

Local Members' Interest
N/A

Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee – 3rd March 2017

Skills and Employability Self-Assessment

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Select Committee:

1. Scrutinise the quality assurance and performance of the learning and skills service within the Skills and Employability team.
2. Scrutinise and comment on the findings of the Skills and Employability 2014-2015 Self-Assessment Report for its Learning and Skills provision, in order to further improve quality and performance in preparation of achieving a good outcome in a FE and Skills Ofsted Inspection.

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 and supports delivery of the LEP skills Strategy. However, this report is about the learning and skills provision the service provides in Staffordshire.
4. The portfolio of work covered in this report includes Community Learning, Intermediate and Advanced Apprenticeships and adult classroom based learning. The Committee is therefore asked to scrutinise the quality and performance of the learning and skills delivered as part of the service.
5. The Self-Assessment Report is a fundamental tool that Ofsted Inspectors use to judge the quality and effectiveness of an organisation in providing education opportunities to young people and adults.
6. The Select Committee are asked to scrutinise the quality assurance and performance of the portfolio of learning and skills provision commissioned by the Skills and Employability team, in order to further improve quality, outcomes for learners and in remaining a good FE and Skills provider.

Report

Background to the Skills and Employability Service

7. 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 and society. Our ambition is to have a flexible skills system which enables people to gain the skills needed to meet the needs of our employers. We want to ensure a well-qualified and adaptable workforce with the skills sets appropriate to the needs of existing businesses and sectors, in which we have aspirations for economic growth. We also believe people, especially young people, should receive the guidance and support they need to enable them to take full advantage of education, training and employment opportunities, and we support effective approaches to supporting unemployed people back into work.
8. 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 via strong engagement with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP established the Education Trust to promote its skills and education agenda. The vision of the Education Trust is to shape a high performing, relevant and responsive education and skills system that meets today's business needs, and anticipates the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow. The Skills & Employability team, through its commissioning strands and direct delivery provision, lead on learning and skills programmes to support priorities.

Learning & Skills

9. The Skills & Employability Service commissions and direct delivers learning and skills through 32 providers, directly through its Direct Delivery Unit and through four main strands of delivery (2016/2017 academic year):
 - a. Community Learning
 - b. Community Learning Trust Responsiveness Fund
 - c. Apprenticeships
 - d. Classroom based learning (including Direct Delivery)
10. Meeting the needs of Staffordshire residents is effective through the diverse range of sub-contractors that have good local knowledge within districts, in order to target priority groups.
11. Details of sub-contractors engaged with Learning and Skills can be seen in Appendix A

Community Learning

12. 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 across Staffordshire. Community Learning supports wider government policies on localism, social justice, stronger families, digital inclusion, social mobility and upskilling English and maths skills and preparing for employment.

13. Community learning is delivered through six main programmes which are as follows:
 - 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
14. Community Learning programmes and the Community Learning Trust bring communities together to promote social renewal. Community Learning supports providers to engage with its locality working groups and adopt a common strategy that empowers those in local neighbourhoods, wards and parishes to work collaboratively to agree learning priorities and learning models.

Community Learning Trust Responsiveness Fund

15. The Staffordshire Community Learning Trust Responsiveness Fund (CLTRF) offers local grants for the delivery of adult learning programmes which address the identified needs of local communities. The CLTRF is funded by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). The funding is for the delivery of education and training for adults returning to learning.
16. Programmes are targeted at adults from one or more of the following groups:
 - a. Adults with enduring mental ill health
 - b. Carers
 - c. Homeless adults and adults living in hostel accommodation
 - d. People with no or low qualifications.
 - e. Adults with learning difficulties/disabilities.
 - f. Adults from ethnic minority groups
 - g. Male adult learners

Apprenticeships

17. The Skills & Employability Service commissions apprenticeship provision from Entrust. The Skills and Employability Service has also led on a range of initiatives to sustain apprenticeship growth.

18. Apprenticeships are delivered in the following vocational areas:

- a. Business Administration: Intermediate and Advanced Apprenticeships
- b. Information Communication Technology: Intermediate and Advanced Apprenticeships
- c. Early Years (Children and Young People's Workforce): Intermediate and Advanced
- d. Supporting Teaching and Learning Apprenticeship: Intermediate and Advanced
- e. Functional Skills (Level 1 and 2) in Maths, English and ICT – delivered as part of the apprenticeship framework.

Classroom based learning (including Direct Delivery)

19. The Skills & Employability Service's Direct Delivery Unit delivers non accredited programmes in ICT through the community learning programme and accredited provision in ESOL, employability and ICT through the adult education budget. Entrust are also commissioned to deliver qualifications in employability.

