

Local Members Interest
N/A

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Monday 28 February 2022

Staffordshire Community Learning Service Annual Self-Assessment (2020– 2021)

Recommendations

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Considers the performance and quality assurance of Community Learning commissioned and delivered through Staffordshire County Council's Community Learning Team, as set out in the Annual Self-Assessment Report.
- b. Considers any further priorities for improvement and areas for development of our Community Learning offer.

Report of Cllr Philip White, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills

Summary

What is the Overview and Scrutiny 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. This report is about the Community Learning the Service provided across Staffordshire during the 2020-2021 academic year.
2. The Select Committee are asked to scrutinise the annual performance of the Community Learning Service to further improve quality, outcomes for learners and for us to remain a good learning provider. The Select Committee are asked to agree improvement priorities.

Report

Background

3. On the 15th April 2021, the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee were asked to scrutinise the 2019/2020 performance of the Community

Learning Service, through the Annual Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan. It was recommended future reports include information on appraisal of outcomes.

4. Community Learning is a commissioning Service funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). For the 2020/21 academic year the Service received £1,622,044 Adult Education Budget from the ESFA to deliver non-accredited Community Learning and accredited Adult Skills provision.
5. The Service contributes to the Council's Strategic Plan and is aligned to the Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SSLEP) priorities. It targets and prioritises those most vulnerable adults who face barriers to learning. 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 Council's Strategy by more residents gaining confidence through learning, improving skills and employability opportunities, and enabling progression to further learning and work.
6. The Staffordshire Community Learning & Commissioning strategy (2019 – 23) outline the aims, priorities and purpose of the provision. The Service provides learning to Staffordshire residents aged 19+ through a range of formal and informal learning programmes. The programmes support people and their families to gain the skills they need so that they can progress in the world of work, into further learning, develop their wellbeing or access courses designed to support parents to give their children the best start in life.
7. Learning is delivered through the Direct Delivery Unit and a range of subcontracted partners including schools, colleges, third sector organisations and community groups. A total of 23 sub-contractors delivered across our four main strands of delivery in 2020-21:
 - a. Community Learning Framework (2019 – 2023)
 - b. Community Learning Trust Responsiveness Fund
 - c. Wider Family Learning Grants
 - d. Adult Skills (accredited provision)
8. In 2020-21 academic year the Service delivered a range of online, blended and classroom-based courses to maintain services during national and local lockdown restrictions. Across all terms the use of community facilities to deliver learning was problematic or were not accessible.
9. There were 23 sub-contracted providers and the Direct Delivery Unit delivering provision throughout the year. Of which 16 had their own

premises located in at least one of the eight districts of Staffordshire. Other sub-contractors and the Direct Delivery Unit traditionally utilise local community venues to deliver learning.

10. In terms 1 and 3 sub-contractors without their own premises delivered learning online. Those with their own premises delivered face-to-face learning and/or blended approach following COVID19 guidelines. This was particularly beneficial for the delivery of practical courses in Science, Technology, Engineering & Math (STEM), Leisure, Health & Wellbeing and Supported Learning. There was a broad range of courses delivered: Languages, Art & Crafts, Flower Arranging, Photography, Family History, Pottery, Plumbing, Willow Weaving, Pathways to Environmental Careers, Plant Science and Horticulture.
11. In term 2 all provision was delivered online. Online delivery consisted of using a variety of platforms learners and teaching staff were familiar with and included asynchronous and synchronous delivery. Extensive programme design was required, especially for practical courses where often resources and distance learning packs were delivered to learners.
12. All Family Learning was delivered online throughout the year. Courses were developed to support child development and behaviour, transition to Primary school, family wellbeing and making the most of the outdoors with babies and young children. Families signposted from tier 2/3/4 family support services engaged in small group synchronous learning and received additional support through WhatsApp and telephone calls. Other courses attracted large learner enrolments per course and were delivered using asynchronous methods which encouraged families to be independent and to learn together and collaborate with peers using online methods.
13. In year participation on Digital Skills, Employability and Adult Skills courses was low as it was difficult to engage low-skilled learners without the classroom element. A range of new courses were developed and timetabled: ESOL Progression for Work, English & Math, Personal Development, Animal Care, Video Calling, Getting Started with Blogging, Confidence with social media, Word Processing, Digital Cloud, Web Design, Office Skills and Essential Digital Skills qualifications. Further development is required to ensure the offer meets the needs of learners.
14. Staffordshire Community Learning was last inspected by Ofsted in February 2017 and was judged to be a good provider of adult and community learning.

