



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 19th July 2022

REPORT TITLE:	OVERVIEW OF 2020/21 COUNCIL LIFELONG LEARNING SERVICE ADULT EDUCATION DELIVERY
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

This Lifelong Learning Service update report sets out the service's developments, summary of delivery and learner achievements in the 2020/21 academic year (AY).

Grant funding received from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority was £1,062,326.

Wirral Council's Lifelong Learning Service actively engages and supports local residents (aged 19+) who are furthest from the labour market. This education provision provides learners with the confidence to take the next steps back into education and employment. As a grant funded Council service, it has the capacity to support the most disadvantaged, working on difficult issues and using innovative approaches for example, supporting community cohesion, troubled families, Children's Centres, family learning, refugees and improving mental health through learning.

The 2020/21 academic year was very challenging for the service with mixed modes of course delivery being required including online when face to face was not practicable due to Covid-19.

The Lifelong Learning Service was inspected by Ofsted, February 2018, and assessed as 'Good'. The service was also MATRIX re-accredited, July 2020, recognising its integrated high-quality delivery of careers education and support for its learners.

As a service, Lifelong Learning supports three of the key strategic Council themes, as outlined in the Wirral Plan 2021 – 2026. These themes include (1) Brighter Futures through the delivery of high-quality education for adults and families, (2) Active and Healthy Lives through a curriculum focus on wellbeing and positive mental health, and (3) Safe and Pleasant Communities through targeted engagement of adults and families in the Borough's most deprived communities / ward areas.

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough.

This is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to:

- 1) note the report; and
- 2) support the services' planned improvements and recognise the contribution to improving the lives of adults in Wirral's more deprived communities during 2020/21.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The Lifelong Service enrolled over 1,380 adults on a range of over 2,908 education provisions during 2020/21. Of those adults that enrolled on courses and workshops 66.5 percent were residents from Wirral's top 20 percent most deprived ward areas (identified using the indices of multiple deprivation index). The employment status of the learners engaged through the service included 67.7% (918 learners) being unemployed (either seeking employment or unable to work at the time).
- 1.2 Of all adult enrolments 91.7% successfully completed their course or workshop. Over 65 percent of learners sampled post course either progressed to further learning (at a higher level), undertook volunteering locally or enter employment.
- 1.3 The overall number of course enrolments during 2020/21 continued to be negatively impacted again by the national pandemic with a reduction of 1,443 or 33 percent. Following on from the 2019/20 academic year; a blended delivery model has continued in to the 2020/21 academic year for course delivery as necessary with great success.
- 1.4 Areas of the service requiring improvement during this academic year (2021/22) include engaging more learners on core provisions (maths, English and digital) to facilitate improved destinations and develop approaches to improve Family Language learner engagement.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Other reporting points in the academic year were considered but were discounted due to service performance data not being validated. Annual reporting includes validated performance data.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Council's Lifelong Learning Service offers entry and lower-level learning (up to level 2) which supports local employment and skills priorities and wider social and economic outcomes, as follows:
 1. Maximise the employability of Wirral residents through delivery of a range of programmes that support people to progress into work.
 2. Deliver learning and skills programmes that are responsive to Wirral employer and residents' needs.
 3. Deliver social well-being (including health) and economic outcomes.
 4. Deliver outstanding teaching, learning and assessment.
 5. Inspire and promote ambition for all learners to succeed and progress; and promote equality and diversity throughout all aspects of the learner journey.
 6. Support and develop 3rd sector organisations across the borough in the delivery of quality education provision. Facilitating capacity building and underpinning Social Value outcomes

- 3.2 In order for the Lifelong Learning Service to achieve the above priorities, the following 2019/20 objectives were reviewed and deemed to still be relevant for implementation in 2020/21:
- a. Implementation of a community-based learning offer that is responsive to local needs, recognising its importance to social and economic inclusion across the Wirral.
 - b. Development of clear and effective local progression pathways from non-accredited learning; to accredited learning, improve signposting and referrals, and measure impact and progression across Wirral and the Liverpool City Region, on to further education and/or employment/enterprise.
 - c. Offer targeted, local learning and skills provision that meets the current and future skills needs of Wirral employers.
 - d. Focus grant funding on people who are hard to reach, disadvantaged and least likely to participate.
 - e. Maximize the funding, resources and sharing of practice through local partnership working and third sector commissioned provisions.
 - f. Continually developing a universal community learning offer through a range of direct and commissioned (where appropriate) delivery.

