



ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5 JUNE 2023

LEICESTERSHIRE ADULT LEARNING SERVICE PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES

Purpose of the report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the performance of the Council's Adult Learning Service (LALS) and to seek the views of the Committee on the proposed Accountability Statement mandated by the Department for Education (DfE) from 2023, which is appended to this report.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

- 2 The LALS' programmes support the objectives of a number of key strategies, in particular Delivering Wellbeing and Opportunity in Leicestershire: Adults and Communities Department Strategy 2020–2024 and the County Council's Strategic Plan 2022-2026.
- 3 The LALS curriculum offer is designed to support adults develop their basic skills, mental health, vocational skills, and wellbeing. The service also delivers a range of apprenticeship programmes and leads the Work and Skills Leicestershire project, a careers service to help adults find employment. LALS is leading the Council's Multiply programme, a three-year national initiative to improve adult numeracy skills due to end in 2025.
- 4 The Committee last reviewed LALS' performance on 7 March 2022 and no significant concerns were raised. The value of LALS work in supporting English skills for speakers of other languages (ESOL) was acknowledged by the Committee.

Background

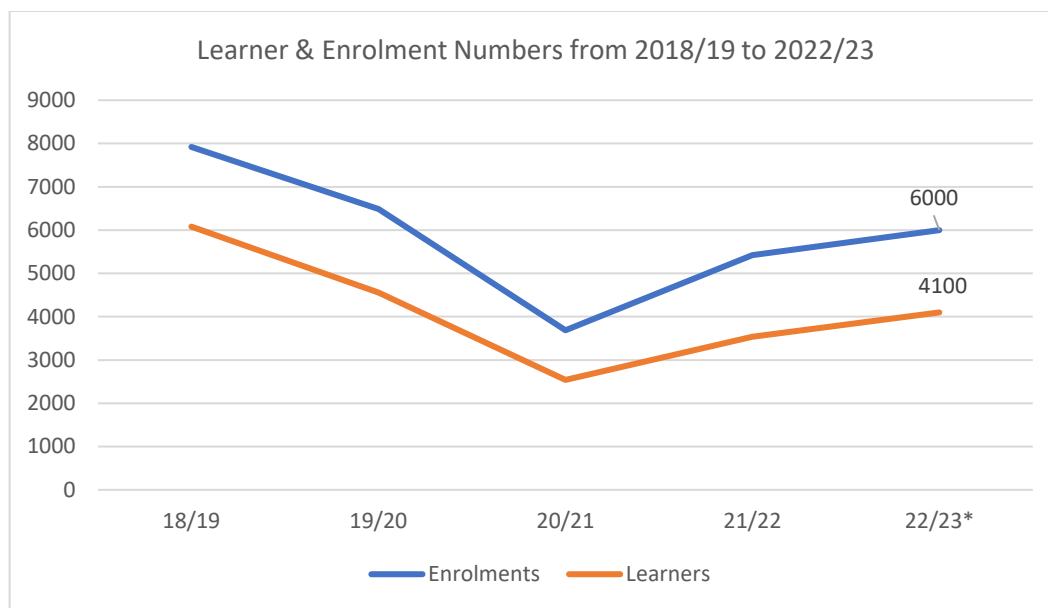
- 5 LALS receives external grant funding circa £5m from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for the delivery of adult education provision across the County.
- 6 The ESFA funding rules state the purpose of the Adult Education Budget is 'to engage adults and provide the skills and learning they need to progress into, or within, work; or equip them for an apprenticeship or other learning. It enables flexible tailored programmes of learning to be made available, which may or may not require a qualification, to help eligible learners engage in learning, build confidence, and/or enhance their wellbeing.'

7 LALS is regulated by Ofsted and at the last inspection in 2018 the service was graded Good for Overall Effectiveness. LALS produces a self-assessment report which is sent to Ofsted annually as part of the quality assurance cycle. Areas identified for improvement in the last report included:

- English and Maths achievement rates at Level 1 and Level 2 need to improve;
- Essential Digital Skills Qualification (EDSQ) achievement rates need be higher;
- The achievement rate of Black African, Black Caribbean and Black Other remains low and needs to improve.

LALS Performance Update

- 8 The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the engagement of adults into learning has been significant with a 52% reduction in numbers at the peak of the pandemic. Participation has slowly recovered and in the academic year 2021/22 LALS enrolled 5,419 learners across 43 venues. The service forecast for this year ending July 2023 is circa 6,000 enrolments which is +18.4% compared with the previous year.
- 9 The increase in enrolment numbers compares favourably with a national increase of 10.7% across all Community Learning providers. Service performance does, however, remain approximately 2,000 enrolments below the pre-pandemic figure and increasing participation is a high priority for the service.



*Forecast for academic year ending July 2023

LALS Learner Achievement

- 10 Findings from the 2021/22 academic year self-assessment shows that high standards have been maintained and the quality of education is good for the majority of learners.