Annual Self-Assessment Process

15. The Service strives to engage all staff in the quality assurance and self-assessment process, in particular sub-contractors and their teaching staff. This includes the creation of sub-contractor Self-Assessment Reports and Quality Improvement Plans that feed into the overall Service annual self-assessment report.
16. Our 2020-21 Community Learning Service Self-Assessment report is based on service-wide data and other evidence, including learner feedback, information on learner destinations, course documentation, quality monitoring and other reports.
17. The Community Learning Service self-assess against an internal Quality and Performance Framework and Ofsted's Education and Inspection Framework (2019) which defines the criteria for high-quality provision and continual improvement and monitoring. The 2020-21 Self-Assessment Report can be located in Appendix 1.

Self-Assessment Summary Judgements 2020-21

18. Staffordshire Community Learning remains a 'good' provider of adult and community learning.
19. Graded using the Ofsted Inspection Framework 4-point scale:
 - a. 1: Outstanding
 - b. 2: Good
 - c. 3: Requires Improvement
 - d. 4: Inadequate

Education Inspection Framework Area	Overall Judgement
Overall Effectiveness	Good
Quality of Education	Good
Behaviour and Attitudes	Outstanding
Personal Development	Good
Leadership and Management	Good
Safeguarding	Safeguarding is effective

Quality & Performance Framework – Internal Key Performance Indicators				
KPI	Attendance 90%	Achievement 94%	Pass 98%	Retention 96%
All provision 20-21	89.7%	97.1%	98.8%	98.3%
Community Learning 20-21	90.8%	97.3%	98.8%	98.5%
Adult Skills Accredited provision 20-21	77.2%	93.2%	99.2%	94.0%

Impact Leadership and Management

20. There is clear leadership and governance, with a strong commitment to provide education opportunities to meet the needs of Staffordshire residents. There are highly effective and dedicated partnerships with a wide range of local and national partners, developing the local skills and digital agenda. As a result, the County Council continues to successfully raise local aspirations, enhances curriculum opportunities and is addressing the needs and priorities within its community and the local economy.
21. Leadership and management support of new methods of delivery has enabled sub-contractors to engage with learners who may not have participated otherwise.
22. The total number of Community Learning learners represent a drop of 25% on the previous year – this should be viewed within the national picture where the drop was 32% in 2020-21.
23. In Adult Skills there was a further significant drop of 53% in the number of learners compared to the previous year. Adult Skills is accredited provision targeted at learners who have low digital and pre-entry/entry level English skills who benefit greatly from classroom delivery to support their engagement and success in learning. Classroom delivery was timetabled in terms 1 and 3. In term 2, libraries and Children’s Centres were not accessible for delivery and all provision was delivered online with very few new learners having the skills or confidence and/or equipment and connectivity to participate.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22 Term 1
Staffordshire Community Learners	2430	1820 (-25%)	728 (15.12.21)
Staffordshire Adult Skills learners	170	80 (-53%)	TBC

24. In terms of enrolments, the decline in 2020-21 was slightly smaller as many learners were able to progress internally and enrol on more than one course.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22 Term 1
Total Enrolments	3,711	2,943 (-22%)	877 (15.12.21)
Community Learning Enrolments	3,428	2,782 (-18.8%)	
Adult Skills Enrolments	283	161 (-43.1%)	TBC

25. Online delivery represented 58% of provision and positively contributed to the end-year enrolment figure.

26. In Adult Skills enrolments were down 43.1% on the previous year; many learners in this area have low digital skills, meaning it was harder for them to engage with the online offer.

