



**CABINET – 6 JULY 2018**

**STRATEGY FOR LEICESTERSHIRE ADULT LEARNING  
SERVICE 2018-22**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES**

**PART A**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet of the outcome of a public consultation exercise on the draft strategy for Leicestershire Adult Learning Service 2018-22 and to seek approval of a revised strategy which is attached to this report as an appendix.

**Recommendations**

2. It is recommended that:
  - a) The outcome of the consultation on the draft strategy for Leicestershire Adult Learning Service 2018-22 be noted;
  - b) The strategy for Leicestershire Adult Learning Service 2018-22, appended to the report, be approved.

**Reasons for Recommendations**

3. The publication of a strategy will provide the basis for planning, commissioning and delivering adult learning services for the next four years and will be the first published strategy for this service. The strategy, which sets out the strategic goals for the service, will contribute to a range of strategic objectives, in particular, the County Council's Strategic Plan 2018–22 "Working together for the benefit of everyone"

**Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)**

4. The Cabinet and Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee both considered the draft strategy at their respective meetings in March 2018.

**Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

5. The relevant policy framework includes:
  - Working together for the benefit of everyone: Leicestershire County Council's Strategic Plan 2018-22;

- Working together to build great communities: Leicestershire County Council's Communities Strategy 2017-21;
  - Promoting Independence, Supporting Communities: Our vision and strategy for Adult Social Care 2016-2020: Leicestershire County Council;
  - Providing Less Supporting More: Our vision and strategy for Communities and Wellbeing 2016-2020: Leicestershire County Council.
6. The County Council's Strategic Plan 2018-22 outlines the long-term vision for the organisation and for Leicestershire. It sets out an approach which will put outcomes for people first, support integration across the Council's services and make better use of the total resources available. The proposed strategy for Leicestershire Adult Learning Service (LALS) would support four of the Plan's five strategic outcomes: Strong Economy, Wellbeing and Opportunity, Keeping people safe and Great Communities.
  7. The priorities in the Council's Communities Strategy 2017-21 include helping communities to work with public services to design and deliver better outcomes for the people of Leicestershire, and to support the voluntary and community sector to provide services and activities. The strategy seeks to support this by the provision of locally based learning activity aimed at improving learner confidence and skill base so that they may be better equipped to become more integrated in their local community.
  8. Leicestershire's strategy for adult social care places a focus on enhancing people's independence so that they are healthier, stronger, more resilient and less reliant on formal social care services. The strategy for LALS would support this focus by the provision of learning activity that enhances people's sense of health and wellbeing, combat social isolation and so contribute to preventing/delaying an early requirement for formal social care services.
  9. The strategy for LALS will sit alongside Leicestershire's Communities and Wellbeing Strategy as LALS is a constituent part of that service. LALS will continue to deliver part of its learning programme through the Council's network of public libraries and develop the natural alliance between libraries and learning.
  10. On 3 March 2018, the Cabinet approved a period of consultation and engagement with learners and stakeholders.

### **Resource Implications**

11. LALS is funded on a payment-by-results basis through the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). The current budget is approximately £5m for both expenditure and income resulting in a nil net budget requirement. In addition LALS can be commissioned as a provider of complementary services. An example of this is the NHS where a nutrition programme is funded. There are no specific resource implications relating to the overarching strategy.
12. The LALS budget draws down on a payment by results basis from the ESFA. The source of its funding is through ESFA's Adult Education Budget (£4.3 million).
13. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the content of this report.

**Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

14. This report has been circulated to all Members of the County Council via the Members' News in Brief.

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**PART B****Background****National Policy and Financial Issues**

15. The Education Act 1996 confers a power on the local authority to provide adult education. Section 15B of the Act states that the local authority “may secure the provision for their area of full time or part time education suitable to the requirements of persons who have attained the age of 19, including provisions for persons for other areas”. This includes a range of training and leisure provision.
16. The Education and Skills Act 2018 gives local authorities the power to promote participation in education and/or training of persons belonging to its area.
17. Adult and community education provision is funded through the ESFA and is regulated through Ofsted.
18. A number of key national strategies inform the development and delivery of adult learning services. These are:
  - English Apprenticeships: Our 2020 Vision; Department of Business Innovation and Skills, Department of Education; Department of Business Innovation and Skills;
  - New Challenges New Chances: Further Education and Skills System Reform Plan 2011; Department of Business Innovation and Skills;
  - Skills for Sustainable Growth 2010; Department of Business Innovation and Skills;
  - HM Government Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain fit for the future (2017);
  - Careers strategy: making the most of everyone’s skills and talents (2017) Department for Education.
19. ESFA updated their guidance for community learning providers in May 2018 and priorities include:
  - Focusing funding on people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate;
  - Widening participation and transforming people destinies by supporting progression relevant to personal circumstances;
  - Developing stronger communities with more self-sufficient, connected and pro-active citizens;
  - Minimising overheads, bureaucracy and administration.

