

Local Members' Interest
N/A

Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee – 4th March 2016

Adult and Community Learning (ACL)

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Select Committee:

1. Scrutinise the quality assurance of the portfolio of learning and skills work within the Skills and Employability team
2. Scrutinise and comment on the findings of the Skills and Employability 2014-2015 Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement and Development Plan (for implementation during 2015-2016) in order to further improve quality and outcomes.

Report of Cllr Ben Adams, Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills

Summary

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

3. Skills and Employability focuses on a range of education and training opportunities to fulfil statutory duties, meet the needs of learners, the economy and the wider community.
4. The portfolio of work covered in this report includes Community Learning, 16-18 Apprenticeships, 19+ Apprenticeships and programmes funded by the Adult Skills Budget. The Select Committee are asked to scrutinise the quality assurance of the portfolio of learning and skills provision commissioned by the Skills and Employability team in order to further improve quality and outcomes for learners.

Report

Background

5. Community Learning is an umbrella term describing a broad range of learning that brings together adults, often of different ages and backgrounds, to pursue an interest, address a need, acquire a new skill, become healthier or learn how to support their children. It is mainly non-accredited and can be undertaken for its own sake or as a step towards other learning or work. It may happen in personal time or work time and be delivered by providers in the public, private or voluntary community sectors.

6. Community Learning supports wider government policies on localism, social justice, stronger families, digital inclusion and social mobility and it includes a range of community-based and outreach learning opportunities and is designed to help people of different ages and backgrounds and families to develop new skills and interests, support progression to formal courses and improve health and wellbeing.
7. Community Learning is funded from a grant from the Skills Funding Agency each year, County Council core funds and investment from providers in activities and fees. However, the grant has been frozen for a number of years and there is increasing pressure on County Council resource and a greater need for investment through fees and activities from our 'Pound Plus' Strategy.

Commissioning and delivery model

8. Four years ago the ACL Service moved to a commissioning framework model based upon our strategic analysis. In 2015 we refreshed that analysis and revised our commissioning framework in consultation with localities. The framework took account of our priorities for community learning and a district needs analysis for each of the eight localities. Our priorities are included in Appendix A. From 1st August 2015 we have delivered these priorities through five main programmes which are described in Appendix B and can be summarised as:
 - a. Leisure tasters and courses
 - b. Provision for adults with learning difficulties/disabilities (ALDD) and those with enduring mental ill health
 - c. Wider Family Learning (WFL)
 - d. Family English, Maths and Language (FEML)
 - e. Employability Skills
 - f. Functional Skills
9. Through this commissioning model we work with a range of approximately 35 learning providers that includes schools, colleges, third sector organisations, training providers and local community groups. We also work with and support different parts of the County Council to achieve broader outcomes.
10. For instance, our Direct Delivery Unit delivers basic ICT courses in the libraries which positively impact on library footfall and their Employability courses support the unemployed back into work, whilst programmes delivered by Families First help to improve outcomes for families and children.

Outcomes from Community Learning

11. In the last full academic year, 2014-15, just under ten thousand learners (9,549) enrolled and participated on almost 1,500 courses across the County. Over the last three years the numbers have declined partly due to a real terms reduction in funding and partly due to a deliberate policy to increasingly focus on supporting those who are disadvantaged. For example the percentage of learners across the provision who come from 0-20 lower super output areas was 9.8% against a Staffordshire average of 9.4%. This percentage is higher for learners on programmes which particularly target disadvantaged communities, for example on Community Learning Trust Responsiveness Fund programmes in 12-13, 15.3% of learners and in 14-15, 17.6% of learners come from 0-20 lower super output areas. On family English, maths and language programmes (FEML), 24% of learners and 26% of learners on Wider Family Learning (WFL) programmes came from 0-20 lower super output areas in 2014-2015.
12. Details of learner enrolments by district can be viewed in Appendix C.
13. Of the total number of learners engaged and enrolled on a course:
 - a. 31% were males
 - b. 48% were adults with declared learning difficulties and/or disabilities
 - c. 65% were without a level 2 qualification,
 - d. 10% adults came from families with children who are under-achieving
 - e. 9% of enrolled learners came from the 0-20% most deprived lower super output areas
14. Community learning provision demonstrated good progression to other training or employment by learners who were contacted via the progression survey in October 2015.
 - a. 15% had started a new job,
 - b. 10% had become more involved in community activities
 - c. 6% had undertaken voluntary work,
 - d. 5% had started another course in a different subject,
 - e. 5% had started a course in the same subject at a higher level
 - f. 3% had started a course which leads to a qualification
 - g. 3% had become self- employed/ started their own business
15. Key performance indicators were set for learner achievement rate at 95% and overall satisfaction rate at 95%. The first target was exceeded by 2% and the second exceeded by 3%.

