

Local Members Interest
N/A

Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee - Friday 24 July 2020

Community Learning Briefing Paper

Recommendations

I recommend that the Select Committee:

- a. Consider performance of the Community Learning offer half-way through the 2019-2020 academic year.
- b. Consider the changes made to the Community Learning offer in response to Covid-19.
- c. Provide feedback on the future options for Community Learning.

Report of Cllr Philip White, Cabinet Member for Learning and Employability

Summary

What is the Select Committee being asked to do and why?

1. The Skills and Employability Service focuses on a range of education and training opportunities to meet the needs of learners, the economy and the wider community and supports delivery of the LEP priorities. However, this report is about the Community Learning provision that the service provides in Staffordshire.
2. The portfolio of work covered in this report includes Community Learning and adult classroom-based learning and online remote learning. The Select Committee are therefore asked to scrutinise the in-year performance of the Community Learning provision, in order to further improve quality, outcomes for learners and in remaining a good learning provider.

Report

Background

3. The Skills and Employability Service's purpose is to improve people's lives through lifelong learning and training, leading to employment and or increased personal fulfilment, supporting the growth of Staffordshire's economy. The Skills and Employability Service aligns with, and respond to, the priorities of local and national Government in all of its services and provision. As part of this approach the Skills and Employability Service continues to support economic growth through its commissioning strands and direct delivery provision, leading on learning and skills programmes to support priorities.

4. The Skills & Employability Service provides Community Learning programmes through a range of formal and informal learning programmes for all adults across the County and provides programmes that supports people and their families to gain the skills that they need so that they can progress in the world of work and give courses that are designed to support parents to give their children the best start in life. In particular it supports and develops individuals and groups for whom formal learning may have been a barrier in the past and works with them to build confidence and realise their true potential in a competitive world.
5. For the most disadvantaged learners Community Learning offers engaging “first steps” learning opportunities as a way of increasing participation for people who are least likely to engage in adult learning and to prepare learners for a more formal programme of learning. We are also inclusive and offer programmes to our community that prevent social isolation through poor health.
6. Above all else we place the learner at the centre of our work and ensure that a high-quality learning experience is achieved through innovative teaching practices that ensure that learners achieve their goals and progress to fuller and richer lives.
7. The service priorities are based on the needs of its customers – primarily Staffordshire residents. The overall impact of this service is positive and contributes to the Councils Strategic Plan and is aligned to Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) priorities. It targets and prioritises those most vulnerable adults who face barriers to learning and improving employability. It is a community-based service that reaches out to those most in need of improving skills. The outcomes from this service contribute to the Councils Strategy by more residents gaining confidence through learning, improving skills, particularly in English, maths and ICT and will improve employability enabling progression to further learning and work.
8. The Community Learning Service is funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and works with schools, colleges, third sector organisations and local community groups to deliver a range of learning opportunities for adults, families and communities across Staffordshire. Service delivery is a combination of provision delivered by the Direct Delivery Unit (DDU), and 90% commissioned to a range of sub-contracted partner organisations. The purpose of our commissioning is to enable Providers to deliver programmes of learning that:
 - a. Develop the skills, confidence, motivation and resilience of adults of different ages and backgrounds
 - b. Support individuals to progress towards formal learning or employment
 - c. Support individuals to improve their health and well-being, including mental health
 - d. Develop stronger communities
9. In 2019 Staffordshire Community Service was allocated £1,708,269 Adult Education Budget from the Education and Skills Funding Agency. The CL service revised their portfolio offer and developed a new four-year framework for adult learners aged 19+ across Staffordshire and a Community Learning Strategy and Commissioning Plan. (Appendix 1)