**The Local Picture**

20. The total population of the County is 682,957, with 77% of the population aged 20 or over (it is 76% for England). The population is ageing and becoming more ethnically diverse, including a significant Asian/Asian British population of 6% with much larger settlements in Oadby, Wigston, and Loughborough. There is also a small Eastern European community.
21. Leicestershire is predominantly rural by area, but urban by population with 70% living in the urban centres, 18% in town and fringe settlements, and 12% in rural areas.

22. There were a total of 4,840 Job Seeker Allowance and Universal Credit claimants in Leicestershire in April 2018.
23. Around 15%, or 5.1 million adults in England, can be described as 'functionally illiterate'. They would not pass an English GCSE and have literacy levels at or below those expected of an 11-year-old. They can understand short straightforward texts on familiar topics accurately and independently, and obtain information from everyday sources, but reading information from unfamiliar sources, or on unfamiliar topics, could cause problems.
24. LALS is an adult and community learning provider that operates across the county and sits within the Communities and Wellbeing Service of the Adults and Communities Department.
25. LALS aims to support people, communities and businesses to develop and engage in learning programmes to suit their needs with a particular focus on the following themes:
  - Families;
  - Skills and employment;
  - Health and wellbeing;
  - Independent living;
  - Community engagement and volunteering.
26. LALS' audience is predominantly aged 19 and over and the service curriculum is mainly part-time study programmes. The service employs 143 full time equivalent staff and delivered 1,037 courses during the 2016/17 academic year.
27. LALS provides a range of accredited and non-accredited learning programmes across 104 venues and delivers 33,000 guided learning hours (learning supported by a tutor) to approximately 6,000 learners. These range from traditional informal leisure and wellbeing type activity to more targeted skills-based work that focuses on those furthest from the jobs market, with an aim of preparing people for more formal learning and work. In 2016/17 the learning profile consisted of:
  - English and Maths tuition (24%);
  - ICT/Employability courses (16%);
  - Work-based learning (8%);
  - High needs for example learning disability and mental health (10%);
  - Family Learning (6%);
  - Personal development activities such as drawing, painting, textiles and cooking. (36%).
28. The service is regulated by Ofsted through the Common Inspection Framework. LALS underwent a full Ofsted inspection in 2015 and was rated as "Good". A short Ofsted inspection in February 2018 also resulted in a "Good" rating.

#### Local Strategic context

29. The proposed strategy for LALS is the first document that indicates how the service proposes to align itself strategically across a range of other key county strategies.

These include those listed in paragraphs 5 to 9 above and also partnership plans, such as:

- Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) Strategic Economic Plan (SEP);
- Leicestershire Rural Development Framework 2014-2020; Leicestershire Rural Partnership;
- Leicestershire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017-2022.

30. LALS contributes to a range of outcomes by:

- Developing learner skills and confidence so that they can progress in employment;
- Supporting low-skilled workers with English (including ESOL [English for Speakers of Other Languages], Maths and ICT);
- Providing information, advice and guidance on learning pathways;
- Helping learners make healthy lifestyle choices and gaining a sense of health and wellbeing;
- Providing local learning opportunities that bring people together to share learning experiences.
- Promoting a sense of community safety through the promotion of the British values (as required by the Department for Education since 2014 and assessed by Ofsted) of democracy, individual liberty, and tolerance of people with different faiths and beliefs.

### **Proposed Strategy for LALS**

31. The proposed strategy sets out how the service proposes to focus its activity to contribute towards four of the five key outcomes identified in the County Council's Strategic Plan - a Strong Economy, Wellbeing and Opportunity, Keeping People Safe and Great Communities - and become more targeted in opening up lifelong learning pathways for those for whom learning in the past may have been a barrier.