Outcomes from Adult Skills Budget

16. Since August 2013, the team has also been in receipt of an Adult Skills Budget (ASB) allocation from the SFA as a result in the funding policy change with Formal First Steps provision moving to an externally accredited funding model. This presented challenges as courses needed to be externally accredited which was less attractive to some learners due to the increased pressure of

assessment.

17. Overall, in 2014-2015, a total of 1,105 learners participated in ASB courses including ICT, Employability Skills, Horticulture and Business Administration with a success rate of 92% (above national benchmark)

Outcomes from Apprenticeships

18. The Council's Apprenticeship programme includes Business Administration, Customer Service and also offers Supporting Teaching and Learning Apprenticeships for schools/academies. There are currently 229 Intermediate Level 2 Apprentices in learning and 121 at Advanced Level 3.
19. In 2014-2015, a total of 131 learners left the Apprenticeship of which 98 achieved the framework. The framework success rate was 74.8% which decreased from 77.8% in 2013-2014 although this is still above the national average of 68.9% for 13-14 (14-15 national average rate has not yet been published). Of the 98 learners that achieved the framework 95% of them progressed either into employment, onto a higher level Apprenticeship or into Further Education.
20. Apprenticeship success is celebrated. 60 learners and their mentors attended the annual celebration to collect their certificates in March 2015.
21. The overall achievement rate was affected this year by a higher than normal number of learners aged 24+ who took up permanent jobs elsewhere before the apprenticeship had been completed. The Business Administration framework achievement rates were affected by 14 learners withdrawing from the Apprenticeship. The reasons for the withdrawals were due to learners leaving to go into permanent employment, health and personal reasons or they did not settle into the placement. The programme assessment practices will be reviewed to make sure that older apprentices are committed to completing the apprenticeship and additional support to support progression at an appropriate rate will be included. A target has been set to improve to 85% in 2015-2016.
22. Functional skills qualifications are delivered as part of the Apprenticeship framework. Exam results in 2014-2015 in English Levels 1 and 2 improved from 85.7% to 93.7% and 74.6% to 94.2% respectively.
23. Learner and employer feedback processes will be improved to assist with continuous improvement and the development of the delivery of the full framework.

Resources and Value for Money

24. Community Learning is funded mainly from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) community learning budget of £1.5m. Community Learning funding from the SFA is considered to be a contribution in locally-owned community networks with clear strategic plans, priorities, objectives and learner outcomes which can only be achieved if there is extra funding over and above that available from the Government.

25. The County Council also contributes £280k to the funding and of this £40k is allocated to Community Learning Grants to support self-directed groups within Staffordshire to meet in order to further develop a skill or interest they share. Although over recent years, the contribution from the Council has decreased, the level of funding available for community learning groups will remain the same in 2016-2017.
26. The County Council uses 15% of the funding from the SFA (£236k) to cover the costs of supporting Adult & Community Learning commissioning, performance monitoring, quality assurance and learning provider development. The current 15% is in line with sector averages but in real terms is shrinking as the overall SFA community learning budget has remained constant since 2007-08 whilst expenditure and particularly staff costs, have risen substantially.
27. The average cost of a 2014-2015 Community Learning enrolment is £155.56 which places us in the top quartile of the Lincolnshire Benchmarking Club (a voluntary group of 32+ national CL providers which compare a wide range of data)
28. The outcome of the comprehensive spending review in November 2015 confirmed that the current level of community learning funding will continue until 2020. However from August 2016, the community learning budget and the adult skills budget will be combined into the Adult Education Budget.
29. The Adult Skills Budget and Apprenticeship provision funding has remained at a similar value for 2015-2016 contract year. 2016-2017 will see an end to contracting in this way as from April 17 the Apprenticeship Levy system will be introduced.
30. The table below shows the breakdown of funding over the last four years