Learner Achievement Rate Trend

| 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 91.73% | 85.67% | 88.44% | 90.66% |

- 11 However, adults studying English and Maths have performed less well with an overall achievement rate of 65% down 2% from the previous year. Employability and Digital skills achievement at 61% is also down by 17% compared with the previous year. These subject areas are a focus for improvement in the current academic year.

Learner Satisfaction

- 12 Feedback from learners is extremely positive. 97% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the things they learnt on the course will help them at home, work and in the community. 97% reported that their course has helped improve their wellbeing.
- 13 Improvements over the last year to customer service and service support systems have translated to higher levels of learner satisfaction with the enrolment process and onboarding to courses.

| End of Course Evaluation Questions | Agree or Strongly Agree (2,813 responses) | Percent change vs previous year |
|--|--|---------------------------------|
| Enrolment on this course was well organised and helpful | 97% | + 4% |
| Aims and outcomes of the course were appropriate | 99% | - 1% |
| The room, equipment and resources for this course were appropriate | 97% | -3% |
| The course length and timings were appropriate | 95% | -2% |
| Induction to the course was well managed and included ground rules | 98% | -1% |
| I was able to complete the contents of the course | 98% | -1% |
| The teaching and learning methods and activities were effective | 99% | 0% |
| Additional learning support was effective where provided | 99% | 0% |
| I feel more confident now than at the start of the course | 97% | -1% |
| I feel participation in this course has improved my wellbeing | 97% | -2% |
| The things I have learnt will help me at home, work and in the community | 97% | +2% |

Safeguarding

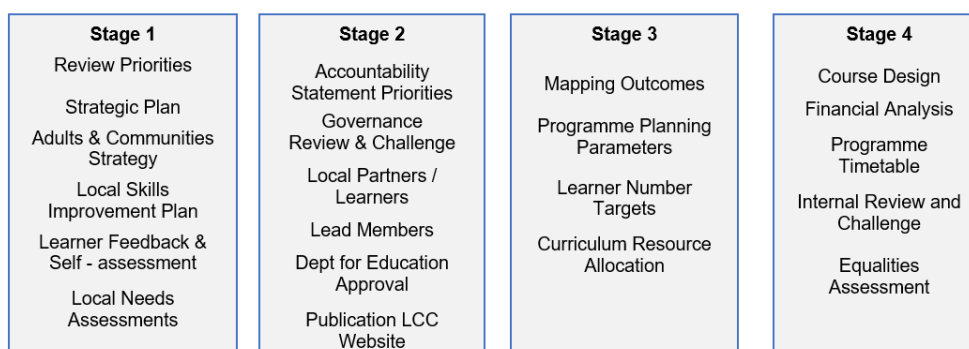
- 14 Adult learners report that they feel safe whilst studying with the service. Safeguarding policies and procedures are robust and well-established ensuring concerns are responded to appropriately to minimise risks.

Accountability Statements - Requirements

- 15 As of June 2022, governing bodies of institutions within the further education sector have a duty under a new section 52B of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 to review provision in relation to local needs, in accordance with amendments made by the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022
- 16 From 2023 the above requirements have been extended to Community Learning providers including local authorities. There is now a requirement for the publication of an Accountability Statement which identifies the service priorities. Once approved by the DfE the document must be published on the education providers website and updated annually as a condition of the funding agreement.

LALS Accountability Statement

- 17 LALS Accountability Statement maps the learning offer to outcomes identified within the County Council's Strategic Plan - Clean and Green, Great Communities, Improved Opportunities, Strong Economy, Transport and Infrastructure, and Safe and Well. Learning activities will contribute to the regional skills strategy to support growth and economic output and the service will prioritise programmes that align to the Adults and Communities Strategy to prevent and reduce need.
- 18 A range of data will be used to shape curriculum design, inform the content of courses and plan the targeting of activities. Each course will have a clear intent to support learner progression towards positive destinations including employment, wellbeing, independence, progression to higher level learning and/or community engagement.
- 19 The Accountability Statement will provide extra rigor to the planning process and help ensure the curriculum offer meets the needs of local priorities. The proposal is to integrate the annual refresh of the statement into Stage 2 of the existing planning framework prior to the preparation of programme planning parameters. This will provide greater opportunity for partners to comment on priorities identified and help steer the curriculum offer. Feedback from district councils will be essential to develop an integrated offer particularly with local delivery of UK Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) skills programmes currently being planned.



Summary of Key Priorities for inclusion in the Accountability Statement 2023/24

- 20 Increasing learner numbers is a key priority for the service. The engagement of partners throughout the programme planning process will help shape the curriculum offer and help to ensure courses meet the needs and interests of groups. The target for the academic year 2023/24 is to engage and enrol 6,500 learners to skills and community learning programmes across Leicestershire.
- 21 Maths, English and Digital skills underpin many activities we face in day-to-day life. The aim is to help people build confidence and develop useable skills that will benefit them at home and in the workplace. Improving learner achievement rates of these programmes will be a priority. The target for the next academic year is to raise overall achievement for skills programmes to 84% (+5%).
- 22 Expansion of provision for ESOL will be prioritised. The programme will provide 560 places helping to meet demand for increasing numbers of residents settling in the county, including programmes for those from Afghanistan, Hong Kong, Syria and

Ukraine. The wider language programme will deliver Deaf Awareness and Sign Language.