3.3 **2020/21 Service and Curriculum Developments**

3.4 Learning in Deprived Communities Projects. For 2020/21 the Service expanded prioritise in 2020/21 and subcontracted key provision to a range of providers, mostly Third Sector, to engage the hardest to reach in Wirral's more deprived communities. The investment value of the subcontract was £99,576 and 14 providers were procured. The 2020/21 providers included: Amber Button, Bee Wirral, Belvidere Centre, Building Learning, Creating Careers, Earth Moves, Ferries Family Group, Health Junction, Future Yard, Next Chapter, The Arch Initiative, Tranmere Rovers, Wirral Environmental Network and Youth Federation.

3.5 The projects focused on four main themes:

1. **Pre-employability skills, Volunteering, and qualifications.** Offering a range of Entry, Level 1 (and where appropriate L2) qualifications, that supported adults seeking employment and/or access to the voluntary sector. The aim of the qualifications was to bolster an individual's CV, raise their aspirations and help them gain the skills that will make employment or volunteering an attainable prospect.
2. **Mental Health & Wellbeing.** Offering a range of courses that address issues of Mental Health, Mental Health awareness and Wellbeing *with a specific focus on recovery models*. The imperative being on encouraging and enabling learners to progress and develop through an understanding of their current situation and providing the tools for them to plan for their future.
3. **Environmental, Horticulture and Working Outdoors.** Offering a range of courses that promote vocational opportunities in Horticulture, Environmental and working outdoors. These courses were targeted at individuals who had an interest in working outdoors and developing a range of skills to help them progress and develop towards employment and/or volunteering opportunities.

4. Family & Parents: Reaching and engaging parents and families who need support across a range of indicators including basic skills. The aim was to provide a range of quality adult learning opportunities in local venues across the Wirral, so that individuals who would otherwise find it difficult to engage have a 'first rung' opportunity close to home.

- 3.6** Across the four themes 544 learner enrolments were recorded with 63% being from Wirral's (a) top 20 percent most deprived wards and (b) 62 percent of the adults were recorded as unemployed at point of enrolment. This cohort of learners enrolled on 850 courses.
- 3.6** Working in true partnership with key third sector providers enables the service to add real social value through, (a) capacity building and engaging the providers in council adult education funded professional development and upskilling for their staff, (b) support and feedback with education delivery, and (c) financial capacity building through appropriately procured council funded delivery contracts.
- 3.7** Pre-vocational Curriculum. New entry qualification pathways were introduced in 2017/18 and built on in 2020/21. Learners start and engage with taster workshops in Sewing Skills, Sign Language, Gardening or Floristry and progress to non-accredited provision followed by an accredited Skills for Further Learning and Employment qualification. The qualifications are planned and delivered to meet specific local skills needs of residents. This type of skills provision supports pathways into lower and entry level jobs that are available across Wirral and the City Region. All courses include appropriate embedded English and Maths outcomes.
- 3.8** Digital Skills. The service has worked alongside the Jobcentre to develop approaches for delivery of Essential Digital Skills for their client groups. The objective being to assist residents to make eligible online benefit claims and apply for jobs. The Community Digital Skills curriculum also offered E-safety, Easy Steps, Level 1 Functional Skills IT, and IT Fundamentals.
- 3.9** Provision of English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programmes. The service has always offered pre-entry, entry 1, 2 and 3 non accredited courses for ESOL learners but this key curriculum area has grown significantly in the last 4 years. The number of ESOL qualifications achieved in 2020/21 was 102.
- 3.10** The ability to speak English is a skill required to secure employment, but it is also a fundamental part of improving integration and developing greater community cohesion. ESOL courses are designed for learners who are outside the labour market because of language and skills barriers, have little or no English skills, and want to develop their skills and confidence in reading, writing, listening, and speaking English. This target group of learners may also face with literacy issues in their own language.
- 3.11** In 2020/21 the service continued to work in partnership with Refugee Action and DWP to support the Syrian Refugees Resettlement Programme. A significant proportion of the Syrian new arrivals are pre - literate in their first language so they are learning to read and write for the first time as adults in a new language as well as learning to speak the language. Additionally, the service has continued working in

partnership with the Council’s Minority Ethnic Achievement Service through a volunteering project aimed at supporting the Refugee families in schools.

