

# Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel

28 January 2020

<b>Report title</b>	Adult Education Service: Strategy, Offer and Outcomes 2019-20	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Michael Hardacre Education and Skills	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All	
<b>Accountable director</b>	Richard Lawrence, Strategic Director Regeneration	
<b>Originating service</b>	Adult Education	
<b>Accountable employee(s)</b>	Joanne Keatley	Head of Adult Education
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<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Regeneration Leadership Team	14 January 2020

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## Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Scrutiny Panel is recommended to:

1. Provide feedback on the suitability of the strategy, learning offer and outcomes for residents
2. Comment and advise on current and future Adult Education Service challenges

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the scrutiny panel with an overview of the adult education strategy, offer and outcomes for residents, highlighting future opportunities and challenges.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The Further Education sector is divided into FE Colleges, Adult and Community Learning Providers and Training Providers. Adult Education Wolverhampton (AEW) is an Adult and Community Learning (ACL) provider. The ACL sector has a distinct focus and purpose enshrined in lifelong learning and the wider benefits of learning. Most ACL providers have a mixed portfolio of funding for skills and funding for community learning. This positions them to make a valuable contribution to agendas such as health and well-being, qualifications and skills, employment and community cohesion.
- 2.2 The City of Wolverhampton Council receives just over £3m annually from the Department for Education via the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to provide the Adult Education Service. The funding is split equally between funding for qualifications and skills and funding for Community Learning, which tends to be non-qualification based. The WMCA is conducting a piece of work, looking at the value for money of Community Learning and the funding methodology may change as a result. This is causing concern amongst Local Authority providers, as indications are that it will be reduced, and the stability of provision could be affected. There is a task and finish group established but a definitive timescale has not been established.
- 2.3 The service also has an Advanced Learner Loans facility for learners aged 24+ undertaking an eligible level 3 qualification. The service also receives a very small amount of funding from the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for learners aged 16 to 18 years.
- 2.4 AEW's funding is for adults aged 19 and over. AEW's unique position as an ACL provider affords it the opportunity to attract adults who are returning to learning and seeking a safe, discrete learning environment with other adult learners. AEW offer allows adults to be the primary focus and caters specifically for their needs rather than those of young people. Adults who register for the service are well supported, often overcoming health and specific learning barriers that they have had since school or developed in early adulthood.
- 2.4 The City Learning Quarter (CLQ) will be developed around the Old Hall Street area of the city centre. It will include a City of Wolverhampton College campus, the council's Adult Education Service, and the Central Library. The aim is to improve the offer to all users of the library, college and adult education provision. The City Learning Quarter will also see investment in the public realm as part of Wolverhampton's regeneration programme.
- 2.5 The College and Council recognise the potential benefits from working together to integrate the adult learning offer to maximise the opportunities for residents and will work together to create seamless pathways for students to progress into and between.

2.6 The Service received an Ofsted inspection, under the new Education Inspection Framework (EIF), in November 2019, it received an overall effectiveness grade of Good and graded good in all areas. The service was graded Outstanding for Personal Development. The Service will develop a robust Post Inspection Action Plan to address the areas for improvement highlighted by Ofsted.

### 3.0 Adult Education Strategy

3.1 **The mission of the service is ‘to make a positive difference to the lives of individuals and communities through high quality learning that inspires, challenges and leads to further learning and employment’.**

3.2 In realising this mission, the service aims to impact on three of the Councils’ strategic outcomes:

- well skilled people working in an inclusive economy;
- strong resilient and healthy communities and children
- young people get the best possible start in life.

The West Midlands Combined Authority’s Strategic Economic Plan and the Council’s Strategic Economic Plan both provide a backdrop to the service aims, particularly the need to contribute to inclusive growth and provide residents more opportunities to position themselves to take advantage of a more prosperous city.

3.3 To impact on the strategic outcomes of the Council and aims of the WMCA the Service uses key demographic data along with information on the labour market trends to inform the planning and delivery of the offer to residents. Wolverhampton is an area of extreme and multiple deprivations. Key facts for Wolverhampton from the Black Country Consortium, Economic Intelligence Unit, January 2019 include:

- 15.5% of residents have no qualifications compared to 7.6% in England. To bridge the gap a further 12,693 Wolverhampton residents would need to gain a recognised qualification.
- 26% of residents hold a qualification at level 4 or above compared with 38% of people in England. A further 19,312 Wolverhampton residents would need to achieve a level 4 qualification to reach the England level.
- The highest proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the Black Country live in Wolverhampton, which at 40% is 12% higher than the national average.
- 5.3% of the working age population claimed unemployment benefit in March 2019, which is 2% higher than the England average.
- 49% of residents coming from BAME backgrounds
- The Experian Literacy Score mapping project (2016), within the 533 Parliamentary constituencies in England, ranked Wolverhampton South East and Wolverhampton North East as being 9<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> respectively in having the greatest literacy need.
- Numeracy skill levels reported in 2011 showed 58.6% of Wolverhampton residents as being below level 1, as compared against 49.1% in England. Having numeracy skills

below level 1 means a person may not be able to understand price labels or pay household bills.