- 23 The apprenticeship offer will focus on Payroll, Social Care, Teaching and Learning and Business Administration and Management. The target is to enrol 60 apprentices to these programmes during the next year. Following the launch of the Adult Care Worker apprenticeship in November 2022, a second larger cohort is expected to start in May 2023. This programme will support the Department's Workforce Strategy by improving skills required for career progression within Adult Social Care.
- 24 The Work and Skills Leicestershire offer supports people to become work ready. Work Coaches help individuals' development of support plans to help clients find work and progress in their careers. The service is delivered in County Council and community operated libraries which offer a neutral, safe and inclusive place for people to attend. This service is funded until September 2023 and discussions with District Council's will continue to explore the use of the UKSPF to extend the project.
- 25 The Learning for Independence programme will provide places for 350 individuals with learning difficulties and additional needs. This programme links closely with Adult Social Care and the curriculum focusses on helping learners gain the skills and knowledge they need to become more independent in everyday life.
- 26 Mental Health and Wellbeing programmes have been in demand and programme plans will prioritise courses that help support residents to improve or maintain their mental health, wellbeing, and resilience. The curriculum will provide a safe learning environment where learners with shared experiences can make supportive social links. This service will focus on further developing links with Public Health social prescriber services.
- 27 The Family Learning programme will provide 800 places for adults needing to develop their basic English and Maths. These programmes will also equip parents with the skills to support their children's education and development. Courses are targeted on the most deprived areas and relies on strong partnerships with schools, academies and the Council's Children and Families Service's welfare services.
- 28 LALS will also lead the second year of the national Multiply Project for the Council which will focus on supporting adults to gain confidence with numeracy skills and progress to higher level learning. The proposal is to deliver of a mix of in-house and externally commissioned provision. A range of partners will be involved including voluntary sector organisations and further education colleges.

Consultation

- 29 There is no requirement for public consultation. Feedback on the priorities identified within the draft Accountability Statement from partners, learners and elected Members will be a key part of the annual refresh.

Resource Implications

- 30 Areas for improvement identified within the self-assessment report will be funded through the service budget.

- 31 Preparation of the Accountability Statement will be integrated into the service planning process and there is no requirement for additional resources. Some senior officer time will be required to support oversight and governance.
- 32 The Director of Corporate Resources and Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the content of this report.

Timetable for Decisions

- 33 The outcomes of the pending Ofsted Inspection will be presented to a future meeting of this Committee following the publication of the Ofsted report.
- 34 Learning Providers are required to submit Accountability Statements to the DfE by 31 May 2023. This provides sufficient time for the ESFA contracting service to prepare the contract of funding for the 2023/2024 academic year. The DfE require a final version of the Accountability Statement by 31 July 2023.

Conclusions

- 35 Adult Education is an essential component in the delivery of outcomes identified within the Council's Strategic Plan. The introduction of Accountability Statement will help ensure programmes are aligned to the needs of local residents and employers.
- 36 The range of programmes that LALS provide support a significant number of disadvantaged residents needing to improve their basic skills. Outcomes are good for the majority of learners and satisfaction rate is high. However, some improvement in English, Maths and Digital skills provision is required. Learner numbers have improved, however, there is further work to do to engage more people to ensure they benefit from developing their skills.

Recommendation

- 37 The Committee's views and comments on the draft Accountability Statement are sought.

Background papers

- [Delivering Wellbeing and opportunity in Leicestershire – Adults and Communities Department Ambitions and Strategy for 2020-24](#)
- [Leicestershire County Council Strategic Plan 2022-26](#)
- Report to Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 7 March 2022 - Leicestershire Adult Learning Service Performance - <https://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?MId=6839>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

- 38 None.

Equality Implications

- 39 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an overview of current performance and the opportunity to comment on the planned approach and priorities identified in the Accountability Statement. These plans do not propose any significant

change to the service offer that could impact on protected groups. The performance of different demographic groups will continue to be monitored through the service self-assessment process and quality improvement plan.

Human Rights Implications

- 40 There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Health Impact Assessment

- 41 Adult education is an important element in supporting the delivery of health and wellbeing priorities. The LALS Accountability Statement prioritises the support of vulnerable groups and provides a range of health and wellbeing programmes. Programmes are designed not only to improve subject specific skills but also help learners develop positive behaviours that improve wellbeing and life chances.
- 42 The impact on health and wellbeing is captured within course evaluations completed by learners. This information is used to help inform programme planning and course design.

Appendix

Draft Accountability Statement

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