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
SFA Community Learning	£1,573,758	£1,574,309	£1,574,309	£1,574,310
SFA Adult Skills Budget (Classroom Based)	£802,682***	£767,142*	£591,839	£449,798
SFA Adult Skills Budget (Adult Apprenticeships)	£87,095	£86,003*	£160,003	£160,002
SFA 16 to 18 Apprenticeships	£160,799	£161,224**	£154,090	£154,500
SCC Funding to ACL – Officer Controlled Total	£440,260	£273,790	£274,060	£226,790****
Total	£3,064,594	£2,862,468	£2,754,301	£2,565,400

Notes:

SFA Budget – Academic Year, County Council – Financial Year

County Council Budget includes Community Learning Groups and residual pension costs

‘*’ In year permanent virement of £74,000 from Class Room Based to Adult Apprenticeships

“**” Reduced in year by SFA to £133,388

“***” Formal First Steps funding rules applied

“****” Now incorporated into larger Skills and Employability budget going forward

31. The table below provides a breakdown of the overall proportion of procured 2015/16 Community Learning by programme type, enrolments and funding

Programme areas	Enrolments	Funding
Leisure Courses (inc. Leisure Tasters)	62% (5928)	36%
Adults with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities	5% (454)	15%
Wider Family Learning	12% (1136)	20%
Family English, Maths and Languages	3% (254)	9%
Employability Skills	15% (1405)	17%
Functional Skills	3% (313)	3%

Pound Plus

32. The Community learning ‘Pound Plus’ financial strategy aims to increase the total investment and maximise the value of public funding to enable the delivery of a high quality community learning programme. The Skills Funding Agency states that the community learning grant is only considered as a contribution to the overall costs of delivering the programmes and there is an expectation that the council as the grant recipient, will add value to this funding pot by attracting extra income, cutting costs and reinvesting to widen the offer to disadvantaged people. The term used by the SFA to describe this added value is “Pound Plus” and all its Providers are required to hold a Pound Plus strategy. The SFA does not provide a detailed definition of Pound Plus and Providers are free to determine local definitions and supporting evidence trails. SFA funding is therefore used as a leverage to secure additional income in order to help widen access for people who are disadvantaged and cannot afford to pay fees. The table below shows examples of pound plus investments:

Pound Plus Investment Types	
Pound Plus Category	Examples
Direct Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fee income from learners ▪ Sponsorship ▪ Grants and tenders ▪ Sales from products or services
Cost Savings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Savings in accommodation ▪ Use of volunteers to support learning ▪ Savings in staffing through partnerships ▪ Shared services - back office functions
Value for Money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Efficiency of curriculum – avoiding duplicated provision

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Effectiveness of curriculum – new subjects, better progression opportunities leading to increased learner participation ▪ Setting up self-organised groups
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33. The Pound Plus strategy requests providers to collate data and submit returns to the council to detail the value of Pound Plus it has generated against the three categories above. Due to the nature of Pound Plus it is traditionally difficult to categorise and evidence therefore the provider returns largely detail the items that are easier to determine e.g. fee income from learners and costs savings in kind through the use of volunteers and savings in accommodation costs.
34. In 2014-15 the provider returns detailed the value of the Pound Plus investment to be a total of £1.1m which is equivalent to around 75% of the Community Learning Budget.