10. The funding allocation in 2019/20 delivers 100% targeted provision to approximately 4,000 adult learners through the delivery of 700 courses. Targeted provision includes family programmes, provision for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities and those with enduring mental ill health, programmes to support employability and English, maths and IT skills and Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths (STEM) provision.
11. The Community Learning Service commissions and direct delivers learning and skills to adult learners through four main strands of delivery:
 - a. Community Learning
 - b. Community Learning Trust Responsiveness Fund
 - c. Wider Family Learning Grants for Schools
 - d. Direct Delivery (Accredited provision)
12. The new community learning framework introduced in August 2019 consists of 7 curriculum areas:
 - a. **Leisure, Health & Wellbeing** The curriculum area offers programmes to adult learners who want to develop a new area of interest or hobby and take part in learning to support their health and wellbeing. This curriculum has a broad range of subject areas including arts media and publishing, languages and literature, hospitality and catering, horticulture, agriculture and animal care. Learners are supported to keep physically and mentally healthy, to develop their personal, social and employability skills and to become active in their communities with progression routes into higher level learning of the same subject, volunteering and accessing other services in their local community.
 - b. **Supported Learning** This curriculum area is targeted at adults who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and adults who have had long-term mental ill health who require more bespoke and supported teaching and learning. The programmes provide opportunities for learners to develop their sense of well-being and self-esteem, develop skills for independent living and improving their functional skills in English, Maths and IT. Programmes of delivery make good use of subjects such as art, music, humanities or cultural subjects etc. as a vehicle for developing and practising strategies for improving mental health or for embedding functional and independent living skills. The programmes help learners to lead healthier, happier, safer and more independent lives and progression opportunities into further learning, volunteering and employment.
 - c. **Family Learning** Adults need to have the skills to give their children the best possible start in life and parental engagement with education is a key factor in children's success in school. Learning with their children may give adults a new "way in" to education despite previous negative experiences. The curriculum aims to encourage family members to learn together to improve basic skills and skills for development in order to equip families to thrive. The programmes support well-being, healthy lifestyles, mental health, fitness, family finances, accessing community activities and services, managing children's

behaviour and development, transition from primary to secondary, understanding school curriculums and staying safe online. There are opportunities for inter-generational learning and, where possible, lead both adults and children to pursue further learning in English, maths, IT and volunteering and employment.

- d. **Employability** The curriculum is focused on up-skilling and re-skilling adults in a vocational context, including sector specific skills, wider skills and the development of English and maths skills to support learner's employment opportunities for those who are unemployed or on a low income and want to improve their employment opportunities. Programmes prepare and give learners skills for work in various jobs and trades, for example, construction, business, health services, art and design and agriculture. The programmes can include classroom theory and practice and hands-on job specific technical training for work and progression onto accredited provision, volunteering and employment.
- e. **Digital Skills** The digital curriculum supports learners use of digital technology more effectively, including the use of computers, tablets, phones, online services and staying safe online. Programmes aim to give learners the confidence to use the digital tools that are important to them. This could be to access local or national services, to communicate, to research, to store and present information, to use technology safely and to keep their family safe, to make the most of applications and use their potential to improve their lives in a variety of ways eg employment, shopping, creativity, leisure. Learners are supported to continue with further learning including accredited provision in IT, English and maths and gain access to more employment opportunities.
- f. **STEM** The curriculum supports learners to up-skill and re-skill to gain and improve employment opportunities. STEM education creates critical thinkers, increases science literacy, and enables the next generation of innovators. Innovation leads to new products and processes that sustain our economy. STEM programmes are those that are deeply rooted in science, mathematics, engineering and/or are of technical or technology application. Learners acquire skills in a specific vocational area and are able to apply for jobs and/or progress onto relevant accredited provision.
- g. **Progression Pathways** The curriculum was introduced to offer internal accreditation progression routes for our learners in Employability, STEM, Digital Skills and Supported Learning. Programmes in this area are delivered by the Direct Delivery Unit and offer Entry Level ICT and Entry to Level 1 English Speakers of another Language (ESOL) qualifications. The curriculum content for ICT gives learners with no or limited experience of ICT the skills they require for everyday use and basic skills required for work. The ESOL curriculum is targeted at those learners who wish to develop their use of the English language in speaking and listening, reading and writing to support them to be active in their community and make positive steps to employment.
- h. **Community Learning Responsiveness Fund** The Fund is for the delivery of adult learning programmes across Staffordshire and is delivered by third-sector

organisations who have access to individuals in local communities. The Fund supports a responsive approach to local emerging needs for a number of targeted learners; carers, care leavers, asylum seekers, people with no or low qualifications, learning difficulties and disabilities, adults from ethnic minority groups and male learners. The programmes are broad and varied and provide 'first step' learning experiences, skill development, including English, maths and IT, access to other local activities, volunteering and employment.

