



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 22nd January 2025

REPORT TITLE:	OVERVIEW OF ACADEMIC YEAR 2023/24 COUNCIL LIFELONG LEARNING SERVICE ADULT EDUCATION DELIVERY
REPORT OF:	ELIZABETH HARTLEY, DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION SERVICES

REPORT SUMMARY

This Lifelong Learning Service update report sets out the service's developments, summary of delivery and learner achievements in the 2023/24 academic year (AY).

Grant funding received from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority was £1,173,362.

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, the service has the capacity to support the most disadvantaged, working on difficult issues and using innovative approaches for example, supporting community cohesion, Family Hubs, the resettlement programme, family learning in schools, and improving mental health and wellbeing through learning.

The 2023/24 academic year was very challenging for the service with further growth in qualification course delivery, new test and learn projects plus continuation of the MULTIPLY maths intervention support programme.

The Lifelong Learning Service was inspected by Ofsted, June 2024, and maintained 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 2023 – 2027. These themes include (1) Early help for children and families through the delivery of high-quality education for adults and families, (2) Promoting independence and healthier lives through a curriculum focus on wellbeing and positive mental health, (3) Safe, resilient and engaged communities through targeted engagement of adults and families in the Borough's most deprived communities / ward areas, and (4) Protect our environment through courses and provisions that include engagement with community allotments and themes including environmental sustainability.

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough.

This is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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 and families in Wirral's more deprived communities during 2023/24.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The Lifelong Service enrolled 2,135 adults on a range of over 4,420 education courses or workshops during 2023/24 academic year. Of those adults that enrolled on courses and workshops 63 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 73.3% (1,565 learners) being unemployed (either seeking employment or unable to work at the time).
- 1.2 Of all adult community learning enrolments 92.04% courses were successfully completed. Over 87% of learners sampled post course either progressed to further learning (at a higher level), undertook volunteering locally or accessed employment.
- 1.3 Areas of the service requiring improvement as identified during the June 2024 Ofsted inspection included (1) Improve achievement rates on the few courses where they are too low, (2) use quality assurance processes to bring about greater consistency in terms of tutors' teaching practices and their compliance with key service procedures, and (3) provide up-to-date and evidence-based professional development for tutors so they can continue to develop their teaching skills.

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 get ready or 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, diversity and inclusion throughout all aspects of the learner journey.
- 3.2 **2023/24 Service and Curriculum Developments**
- 3.3 Learning in Deprived Communities Projects. This Lifelong Learning approach is to support and develop Third Sector organisations across the borough in the delivery of quality education provision. Facilitating capacity building and underpinning Social

Value outcomes. In 2023/24 the Service expanded priorities in 2023/24 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 £180,150 and thirteen providers were procured. The 2023/24 providers included: Amber Button, Bee Wirral, Three D Training, Be Well, Crea8ing Careers, Earth Moves, FTW, Next Chapter, Wirral Environmental Network, Wirral Mind, Youth Federation and Building Learning.

3.4 The projects focused on three 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 emphasis 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, environment 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.

3.5 Across the three themes 821 learner enrolments were recorded with 56 percent being from Wirral's (a) top 20 percent most deprived wards and (b) 61.5 percent of the adults were recorded as unemployed at point of enrolment. This cohort of learners enrolled on 1,357 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 Direct Delivery Pre-vocational Curriculum. 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 Third Sector Organisations and Jobcentre Plus 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, EDSQ Entry 3 and Level 1, and IT Fundamentals.