Quality Improvement Strategy

35. Learning and Skills providers are required to prepare an annual self-assessment report (SAR), based on Ofsted's Common Inspection Framework (CIF) and this is used to inform the Skills and Employability Quality Improvement and Development Plan (QIDP). In line with the CIF, the SAR makes key judgements based on evidence on the following areas:
- a. Overall effectiveness
 - b. Effectiveness of leadership and management
 - c. Quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - d. Outcomes for learners
 - e. Personal development, behaviour and welfare
36. Judgements are made for Community Learning, ASB and Apprenticeships and are graded from 1 to 4 in line with the CIF as follows:
- a. 1 – Outstanding
 - b. 2 – Good
 - c. 3 – Requires Improvement
 - d. 4 – Inadequate
37. The table below summarises the validated grades awarded to Community Learning and ASB and the provisional grades (awaiting final validation) awarded to Apprentices and the overall Skills and Employability SAR.

Criteria	Overall 14-15	CL	ASB	Apprentices
Leadership and management	2	2	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	1	2	2
Quality of teaching,	2	2	2	2

learning and assessment				
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	1	1	1	Not assessed

38. In the 2014-15 SAR, all self-assessed grades for community learning are 2 (good), with the exception of the grades awarded to personal development, behaviour and welfare and outcomes for learners which are 1(outstanding).
39. Findings from completed provider SARs and a review of all data show that all self-assessed grades for ASB are 2 (good) with the exception of the grade awarded to personal development, behavior and welfare which is 1(outstanding).
40. The Apprenticeships SAR (which will be validated at the end of February 2016) based on the 2012 Common Inspection Framework has self-assessed grades of; overall effectiveness Good – 2; Outcomes for Learners Good – 2; Quality of Teaching and Learning Good – 2; Effectiveness of Leadership and Management Good – 2.
41. A summary of the SAR strengths and areas for improvement can be viewed in Appendix D.

Progress since the last inspection

42. Staffordshire County Council was last inspected in November 2012 and was awarded a grade 2 (good) for overall effectiveness and a grade 1 (outstanding) for leadership and management. The summary of key findings included:
- Learners develop good personal, social and employability skills.
 - Good teaching, training and assessment ensure that the very large majority of learners successfully complete their learning programmes or apprenticeships.
 - Teaching, learning and assessment are consistently good, with outstanding features. Tutors plan sessions carefully to include a good range of practical and interactive activities that involve learners fully and make learning interesting and relevant.
 - Well-qualified and dedicated tutors provide high quality support to help learners achieve.
 - Leadership and management are outstanding. Senior leaders and managers provide particularly strong leadership to ensure that the service offers relevant and high quality provision to meet the needs of the county's diverse communities

43. To improve further and achieve a grade 1, the report states that we needed to:
- a. Further improve outcomes by ensuring that all tutors set clear and achievable personal targets that stretch and challenge learners.
 - b. Increase the proportion of lessons that are outstanding by:
 - i. sharing the very best practice in teaching and learning and ensuring that this is then consolidated in lessons across the curriculum
 - ii. ensuring that tutors make better use of the available information and learning technology (ILT) resources to enhance further the quality of learning sessions

44. The improvements recommended by Ofsted and the progress made to date are listed below.

Further improve outcomes by ensuring that all tutors set clear and achievable personal targets that stretch and challenge learners

45. Several steps have been taken to address this which has resulted in improved auditing of achievable personal targets and evidence indicates that significant improvement has been made by most community Learning providers. However, the range and diversity of our provider base and the rapid turnover of tutors make this a constant challenge. Contracts with new providers in August 2015 further exacerbate the challenge. The setting of clear and achievable targets which stretch and challenge learners is continuously addressed and reinforced with tutors and provider managers and through best practice shared at network meetings, in provider updates and the teaching and learning blog.
46. In the apprenticeships provision, one to one monthly sessions have been introduced between the quality manager and the assessors to ensure that they are supported with setting personal goals and achieving their targets therefore producing quality assessments.

Increase the proportion of lessons that are outstanding

47. The ACL Service has made good progress in addressing this and we have seen an increase in the proportion of lessons graded outstanding which has increased from 19% in 2012-13 to 24% in 2014-15. This has been supported by the appointment of a Teaching and Learning Advisor who supported tutors, followed up actions from observations of learning and teaching, mentored tutors graded 3 or 4, shared best practice and contributed to the teaching and learning conference run in September 2013. A second Teaching and Learning Advisor was appointed in January 2016 to support and further improve the quality of delivery.