Inspections of Learning and Skills

20. The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) is a non-ministerial department of the UK government, reporting to Parliament via the Department for Education. Ofsted is responsible for inspecting a range of educational institutions, including Further Education and Skills Providers, state schools and some independent schools. It also inspects childcare, adoption and fostering agencies and initial teacher training, and regulates a range of early years and children's social care services

21. In the new Common Inspection Framework, Ofsted have introduced a new inspection methodology, which includes Short inspections. Providers judged good for overall effectiveness at their most recent inspection will usually be inspected within three years from September 2015. This will usually be a short inspection, but may be a full inspection where information suggests that this is the most appropriate course of action.

22. Learning and Skills was last inspected in November 2012 and judged as a good provider. Therefore in scope imminently for a short inspection under the new Common Inspection Framework methodology.

23. A short inspection will determine whether the provider continues to provide a good standard of education/training for learners and that safeguarding is effective.

24. Inspectors will make overall judgements on:

- a. Effectiveness of leadership and management
- b. Quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- c. Personal development, behaviour and welfare
- d. Outcomes for learners.
- e. Apprenticeships
- f. Adult Learning Programmes

g. Effectiveness of safeguarding

25. Learning and Skills Self-Assessment summary judgements (2015 - 2016)

Graded using the 4 point scale: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires Improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	Adult Learning Programmes	Apprenticeships
Overall Effectiveness	2	2	2
Effectiveness of Leadership and Management	2	2	2
Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment	2	2	2
Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare	2	2	2
Outcomes for Learners	2	2	3
Apprenticeships	2		2
Adult Learning Programmes	2	2	

Overall effectiveness of the Skills and Employability Service's Learning and Skills Portfolio

26. Learning and Skills is judged to be good and is continuing to make progress in being Outstanding, which it is achieving by following the Council's vision is to create a Connected Staffordshire. The Service has a strong focus on providing education opportunities to meet the needs of Staffordshire residents and the wider economy.
27. The effectiveness of leadership, management and governance is good. The management team continuously undertake strong strategic and operational planning, focused clearly on maintaining and improving high standards of quality and performance; as a result all staff have a clear understanding of the County Council and Skills and Employability Service's vision and priorities.
28. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across learning and skills is good. Throughout 2015-2016 the Community Learning offer placed a major focus on learning, teaching and assessment, which led to a good and continually improving quality of experience for learners, with elements of further and continued outstanding practice evident across some areas of delivery. Further development is in progress to ensure that the most successful and innovative practice in learning, teaching and assessment is extended across all areas, ensuring a consistently good learning experience across all provision as an absolute minimum.
29. The Community Learning offer has continued to focus its approach on ensuring learners develop very good personal, social and employability skills, through the continued development and provision of a wide variety of activities aimed at enriching their learning experience. This is supported by ongoing partnerships with local community organisations and employers, resulting in learners gaining useful additional subject knowledge, qualifications and positive workplace experience which effectively prepares them for the world of work.

30. The range of provision meets the needs of learners and employers well. Provision is designed to engage the community, vulnerable and disadvantaged learners and effectively support social and economic inclusion and contribution. Meeting the needs of Staffordshire residents is effective through the sub-contractors that have good local knowledge.
31. Responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of young people and vulnerable adults is taken extremely seriously and, as a result, learners consistently say they feel safe. Staff and learners show high levels of respect for each other; which is due to the efficient systems and robust implementation of effective safeguarding processes and procedures. The promotion of Equality and Diversity is good, and continually improving.

Summary of Headline Key Strengths for Community Learning, Apprenticeship programmes and Classroom Based Learning 2015/2016

32. Strong and effective leadership, management and governance, together with improved quality assurance and improvement arrangements, which are transferred to learning, teaching and assessment practices which have continued to enhance aspects of the Services' performance and strongly support learning, resulting in learners successfully completing their learning programmes and achieving their goals.
33. Learners receive very good information, advice and guidance to ensure that they are enrolled on programmes that meet their needs, interests and aptitudes and make good progress towards their choice of destination.
34. Learning and skills makes a difference to learners' lives, especially for the majority of learners coming from challenging backgrounds. As a result, the vast majority of learners develop strong personal and work-related skills which develop self-confidence and work-readiness.
35. Good and effective wider outcomes achieved for 'hard to reach learners', such as reducing isolation, social inclusion, mental health and the impact on family life and health.
36. Outcomes for learners overall on Community Learning programmes are good with achievement in 2015/2016 sustained across the majority of Community Learning Programmes.
37. There is a continued upward momentum in provision for Learners with Learning Difficulties and or Disabilities (LLDD), of which is outstanding and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) at Entry level 1 – Level 1, therefore achievement rates are improving.
38. Timely achievement on apprenticeship frameworks has increased to 75% compared to 62% in 14/15. With achievement rates continuing to improve in some areas; although at a steadier rate, apprentices are making good progress.

39. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the Learning and Skills offer is good and improving.
40. Highly effective safeguarding arrangements and strong initiatives to promote staff and learners' awareness of the risks of extremism and radicalisation; as a result, learners feel safe and are safe.
41. Learners develop effective employability skills which prepares them well for the job market. They gain a good awareness of employment through taster sessions focused on skills for particular sectors and specific employability classes.
42. Learners develop personal, social and employability skills including Maths, English and ICT and appreciate the importance of these skills to increase their future employability.