- i. **Wider Family Learning Grants** The grant is made available for schools across Staffordshire who have identified a need to support families to learn together. Targeted at parents who are digitally excluded, English is not their first language, families at risk, male carers, parents/carers of children with learning/physical disabilities, families with children who are underachieving, Black and Minority Ethnic Groups. There are a number of overarching outcomes to be achieved through the provision, for example, supporting families to have healthy and independent lifestyles, adults able to support their child's school learning and further activities outside of school, new adult aspirations for their own learning and progression, developing understanding of school curriculums and developing functional skills (language, maths, digital).
- j. The service entered a competitive tendering process in 2019. As a result, the service subcontracts with 11 providers to deliver the community learning framework. Additionally, the service subcontracts with 9 third sector organisations via the Community Learning Responsiveness Fund (CLTRF) and 7 schools through the Wider Family Learning Grants (WFLG). Details of sub-contractors engaged with Community Learning can be seen in Appendix 2.

2019- 2020 Academic Year - Performance Term 1 & 2 (Reporting Period 10)

Timeframe of delivery for terms 1 and 2: 1st August 2019 – 3rd April 2020

Curriculum Area	19/20 Funding Allocation	19/20 Planned Enrolments	Actual Enrolments Term 1 & 2)
Leisure, Health & Wellbeing	£140,000	1,850	917
Supported Learning	£245,000	733	648
Family Learning	£230,000	1303	429
Employability	£104,000	337	268
Digital Skills	£110,000	494	215
STEM	£210,000	338	139
Progression Pathways Direct Delivery Unit ESOL & IT	£160,000	650	230
Community Learning Trust Responsiveness Fund	£100,000	458	246

Wider Family Learning Grants	£20,000	148	65
Total	£1,319,000	6,311	3,157

13. In the 2018/19 academic year, Community Learning subcontracted with 39 providers and at year end achieved 6996 enrolments. In comparison in the 19/20 academic year Community Learning subcontracts with 25 providers with an enrolment target of 6,311.
14. At Reporting Period 10 headline in-year data demonstrated the Community Learning service was performing well during terms 1 and 2 in relation to number of learners, new learners and enrolments. See Appendix 3.

Year	Number of Learners	New Learners	Number of Enrolments	Attendance	Retention	Achievement
18/19	1381	991	2313	70%	95%	61%
19/20	2167	1508	3157	62%	89%	59%

15. The drop in attendance, retention and achievement is being monitored with individual subcontractors. Initial findings are related to the initial impact of COVID19 throughout term 2 and the reluctance to attend and/or ill health/caring commitments of targeted learners and/or learners recorded as 'continuing' in their learning and courses not closed during the reporting period.
16. Overall, there is good engagement of learners across five of the eight districts. Further work with subcontractors is required to improve engagement in South Staffordshire, Staffordshire Moorlands and Newcastle.
17. Learners satisfaction levels in terms 1 and 2 are high. A high proportion of learners enjoy their learning experience and would recommend their course to others. All learners feel safe in their learning environment and feel they have the support they require to make good progress in their learning. Vast majority of learners report they knew what they were going to do next, with more than half of learners planning to continue with community learning programmes. Learners report their course had a positive impact on their personal development and wellbeing. Moving forward the service needs to inform and raise learner awareness of how to protect themselves from risk associated with radicalisation and extremism more effectively. Further information can be viewed in Appendix 4.
18. Quality assurance activities for term 1 and 2 were well planned and in line with the Education Inspection Framework and Education and Skills Funding Agency requirements. All curriculum areas and subcontractors received unannounced class visits to support the development of provision. The grade profile of observations of teaching and learning is 88% good or better. Quality is regularly reviewed and reported on at subcontractor and service level. The service Quality Improvement Plan can be viewed in Appendix 5.

COVID19

19. Staffordshire Community Learning Service historically delivers community based face-to-face learning to Staffordshire residents. Prior to COVID19 the service did not have any online provision and has been required to embrace the opportunity and cross the digital divide in order to continue to provide learning to current and new adult learners across Staffordshire.
20. The service had to move rapidly onto online learning and has been faced by many challenges:
 - a. No physical presence online
 - b. No physical digital equipment to loan to adult learners
 - c. Subcontractors not setup for digital remote learning (physical equipment and skills)
 - d. High proportion of learners who engage in community learning have limited IT skills and/or access to physical digital equipment
 - e. Curriculum content not suitable for online delivery
 - f. CL team required to update expertise in online learning to support subcontractors to deliver online learning
 - g. No online process for enrolment and learner surveys
 - h. No quality assurance process in place for online teaching and learning