27. The Community learning Service provided SME grants and digital equipment grants to sub-contracted providers to support with access to digital devices and connectivity. A total of £34,986 was invested in over 40 ipads, 20+ laptops, and a wide range of ergonomic equipment and assistive technology devices, as well as dongles pre-loaded with data to support learners to engage with learning. The equipment has been loaned to learners, and as a consequence they were enabled to take part in online delivery and improve their digital skills.

28. Some sub-contractors have not accessed the digital equipment fund because they have the necessary digital equipment and others reported they do not have the capacity to maintain and monitor the use of the equipment. The purchasing of equipment to 'gift' to learners with a clause to enrol on at least one Essential Digital Skills qualification has not attracted much interest.

29. A further £265,000 of digital equipment funds will remain available to contribute to the Digital Inclusion agenda until the end of the Community Learning Framework 2019-23. As we develop new partnerships to increase participation it is likely further equipment will be purchased to respond to demand and need. And we would like to make use of national initiatives, for example Get Online Week to promote the benefits of digital skills for everyday life, work and employment to our current learners to support their progression in further learning.
30. Across the county, a high proportion (45%) of enrolments are from learners living in identified wards of deprivation, demonstrating that we are effective in reaching our target learner groups.
31. Just over three-quarters, 77%, (2143) of enrolments were from female learners with 23% (642) being male. This is a reduction from 25.7% in the previous year and below the benchmark of 25%. Analysis identified male learners were more likely to enrol in the Tamworth district and on practical courses within the STEM and Supported Learning curriculum areas and least likely to participate in Family Learning.
32. A high proportion of provision (28% enrolments, up from 21% in 2019-20) falls within the Supported Learning curriculum area, and a high proportion of learners (33%) of learners across all provision have a learning difficulty or learner disability; this compares to 18% in national figures for Community Learning participation.
33. Family Learning increased from 22% to 27% of enrolments. Over half of these learners were highly targeted, being referred through safeguarding and early help channels, or schools, and the courses had a significant positive impact on the parenting skills of the adult learners, and subsequently on family life. Case studies can be located in Appendix 2.

Quality of Education

34. Standards for teaching and learning are clearly communicated and learners benefit from an exciting range of learning experiences in a variety of well-equipped and resourced environments, including online and remote delivery. As a result, observations of teaching and learning evidence that 85% of delivery is good or better.
35. Learners are well supported by tutors who understand their needs, are experts in their sectors and provide very good opportunities for wider skill development, including digital skills.

36. Learners are very happy with their experience, with outstanding rates of satisfaction and a wealth of positive feedback on the impact of their learning, which reaches beyond the original subject of the course, and often has a positive impact on other family members.
37. Overall, learner attendance, retention, pass and achievement rates are excellent, and improved from last year. There has been a reduction in gaps in achievement for equality groups.
38. Throughout the year 58% of provision was delivered through online or remote learning, including the vast majority of provision taking place in August - September 2020 and January - March 2021, when national Covid restrictions were in place. The remaining 42% was delivered face-to-face in colleges, schools, children's centres, care farms and community venues across the county.
39. Feedback from learners demonstrates online or remote delivery was successful in enabling more people to participate who had caring commitments, or who would otherwise not have been able to participate in classroom-based learning. These delivery approaches have supported continued attendance and retention of individuals where circumstances, such as Covid-related issues, would otherwise have made it difficult for them to complete their learning.