- 3.4 The curriculum strategy focuses on attracting residents from deprived communities, with low levels of skills and qualifications and high levels of unemployment. The curriculum is designed to widen participation in learning particularly for those furthest from the labour market; offer opportunities to improve health and well-being, putting people in a better position to move towards employment and provide people with the qualifications, skills and attitudes needed by employers today.
- 3.5 In 2019-20, the service has tried a new strategy to widen participation further in deprived communities by subcontracting some provision to third sector providers who are directly delivering to residents in their communities. The aim is for these learners to progress into AEW learning opportunities in the City centre.
- 3.6 The curriculum strategy ensures AEW works hard and purposefully to provide an inclusive learning environment to support its impact on individuals and their communities. Its endeavours to be inclusive are supported by well-developed, productive partnerships internally within the Council, and externally with a range of public, private and third sector organisations, including City of Wolverhampton College, the City of Wolverhampton University, Schools, Strengthening Families Hubs, Job Centre Plus, the Refugee and Migrant Centre and the Learning Platform.
- 3.7 The curriculum strategy includes managing efficiency and value for money through effective and integrated use of all funding streams, income from student fees, income from small projects and income from work with employers. Annual curriculum planning includes scrutinising efficiency indicators such as class size, teaching hours utilised, room and building usage.
- 3.8 The curriculum strategy aims to support those in low paid work who are aiming to improve their skills to access higher paid work. The service provides core qualifications such as English, maths and ESOL in the evening to enable those in daytime work to study in the evening. And in ESOL we have a project to test a more flexible offer for shift workers, who struggle to attend regularly and miss too much content to achieve their qualifications.
- 3.9 To support the lifelong learning agenda and the concept that learning throughout life is good for health and well-being, but to remain within funding priorities, the Service offers a suite of 'Club Classes'. These classes are not funded by Government; the tutors are self-employed and the students all pay. Adult Education's role is to support with aspects such as marketing and facilities.

#### **4.0 The Curriculum Offer**

- 4.1 In line with the need in the City, the service has developed strengths in areas such as English, maths and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) alongside vocational provision at level 2 and below and provision specifically designed for those

with mental health issues and learning disabilities. The service also provides opportunities for adults to enter higher education after following an Access to Higher Education programme or other Level 3 courses.

- 4.2 To ensure we attract residents with low and no skills the curriculum offer provides multiple entry points from community engagement activity, which is likely to be non-qualification based, through entry level and up to level 2, 3 and above.
- 4.3 Following engagement the curriculum is designed to offer linear and non-linear pathways to take adults through to meaningful outcomes including employment and further learning with AEW or other FE and HE providers. Examples of linear pathways would include progression from entry level, in a subject such as maths or English, up through the levels to GCSE in the same subject. Non-linear progression would be a student starting their journey studying, for example, a basic skill such as English or Maths but then moving sideways to a vocational subject such as Health and Social Care or Supporting Teaching and Learning in school.
- 4.4 Given the low levels of literacy and numeracy skills for adults in the City and the importance of these skills to function well in work, community and society, the AEW curriculum concentrates on improving these skills from many angles. It is designed to provide English and Maths development discretely, as part of a learning package, embedded in vocationally/employability packages and in targeted support workshops.
- 4.5 Typically, following Careers, Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG), adult learners interested in re-entering the labour market, or looking to change/improve their earning power, follow multiple courses. These are packaged as a 'Programme of Study', taken concurrently or sequentially and inclusive of English, maths and ICT. The vocational areas of study would include health and social care, supporting teaching and learning in schools, business administration and customer service. The package would also aim to improve their employability with additional relevant qualifications in areas such as food hygiene, paediatric first aid and first aid at work.
- 4.6 AEW offers provision designed for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities. There are two key pathways one designed to maintain skills and gain independent living skills and the other designed to progress skills sufficiently to gain greater independence, maintain for gain voluntary work or move towards paid employment.
- 4.7 The AEW 'Like Minds' programme supports individuals with mental health difficulties. They are referred to the programme by their GP or other health professional. The programme concentrates on practical creative and craft-based activities, whilst building self-confidence, self-esteem, friendships and resilience.
- 4.8 In partnership with schools and children's centres, the service offers family learning opportunities targeted at those parents whose children are at risk of low attainment. The aim is to support adults to engage with their children's education but also to encourage adults to take-up further learning for themselves.

- 4.9 In partnership with the University AEW offers five Access to Higher Education pathways. These include Access to Health Studies, Access to Music Technology and Access to Social Science. A pre-access course has been designed to provide a pathway and support those not ready to take the full Access programme.