Response to COVID19

21. The community learning team with their subcontractors embraced the opportunity to transfer learning to online learning and consequently the following actions were deployed:
 - a. The development and introduction of a simplified online enrolment form, learner handbook and learner survey
 - b. The development and implementation of a curriculum review/sign off process to quality assure programmes prior to delivery
 - c. Amendments to the observation of teaching and learning process and documentation to quality assure online learning to encourage reflective practice to develop professional skills and the curriculum offer for the future
 - d. Consistent and clear communication with subcontractors, including numerous meetings with managers and teaching staff to support the transfer to online learning
 - e. Marketing campaign with an updated Course Directory and the use of social media and blogs to promote adult online learning and support the development of all provision. And most recently a press release to raise our profile
 - f. CL team, subcontractor managers and their teaching staff attended a series of professional webinars dedicated to online delivery methods to identify approaches that would work best for our learners
 - g. Teaching staff explored a range of free platforms to deliver online learning which were to be safe and accessible for learners, for example, Padlet, Google Classrooms/meetings/hangouts, WhatsApp, Facebook Closed Groups, Teams, Subcontractors Virtual Learning Environment

- h. Subcontractors redesigned their curriculum content and developed new resources suitable for online learning
- i. Subcontractors considered learners who had no means of accessing online material, and in some instances provided 'learning in box' with regular contact via telephone to check on progress, achievement and wellbeing
- j. Subcontractor Engagement Event delivered providing elements of support, inspiration and development opportunities to transfer and/or stay online in the future

Immediate Impact (June 2020)

- a. No face-to-face classroom based learning delivered across Staffordshire
- b. 13 subcontractors delivering online learning in leisure, health & wellbeing, digital, employability, supported learning, family learning, STEM and CLTRF.
- c. Online enrolment process in place
- d. The online enrolment process anticipates 800 enrolments for term 3 online delivery. At year end we can forecast approx. 4,000 enrolments equating to an enrolment shortfall of 37%. If we had ceased any further delivery for term 3 the enrolment shortfall would have been 50%.
- e. Two subcontractors have successfully delivered Family Learning online to 328 adults and their families. Alongside widening participation, the curriculum area has received some very positive quotes from learners to evidence the impact on individuals and their wider family. Learner quotes can be viewed in Appendix 6.
- f. Supported learning continues to perform well online with 100 learners engaged in the provision
- g. One subcontractor has continued to deliver STEM online, requiring the delivery of resources to learners at a safe distance to enable learning to take place
- h. Subcontractors report they have engaged with more new learners (those who have not engaged in learning in the past 3 years) online, including those isolated at home, those who would not participate in group learning and shift workers.

The Future

- 22. An exciting opportunity to innovate for Community Learning and an appropriate time to support Staffordshire residents further and contribute to SCC vision and the recovery plan. In the next academic year we intend to:
 - a. Build our online curriculum offer now and in future years, to be informed by our current learners and local needs emerging with COVID19 as we recover
 - b. Investigate the use of a Virtual Learning Environment for Staffordshire learners
 - c. Revise our marketing campaign to fully promote our offer of online and blended learning for 2020/21
 - d. Gain access to new audiences across Staffordshire
 - e. Develop the curriculum offer within the Direct Delivery Unit for ESOL and ICT, to include the new Essential Digital Skills qualifications and give learners the skills they need to work remotely from home and need in everyday life, including skills for employment

- f. Direct our subcontractors to deliver more learning in South Staffordshire, Staffordshire Moorlands and Newcastle and to include more English and Math courses within the Employability curriculum area
- g. When the time is right and it is safe to do so for our learners, reintroduce face-to-face classroom/outside delivery of courses to our most vulnerable learners who would benefit from learning with others during such difficult times
- h. Phase in a blended approach to learning for all learners when it is safe to do so for our learners
- i. Continue to undertake quality assurance and performance interventions to monitor outcomes effectively and to support are ambition to deliver high quality outcomes to our learners and fully support and contribute to SCC recovery plan
- j. Fully utilise our management information system to improve performance monitoring further

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1: Community Learning Strategy & Commissioning Plan (2019 – 23)

Appendix 2: List of subcontractors 19/20

Appendix 3: Performance data term 1&2 19/20

Appendix 4: Learner satisfaction

Appendix 5: Quality Improvement Plan 19/20

Appendix 6: Family Learning Learner Quotes 19/20

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