#### **Strong Economy**

32. Through a range of activity such as its apprenticeship programme, LALS can help learners develop the skills and confidence to progress along a career pathway, and make informed choices. The service will:

- provide access to good Information, Advice and Guidance to help people find the right learning opportunities;
- prioritise the delivery of core skills that employers value including English language, Maths and ICT;
- collaborate with partners to tailor employability programmes to meet the needs of unemployed people;
- develop partnerships with public and private sector employers to support the delivery of high quality apprenticeships and upskill the workforce;
- further develop links with employers to provide work experience opportunities;
- develop new programmes that provide more flexible ways for people to learn which include a mix of online and classroom based learning;

- tailor existing programmes to support people with learning difficulties and disabilities in work and volunteering.

### Wellbeing and opportunity

33. LALS provides leisure activity for which a fee is payable such as drawing, painting, textiles and cooking. These programmes can have an indirect impact on public health and social care agendas through tackling social isolation and improving an individual's sense of health and wellbeing. However, these activities may not be making a significant contribution to the strategic direction now being proposed and will be reviewed in light of this. The service will:

- refocus its less targeted programmes to support independence, confidence building, first steps learning and health and wellbeing;
- review and determine alternative funding avenues for any of the current range of courses that are more focussed towards leisure learning;
- embed volunteering and work experience in programmes to provide pathways to work;
- support vulnerable and disadvantaged people in developing independent living skills;
- develop 'first steps' provision to engage and support learners low in confidence and/or poor mental health.

### Keeping people safe

34. Safeguarding learners and promoting fundamental British values (as defined by the Department for Education) are prioritised through the Ofsted Common Inspections Framework. Adult learning provision must incorporate cross-cutting activity that ensures that learners feel safe and that fundamental British values are maintained. The service will:

- create a safe environment for learning;
- develop learners' confidence to enable them to speak up and share concerns about their safety or wellbeing;
- bring people together from different backgrounds to learn from each other and develop tolerance and understanding;
- embed the development of e-safety skills within learning activities.

### Great Communities

35. One of LALS' strengths, recognised by Ofsted, is that it delivers a programme of activity across over 100 local venues, making it well placed to contribute to building capacity in local areas and so contribute to the outcomes of the Council's Communities Strategy "Working together to build great communities". The service will:

- take account of and develop activity that complements existing work with volunteers provided by key stakeholders such as Voluntary Action Leicestershire (VAL);
- deliver programmes that develop the skills and confidence of people wishing to volunteer, for example skills to run local services;

- support volunteers and Community Learning Champions to act as advocates for adult learning in their local areas;
- create more effective links with community groups to help them access the expertise they require;
- utilise resources effectively by working in partnership with other services to plan and deliver courses including children and families, libraries, and social care.

### **Activity to Support the Delivery of the Strategy**

36. The sustainability of the service is maintained on a payment by results basis which draws funding from the ESFA. There may be opportunities to explore additional funding streams from other sources to add value to LALS core funding. The service priority will remain equality of access, but will also seek to raise income through programmes which can be delivered on a more commercial basis. To achieve these different objectives an effective fees policy will be essential to ensure those less able to pay have every opportunity to participate and gain from the benefits of learning.
37. LALS will continue to engage with its learners, partners and stakeholders to inform its continued development and the delivery of high quality programmes of learning through inspirational teaching and learning activity. It will provide appropriate information, advice and guidance to enable learners to make informed decisions about their future through a combination of online materials and face to face sessions for current or prospective learners in collaboration with other council initiatives. The following therefore needs to be put in place:
- an action plan identifying key areas of work to underpin the strategy;
  - an effective fees policy to ensure that those less able to pay have the opportunity to participate and gain from the benefits of learning;
  - an outcomes-based approach that measures the impact that programmes have on learners as they progress beyond contact with the service;
  - continuous reviews of programme areas to ensure that they meet needs;
  - continuous engagement with learners, partners and stakeholders to shape provision.

### **Engagement**

38. Engagement with learners and stakeholders on the draft strategy was undertaken from 2 April to 31 May 2018. Engagement comprised of:
- a feedback section on the County Council's "Have Your Say" webpage;
  - four learner voice guided discussions held at libraries and community colleges across the County;
  - a presentation of the draft strategy at the Work and Skills Group which brought together a range of internal and external stakeholders;
  - targeted mail to stakeholders including the County Council, LLEP, community colleges and academies, district councils and Leicester City Council's Adult Learning Service;
  - local staff meetings and briefings.