Key outcomes for learners on Community Learning, Apprenticeship programmes and Classroom Based Learning 2015/2016

43. Outcomes for learners overall on Community Learning programmes are good. The Community learning offer is committed to making continuous improvements for its users and strives to be outstanding. In the academic year 2015 – 2016, Community Learning engaged with 37 providers, delivered 1377 courses to 6045 learners, of which equated to 10129 enrolments. The outcomes for learners across Community Learning is good with achievement at 93%, and equal to 14/15 achievement. The 15/16 pass rate is equal to 14/15 performance at 97%.
44. Overall the achievement in 2015/2016 has been sustained at 93% across the majority of programmes, however some specific areas continue to require further improvement. There is a continued upward momentum in provision for Learners with Learning Difficulties and or Disabilities (LLDD) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) at Entry level 1 – Level 1, therefore achievement rates are improving. The areas of IT, FEML, non-regulated ESOL and Leisure 2015/2016 has seen a decline in achievement, mainly due to the retention of learners across these programme areas, with these areas as a focus for improvement in 2016/2017.
45. Within Community Learning, achievement gaps for different groups of learners are rapidly closing, with minimum disparity in achievement between gender, age and learners with and without learning difficulties and or disabilities at headline level. There is variance of achievement for different ethnic groups, with Black or any other black background, BME and other ethnic group performing at a slower rate compared to other groups. These groups of learners equate to 131 enrolments and 1.2% of enrolments overall. The enrolments of males still remain low with 29% enrolled (3133) against 64% (6996) of female enrolments. This is just above the national average of 26-28% and a continued focus for Community Learning.
46. Improved, outstanding achievement on Community Learning provision for Adult Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities with achievement being at 97% overall.

47. Good and effective wider outcomes achieved for 'hard to reach learners'. There is consistent reporting of significant wider outcomes such as reducing isolation, social inclusion, mental health and the impact on family life and health. A number of providers run courses in residential and care home settings. The learners often experience reduced amount of social opportunities, reduced mobility and increased health problems. The courses offer them access to learning and help to tackle isolation
48. Teaching, learning and assessment across learning and skills is good at 95% with the majority of lessons observed in 2015 - 2016 judged as good or better. In these lessons staff plan effectively to ensure learners are engaged and motivated. As a result, most learners enthusiastically participate in learning and make good progress in improving their skills.
49. Apprenticeship enrolments have seen a decline during the 2015-2016 academic year. In 2015 – 2016, Apprenticeship programmes were delivered to 69 learners across the county. This is a reduction of 62 learners compared to 131 in 2014-15. Timely achievement is at 75% in 15/16 and with achievement rates continuing to improve in some areas; although at a steadier rate, apprentices are making good progress. However, 24+ advanced apprenticeships (28.5% timely achievement) particularly in Business and Administration and intermediate apprenticeships in Children and Young Peoples' Workforce (60% timely achievement) continues to require further improvement.
50. The majority of apprentices achieved qualifications in Functional Skills English, maths and ICT in a timely manner with achievement at 92% overall. However Functional Skills ICT at level 1 and maths, particularly at level 2, also requires further improvement.
51. Processes and procedures for ensuring learners are protected and helped to keep themselves safe are effective. There continues to be an excellent and high profile approach to raising awareness of, and promoting, safeguarding across learning and skills.
52. Community Learning learner data can be viewed in Appendix B

Resource and value for money

53. Learning and Skills delivery is funded by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). 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.
54. The County Council also contributes £280,000 to the funding and of which £40,000 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.

55. The County Council uses 15% of the funding from the SFA (£236,000) 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.
56. The table below shows the breakdown of funding over the last three years

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
SFA Community Learning	£1,574,309	£1,574,309	£1,574,310
SFA Adult Skills Budget (Classroom Based)	£767,142*	£591,839	£449,798
SFA Adult Skills Budget (Adult Apprenticeships)	£86,003*	£160,003	£160,002
SFA 16 to 18 Apprenticeships	£161,224**	£154,090	£154,500
Total	£2,502,675	£2,480,241	£2,338,610

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

Pound Plus

57. The Skills and Employability Service’s 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	Fee income from learners Sponsorship Grants and tenders Sales from products or services
Cost Savings	Savings in accommodation Use of volunteers to support learning Savings in staffing through partnerships Shared services - back office functions
Value for Money	Efficiency of curriculum – avoiding duplicated provision Effectiveness of curriculum – new subjects, better progression opportunities leading to increased learner participation Setting up self-organised groups

58. 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.
59. In 2015-16 the provider returns detailed the value of the Pound Plus investment to be a total of £542,000 which is equivalent to around 47% of the Community Learning Budget.

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. The use of the Adult Education Budget and Apprenticeship Funding gives young people and adults 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 – Details of Sub-Contractors Engaged with Learning and Skills

Appendix B – Community Learning Learner Data