- 3.9 Provision of direct delivery English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programmes. 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. The service offers pre-entry, entry 1, 2 and 3, and Level 1 non-accredited courses and qualifications. The total number of enrolments for 2023/24 was 1174, with 60 percent from the top 10 percent most deprived wards (75 percent from the top 20 percent most deprived wards), 84 percent recorded as unemployed, 65 percent with no qualifications on entry. The overall achievement rate was 91 percent. This key curriculum area has continued to grow in 2023/24 with the number of individual ESOL learners increasing by 45% from 279 in 2021/22 to 404 in 2023/24. Additionally, learners develop wider skills and knowledge, improve their confidence and social involvement in the community.
- 3.10 English, Maths and Family Learning. English and maths delivery is initially non accredited leading to a pathway of stepping stone accredited units/ awards and progressing to Functional Skills qualifications. A total number of 211 enrolments were recorded for English and maths, including 64 qualifications. This is a 77% increase from 119 enrolments in 2023. We are continuing to raise the profile of English and maths through MULTIPLY and the Literacy Test and Learn pilot.
- 3.11 Family Learning encourages family members to learn together with a focus on intergenerational learning. Outcomes are specifically designed to enable parents to learn how to support their children's learning, improve wellbeing, develop confidence and skills. Delivery includes Bread Making Skills, Cooking on a Budget, Bake and Taste, Calm and Create, Family Arts and Positive Emotional Resilience. Achievement is 97% with 146 enrolments recorded.
- 3.12 Key developments and priorities for 2024/25 academic year. The 2024/25 academic year has seen significant national funding policy change with transition to Tailored Learning and Adult Skills Funding. The council's approach to curriculum for 2024/25 remains similar to 2023/24 being based around four key pillars with areas including Community and Family Progression seeing expected expansion: (1) Wellbeing and Independence, (2) Community and Family Progression, (3) English, Maths and Digital, and (4) ESOL. The provision plan is predicated on learner need and engagement (predominantly) with identified pathways for progression.
- 3.13 The council's Lifelong Learning Service was inspected in June 2024. The inspection was a positive process for the service with Ofsted undertaking deep dives into preparation for employment, IT / Digital, ESOL, and teaching assistant courses. This is in addition to also inspecting careers support, subcontracted provisions, safeguarding and leadership and management.
- 3.14 A copy of the Ofsted feedback letter can be found in the appendices. Ofsted noted that tutors are knowledgeable about their subject, learning is planned and sequenced, almost all learners achieve, learners with additional learning needs receive the support that they need, and learners have access to relevant and

impartial careers education, information, advice and guidance, finally, arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- 3.15 Headline quality improvement priorities that emerged following the Ofsted short inspection include: (1) Improve achievement rates on the few courses where they are too low, (2) Use quality assurance processes to bring about greater consistency in terms of tutors' teaching practices and their compliance with key service procedures, and (3) Provide up-to-date and evidence-based professional development for tutors so they can continue to develop their teaching skills.

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 2023/24 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 The Council Lifelong Learning Service and any subcontracted providers must comply with the Conditions of Funding grant and AEB funding guidance documents for academic year 2023/24. Failure to comply may result is a bad audit and subsequent funding clawback.
- 7.2 There are no significant risks identified with the key decisions set out in this report.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Consultation and engagement with service users and providers is focused on the programme content, access, and the quality of delivery and integral to service planning and review; this is undertaken throughout the academic year.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision, or activity.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Lifelong Learning provisions are delivered in areas of the borough experiencing significant social and economic disadvantage and the curriculum focus will also specifically promote and support positive responses to many of the impacts within climate adaptation, particularly energy, waste, water, food, and homes.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Sufficient and appropriate entry level community-based learning opportunities for all Wirral resident adults is fundamental. Inactive and unemployed adults must be supported and encouraged to develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours required to enable them to access local jobs, support their families, have good health and wellbeing as well as supporting local economic growth.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Ofsted Short Inspection Feedback Letter, 5th and 6th June 2024

Appendix 2: Case Study – Academic Year 2023/24 – Lisa Davies

BACKGROUND PAPERS

LCR AEB Funding Rules 2023/24

Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022

FE and Skills Handbook, Ofsted

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Children, Young People and Education Committee in accordance with Section B of its Terms of Reference, the functions and powers conferred on or exercisable by the Council as Local Authority in relation to the provision of education.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE	21st June 2023
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE	19th July 2022
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE	13th September 2021