## Outcomes

39. Although response to the online “Have your say” webpage was low, a range of useful stakeholder feedback was received through targeted conversation with the following :
- County Council internal departments;
  - District Council representation;
  - Public Health;
  - LLEP;
  - Work and Skills Board.
40. In addition, valuable feedback was received through four “Learner Voice” sessions that targeted LALS learners across the County.
41. A summary of the main themes arising from this activity makes up the remainder of the report:

## Stakeholder Response

42. Feedback from the County Council (including the Chief Executive’s Department’s Economic Growth Team, Leicestershire Traded Services and Public Health) and the adult learning staff groups highlighted::
- support for the vision and key design principles of the strategy;
  - concern that there may be duplication with other areas of the County Council, for example, that undertaken by the Learning and Development Section;
  - the need to engage with external stakeholders such as the LLEP and learners;
  - closer liaison with community colleges and adult learning services in Leicester;
  - exploring how learners’ confidence can be channelled into making a wider contribution in their communities.
  - complement existing work with volunteers such as VAL.
43. A response from the LLEP outlined an emerging new area skills assessment; “Skills for the Future 2018-2030” that will be useful in informing the development of the Strategy. The new research will examine the changing patterns of employment and sectors across the LLEP area and inform their Local Industrial Strategy and careers provision. The information will be used for planning purposes by further education establishments, Skills providers and new skills advisory boards. The research is anticipated to be completed by July 2018.
44. A response from representation of Leicestershire Culture and Sport Chief Officer Partnership (CSCOPS) - representing district council leisure leads agreed with the strategic direction of the strategy and emphasised the importance of working alongside the seven districts councils as operational partners, particularly in the employment and skills agenda.

## Learner Response

45. Four learner voice workshops were held across the County to introduce the draft strategy to LALS learners and to hold conversations around the broad vision and strategic approach of the strategy. Feedback from the workshops identified the following::

- there was overall agreement with the vision and mission outlined in the strategy;
- there was a need to ensure that learning programmes were linked to workplaces and relevant to employee outcomes;
- there was acknowledgement that adult learning should also reflect community as well as vocational learning;
- It was important to recognise the importance of investment of skills in order for people to gain employment.
- support for developing a larger on-line learner offer to ensure that learners can use the web for distance working;
- the need to encourage and developing volunteering opportunities across the service;
- the importance of the right pricing for learning programmes;
- the value in developing partnerships with the NHS and adult social care for wellbeing programmes;
- the importance of ensuring that programmes are inclusive.

## **Conclusion**

46. Responses from the range of consultation and engagement activity undertaken reinforce a broad agreement and support of the strategic direction that is outlined in the draft strategy.
47. Based on responses received, a small number of amendments to the strategy have been incorporated into a revised final strategy. These are:
  - recognition of the Government’s Careers Strategy 2017;
  - shifting the focus of the personal wellbeing programme to recognise its impact on personal development;
  - an acknowledgement that in keeping people safe, LALS should also help people to access other services and support which will enable them to keep safe and remain independent;
  - in supporting great communities acknowledgement that LALS should enable people to be kept informed and get involved in decisions that affect them.
  - acknowledgement of the emerging ‘Skills for the Future 2018-2030’ work across the LLEP area.

## **Background Paper**

- Report to the Cabinet on 24 November 2017 - “Leicestershire County Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022”  
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=4865#AI53604>
- Report to the Cabinet on 9 March 2018 – “Draft Leicestershire Adult Learning Services Strategy 2018-2022”  
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=5178&Ver=4>
- Report to the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 6 March 2018  
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1040&MId=5355&Ver=4>

**Appendix**

Realising Potential – The strategy for Leicestershire Adult Learning Service 2018-22

**Equalities and Human Rights Implications**

48. An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) screening exercise was conducted. It is anticipated that as the impact on protected groups will be minimal that a full EHRIA is not required at this stage. It is intended that the proposed strategic direction should improve access to the LALS service for protected groups.
49. Subsequent EHRIAs will be conducted as reviews of programme areas progress.

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