Sharing the very best practice in teaching and learning and ensuring that this is then consolidated in lessons across the curriculum

48. ACL have conducted sector leaders' RARPA training, refreshed our RARPA audit

process, organized CPD sessions for all providers and regularly share best practice through our teaching and learning blogs.

Ensuring that tutors make better use of the available information and learning technology (ILT) resources to enhance further the quality of learning

49. ACL set up an ICT strategy group to review priorities and complete an ILT statement. We work with JISC (joint information systems committee) to develop a strategy to support rural community groups to use ILT and have an iPad loan system to encourage the use of ILT in the classroom.
50. The increased use of e-portfolio to record the Learning Plan has resulted in an improved and more effective monitoring and quality checking system for the apprenticeships provision saving assessors and learners time due to the ease of access.

Challenges for the Service

51. The three main areas of challenge for the Skills and Employability team are as follows:

Funding

52. The freeze on the budget and the increase in real terms' delivery costs present real risks in maintaining learner numbers in Community Learning. However the decline in learner numbers in Staffordshire is in line with a national trend which was highlighted in the Ofsted Chief Inspectors' annual report. It is recognized that this decrease is more than compensated for by the value for money that community learning funds deliver.
53. For 2015-2016, there was a planned national reduction by the SFA of 24% in ASB allocations. Our first SFA funding statement included an allocation of £42,482 for ESOL plus (mandation funding aimed at JSA claimants). However in July 2015, the SFA removed the ESOL mandate funding from all providers nationally and reduced our allocation by a further 3.9%. Due to planned funding reductions, we reduced the number of providers to 2 in anticipation. However this means the income from our management charge to support the service is significantly reduced.
54. The Apprenticeship Funding will cease in March 2017 due to the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy. There is no information available yet from the Skills Funding Agency as to how the residual apprentices will be funded.

Ofsted inspection

55. In September 2015, Ofsted implemented a revised inspection methodology. The majority of providers previously graded good by Ofsted will be subject to a short inspection lasting 2 days. The learning and skills portfolio of work became eligible for a short inspection in November, 2015 and preparations in anticipation are well under way.

Adult Education Budget and Devolution

56. This budget line will replace Community Learning and Adult Skills Budget funding from August 2016. The mix and balance of provision that will be delivered in return for the block funding is yet to be agreed with SFA. The government is seeking to transfer control of the AEB to local government areas through devolution agreements. The new budget is part of the transition to full skills devolution from 2018-2019.

Links to the Council's strategic outcomes

57. Community Learning, Adult Skills Budget, Apprenticeship Funding 16-18 forms part of a commissioned range of learning and skills provision. There is also a small amount of provision that is delivered to address market failure through our Direct Delivery Unit. This provision is important in supporting the County Council's vision, values and outcomes by improving employability and skills. We support people to acquire the skills to access work. By experiencing learning for leisure or personal development and through our community groups, the programmes help people feel healthier and to maintain their independence whilst being part of the community. Some of the providers also work closely with the Children's Centres supporting the building resilient families agenda.

58. Apprenticeships support employers' workforce development and will be important in meeting government targets to increase apprenticeship growth in the public sector.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

59. This report links to the "Adult and Community Learning Strategy and Quality Improvement" report, Prosperity Select Committee 24th July, 2015.

Community Impact

60. Community Learning supports wider government policies on localism, social justice, stronger families, digital inclusion and social mobility and it includes a range of community-based and outreach learning opportunities and is designed to help people of different ages and backgrounds and families to develop new skills and interests, support progression to formal courses and improve health and wellbeing and therefore positively support our community in Staffordshire. Some examples of case studies and learner comments can be viewed in Appendix E.

61. Use of the Adult Skills Budget and Apprenticeship Funding gives young and older people the skills they need to progress within or into work and gives employers the skills they need for their workforce development therefore contributing to economic growth.

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Appendices/Background papers

Appendix A: Community Learning Priorities

Appendix B: Description of Community Learning Programmes

Appendix C: Community Learning Enrolments by District

Appendix D: Summary of SAR strengths and weaknesses

Appendix E: Case studies/comments from providers/learners

Appendix F: Photos of celebratory events