Personal Development, Behaviour and Attitudes

40. At the end of the course learners complete a survey. Learner satisfaction is high and has remained consistent with previous years. Just over half (56%) of learners intend to participate in further community learning programmes, although this is a reduction on last year (63%). Of the total number of responses, 82% learners had added a comment to explain the impact of the course with the overwhelming majority of comments being positive.
41. A large proportion (99% or above) of learners stated:
 - a. they enjoyed their learning experience
 - b. had the help they needed to make good progress and achieve
 - c. received the help they required to understand what they could do next.
42. In addition, learners report clear benefits for their personal development, with the most common being the opportunity to take part in new experiences (79%), improved wellbeing and health (65% and 34% respectively) and making new social contacts (44%). The learner comments reveal a common synergy between learning new skills and

significant improvements in mental wellbeing, which has been particularly important to learners during the pandemic.

43. Support for employment-related skills is good. In the feedback surveys, nearly two-thirds of learners across all provision (64%) report a development of their work-related skills, or functional skills in at least one area of the following: skills and confidence to progress in my job/career, ability to re-skills or upskill for work, or development of English maths or digital skills.
44. In November 2021 a telephone survey was conducted to determine learner destination and the impact of learning, in which 979 former learners participated.
45. There is an increase in the number of people who are in employment following their course; this may be partly due to the lower average age of learners in this academic year. However, there are also higher numbers in volunteering and further learning, including amongst those who were not in work before the start of the course, indicating positive destinations for these learners.
46. There is an increase in the number of learners satisfied they achieved their main aim for joining the programme. The 2019-20 increase in learners feeling the positive impact of their course, as measured against some of the key aims of Community Learning, have been mostly maintained or further improved.

	2019-20	2020-21
Total Number of Learners	2540	1862
Surveys completed	1272	975
What are you doing now?		
Employment	43.8%	49%
Unemployed looking for work	6.5%	5.3%
Further study	3.9%	4.1%
Volunteering	2.1%	3.6%
Wider Outcomes		
Achieved main aim	89.8%	94.8%
Participate in society	50.8%	55.9%
Protect self from online/scams	31.2%	37.2%
Keep well	82.3%	82.3%
Pursue goals	68.8%	67.8%
Improve maths/English	21.1%	20.5%
More independent	56.7%	60.3%

Safeguarding

47. The arrangements for safeguarding are effective, with 99.3% of learners stating they felt safe and knew what to do if they did not. The 2 individuals who reported not feeling safe were from the Supported Learning curriculum area and they did confirm that they knew what to do in this situation.

Areas for Development

48. The Community Learning Quality Improvement Plan outlines the identified areas for development. Detail and progress to date can be located in Appendix 3.

- a. Use enrolment and destination data more fully to inform Service development
- b. Increase participation
- c. Targeting learners in priority learner groups, and specifically increase male participation to at least 25%
- d. Ensure Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement (RARPA) practices are adapted to a consistently good standard
- e. Vast majority of learners feel safe, however, need to monitor key groups and increase awareness
- f. Increase capacity to provide mentoring and coaching to get back to a position where 90% of delivery is good or better
- g. Increase attendance and retention for the identified curriculum areas and explore reasons for withdrawal
- h. Continue to build on the improvements in accuracy and use of data
- i. Increase awareness of how to stay safe from radicalisation and extremism

Link to Strategic Plan

Economic Growth: Skills and Employability

49. We will ensure that Staffordshire has an outstanding skills system that helps people to learn new skills and improve their job prospects, throughout their entire career. It will help residents make informed choices about the best way to learn, develop their career, re-train or increase their skills, and in doing so, will give employers the skilled and ambitious workforce they need to drive business success.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

- a. Prosperous Overview & Scrutiny Committee, 15th April 2021: Staffordshire Community Learning Annual Self-Assessment Report
- b. Delegated Decision, 8th July 2021: Approval of funding allocation & distribution
- c. Prosperous Overview & Scrutiny Committee, 24th July 2020: Community Learning Briefing Paper
- d. Prosperous Overview & Scrutiny Committee, 25th April 2019: Staffordshire Community Learning Annual Self-Assessment Report and Community Learning & Commissioning Strategy (2019-23)

Community Impact

N/A

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Staffordshire Community Learning Self-Assessment Report 2020-21

Appendix 2 - Case Studies

Appendix 3 - Quality Improvement Plan 2021-22

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