## **5.0 Outcomes for Students**

### **Participation**

- 5.1 As a result of the service's strategy and curriculum offer it is important to measure success by looking at whether the service has attracted the students it intended to and to evaluate if those students were successful in achieving a positive progression to further learning or a positive destination if appropriate.
- 5.2 In 2018-19, the service attracted 2933 students, which was an 8% increase on the previous academic year. The increase was primarily achieved through a planned focus on increasing enrolments and value for money in the Community Learning Funding stream. Of these 84% were residents in Wolverhampton and 92% resident in the West Midlands with the remainder living on the borders primarily of Shropshire where travel to learn in Wolverhampton is good.
- 5.3 In 2018-19, of the students it attracted 31% were unemployed and looking for work, which was a 5% decrease on the previous academic year. However, the service increased the number of employed students it attracted by 5% and most of these students were on a low income.
- 5.4 In 2018-19, 58% of students had no or low qualifications (below level 2), which was a 1% increase on the previous academic year.
- 5.5 In 2018-19, 55% of students lived in the 9 most deprived wards, which was consistent with the previous year and 30% lived in the top 10% of Lower Super Output Areas in the City, 1% higher than the previous academic year. The offer will be further refined to continue to increase the proportion of residents engaging in learning from Lower Super Output Areas.
- 5.6 In 2018-19, 23% of students declared a learning difficulty or disability and of these 115 declared a mental health issue. This is consistent with the previous academic year.
- 5.5 In 2018-19 the service delivered 205 qualification courses and 189 community learning courses. 49% of these were at entry level, 18% at level 1 (pre-GCSE), 13% at level 2 (GCSE A-C equivalent), 13% at level 3 and above and 7% on mixed levels.

5.6 In 2018-19, of the 4464 enrolments onto qualification courses, 24% were for students studying English as their second language, 22% were studying vocational qualifications including health and social care, supporting teaching and learning in schools, business administration and creative subjects, 19% were studying English, 17% were studying maths.

### **Achievements**

5.7 In 2018-19 overall achievement for students on qualification and skills courses was 90% against a benchmark for similar providers of 86%. For Community Learning the achievement was 98% against a benchmark of 85%. All broad subject sector areas achievement rates were above provider benchmark and the majority were between 5% and 10% above.

5.8 When analysing individual qualification types most were above the provider benchmark. However, basic skills maths was 9% below the benchmark and is a focus for targeted improvement in this academic year.

5.9 When scrutinising levels, entry and level one provision together are 4% above the benchmark, level 3 is 7% above and level 5 provision, which is small, is 18% above. However, level 2 provision is 2% below the benchmark, primarily because of the maths provision.

5.10 Achievement for those students from the 9 most deprived wards were 1% below the overall Service achievement rate of 90%. For those in the 10% most deprived wards there was a 2% gap. This will be investigated further to understand better action that may need to be taken.

5.11 There were no discernible gaps in achievement between gender, ethnic groups or those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

### **Destinations and benefits of learning**

5.12 In 2018-19, based on 892 responses to the Next Steps survey, 33% of students reported a positive employment outcome with 5% gaining full-time employment, 10% part-time, 5% became self-employed and 13% gained a promotion or better job. This shows a steady upward trend over the past three years, although the percentage going into full-time employment dropped by 4% this year.

5.13 In addition to the employment outcomes, the Next Steps survey also showed that because of engaging in learning: 79% of students increased their personal confidence, 44% improved their social life, 13% improved their physical health and 26% reported improved mental health.

5.14 Wider outcomes measured by the Next Steps survey include 31% of students saying they had become more involved in their child's education, 31% said they had improved their

confidence in parenting skills, 17% have become more involved in their local community and 11% entered or continued to volunteer.

5.15 For the first time the Service engaged an external company to telephone those students who had left the Service in 2018-19 and not returned to Adult Education in the next academic year. 809 students were successfully contacted, and this was 3-months after they had finished their studies. It showed that 48% were in paid employment of 16 hours or more and 7% in employment of 16 hours or less. A further 7% were in full-time further education and 7% were in Higher Education. Finally, 16% were not employed but looking for work, and 14% were not in paid employment and not looking for work.

## **6.0 Questions for Scrutiny to consider**

6.1 Does the panel have recommendations for the Service to consider developing to enhance its offer or outcomes for residents?

## **7.0 Financial implications**

7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report (HM/20012020/L)

## **8.0 Legal implications**

8.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report (TS/16012020/S)

## **9.0 Equalities implications**

9.1 There are no known equalities implications arising from this report.

## **10.0 Climate change and environmental implications**

10.1 There are no known environmental implications arising from this report.

## **11.0 Health and Wellbeing Implications**

11.1 If Community Learning funding was significantly reduced it may impact on the Service's ability to provide health and well-being related programmes.

## **12.0 Human resources implications**

12.1 There are no known human resources implications arising from this report.

## **13.0 Corporate landlord implications**

13.1 There are no known corporate landlord implications arising from this report.

## **14.0 Schedule of background papers**

14.1 There are no background papers to this report.