- 3.12 English, Maths and Family Learning. Qualifications currently on offer include accredited English and Maths steppingstone units and awards, Functional Skills Maths and English level 1 and 2, Equality & Diversity Level 1 and Community Volunteering Level 1 and 2. The pandemic at times continued to present delivery challenges as venues closed and digital access barriers were addressed. The final number of English qualifications achieved was 147 (+35% compared to 2019/20) and the number of Maths qualifications achieved was 77 (+30% compared to 2019/20).
- 3.13 Family Learning was incorporated into the English and Maths curriculum area in 2019/20 offering a clear pathway for parents to progress from a 2-hour non-accredited workshop to a full level 2 Functional Skill qualification. Family learning encourages family members to learn together as and within a family, with a focus on intergenerational learning. Family learning activities are specifically designed to enable parents to learn how to support their children’s learning. Family learning is a powerful method of engagement and learning which can foster positive attitudes towards life-long learning, promote socio-economic resilience and challenge educational disadvantage. Adults often start their own learning journey through Family Learning. Access to family learning has continued to be challenge in this academic year with limited access to primary schools due to Covid risk assessments. The number of enrolments for Family Learning in 2020/21 academic year was 298.
- 3.14 The LCR Combined Authority provided additional funding through AEB for three innovative Test and Learn pilots. The pilots tested new methods of delivery not restricted to current qualifications or formularised rates of payment but tailored to delivery of provision to address skills needs more effectively in the Liverpool City Region.

Test and Learn Pilot	Number of Enrolments	Disadvantage ward - top 20% IMD	No qualifications at entry
ESOL	136	91%	70%
Digital	33	70%	37%
Literacy/numeracy	47	48%	41%

(Source: TERMS Lifelong Learning System, 2022)

- 3.15 Key developments and priorities for 2020/21. The LCR Combined Authority (CA), as devolved grant funders of the service, have established several broad priorities to help shape 2020/21 curriculum delivery. The LCR CA priorities are aligned to the Liverpool City Region Skills Investment Strategy priorities. The service has also shared and agreed a number of local priorities and an integrated delivery plan.

- 3.16 The LCR CA have asked LCR council Adult Learning Services and Further Education Colleges in receipt of the adult education budget (AEB) grant funding to prioritise the following: (1) adults aged 19-24, (2) adults aged 50- 59, (3) long term unemployed adults, (4) lone parents, (5) those adults with no qualifications and, (6) ex-military personnel.
- 3.17 Quality improvement priorities that have emerged following the self-assessment process using the current Ofsted Education Framework for Learning and Skills include: (i) Curriculum intent, impact, and implementation, (ii) staff wellbeing, and (iii) learner progression and destination.
- 3.18 Response to the National Pandemic – Access to online courses and materials has continued to be supported through the utilisation of access grant funds made available by the LCR Combined Authority. The service has established a laptop and data loan scheme so that those learners who are digitally disadvantaged or excluded can continue their learning during national lockdown and/or individual isolation periods as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic.
- 3.19 Learners have been extremely grateful that the funding has been available to purchase laptops for them to use during the lockdown. Every learner who loaned a laptop has immensely valued the equipment. Those who did not have any suitable device at home to use would not have been able to continue to participate in classes, those learners who live alone would have been further isolated and disadvantaged.
- 3.20 Tutors have been able to keep learners on track with their courses, adapt delivery for those who are home-schooling and pushed for time, and set and receive home study which otherwise would have been impossible. This has motivated learners, kept them engaged in learning and provided a focus for some in difficult times.
- 3.19 Finally, learner enrolment and marketing approaches have been further enhanced in 2020/21 with a new Facebook page, with a growing subscriber base, which receives regular updates and links to a new online course registration portal.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implication to be noted relating to this report. The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority reintroduced minimum financial performance thresholds for formula funded provisions in the 2020/21 academic year. The Council's Lifelong Learning Service performance was in an over performance position requiring no mid or end of year return of funding.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 There are no resource implications arising from this report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 There are no risks to the Council arising from this report.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 The views and experiences of learners are captured by tutors at the end of every course and analysed by service managers. This important service user feedback is used to inform quality improvements and curriculum changes.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and published and can be found using the link below:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Consideration of the climate emergency is intrinsic to Lifelong Learning in several ways from; for example, understanding healthy cooking and diet (reduced red meat, sugar, and salt), increasing a plant-based diet, to growing your own sustainable produce via a community allotment.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The Council Lifelong Learning Service will continue to target its grant resources and educational delivery at those families and adults in the borough's most deprived communities. The service will also target those adults with low or no educational attainment to enable them to better access employment and raise aspirations.

11.2 Within the 2022/23 academic year up to 10 percent of the Council's Adult Education Budget will also be commissioned out to local third sector providers engaging with vulnerable adults in deprived communities. Additional support will also be provided to those organisations to help them to develop their capacity to deliver good quality education services.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

LCRCA AEB Funding Rules 2020-2021
LCRCA Allocations 2020-2021

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD	9th February 2022
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE	13th September 2021
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	28th January 2020