

Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

24 September 2013

Adult Learning Strategy



Joint Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive and Rachael Shimmin, Corporate Director Children and Adult Services

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide Members of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee with background information on the Adult Learning and Skills Service prior to an overview presentation.

Background

- 2 Previously the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee has received written evidence as part of the 'Increasing young people's employment opportunities (18 – 24) in County Durham Scrutiny Review of the key messages, priorities and the delivery of the Adult Learning Strategy within County Durham. In addition, included within the refresh of the work programme for 2012 – 2014 an update on the development of the Strategy was provided to members at the meeting of the committee held on the 24 September 2012. At this meeting it was agreed that a further update on the development of the Strategy would be included within the refresh of the Committee's work programme for 2013 – 2015.
- 3 At the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee members will recall that the work programme for 2013 – 2015 was agreed which included an overview presentation on the Adult Learning Strategy which was considered to be more appropriate for new members of the committee. Accordingly, the Strategic Manager for Progression and Learning has been invited to the meeting of the committee on the 24 September 2013 to do an overview presentation on the Adult Learning and Skills Service and outline its key strategic objectives and priorities.

Adult Learning & Skills Service Overview

- 4 The Adult Learning and Skills Service is principally funded by the Skills Funding Agency to deliver Adult Community Learning (ACL), Adult Skills (ASB) for workplace and classroom learning, and European Social Funds (ESF) for an 'Engaging Vulnerable Young People' project.
- 5 Provision offered by the Service is developed in line with national priorities, as outlined in *New Challenges, New Chances: Next Steps in Implementing the Further Education Reform Programme* (December 2011) and in the *Skills Funding Statement 2012-15* (December 2012)
- 6 The service also seeks to respond to the priority themes and actions within the Council Plan (2013-17), including the themes "Altogether Wealthier", "Altogether Better for Children and Young People" and "Altogether Healthier". The "Altogether Wealthier" theme focuses on creating a vibrant economy and putting regeneration and economic development at the heart of all Council plans. The Adult Learning and Skills Service supports this and has developed provision to develop the employability skills of those active and inactive in the labour market.
- 7 In planning for the future, the service seeks to take forward the recommendations in the North East LEP Skills Action Plan.

Service Priorities

- 8 The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) document '*New Challenges, New Chances*: (December 2011) sets out clear priorities for the funding received by the service. These include providing learning opportunities for:
 - Those who did not achieve Basic English and Maths in school.
 - Young people aged 16 up to 24 for learning which enables them to progress into further learning or to get a job.
 - Unemployed people on benefits who are looking for work to access labour market relevant courses, which help them improve their skills or re-train to help them get a job.
 - Apprenticeship programmes where returns are greatest
 - Individuals over 24 who want to retrain or up-skill at Level 2 in order to secure different employment and/or improve their life-chances.
 - Those at risk of social exclusion to support them to access learning.
- 9 Between 1 August 2012 and 31 July 2013 the service engaged over 1300 learners in classroom based learning focusing on Maths, English and employability skills in areas such as Business Admin, Teaching Assistants and Health and Social Care.

- 10 Over 200 learners accessed provision in the workplace. The Service has also supported 60 apprentices in areas such as Business Admin, Team Leading and Health and Social Care.
- 11 Community learning engaged over 5,500 learners. For many of these individuals this is the first steps back into a formal learning environment and progression onto further learning/employment. The Service remains committed to commissioning a range of learning opportunities funded through Community Learning that support access and progression for people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate.
- 12 The ESF project has engaged over 900 young people since the start of delivery in April 2011. The project has continued to utilise ESF funding to work with a range of providers and deliver provision designed to address Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) issues in County Durham through the themes of Prevention, Transition and Re-engagement.

Current Position

- 13 In March 2013 the service reviewed its structure to be fully aligned with Children and Adult Services and integrated with the Progression and Learning team. The revised structure ensures that the Adult Learning and Skills Service can maintain its delivery and commitment to external funding organisations, whilst contributing a saving to the medium term financial plan.
- 14 The Adult Learning Strategy – *'Learning for Skills, Learning for Life 2011-2013'* is currently under review. The strategic direction for the service aims to be responsive to reforms within Further Education and Skills such as Post-16 funding, qualifications, Apprenticeships and Traineeships.
- 15 The Service is supporting current initiatives and opportunities through European Social Funds including a Youth Employment Initiative.
- 16 Strategic partnerships are being used effectively to develop provision to meet learners' and employer's needs. The Strategic Lead for the Adult Learning and Skills Service is a member of the Business, Enterprise and Skills Group which drives forward partnership action to deliver on the County's Economic Strategy.
- 17 The service continues to plan, commission and deliver learning and skills provision that supports the local economy and is aligned to recommendations in the North East Economic Review.

18 The presentation to the economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 24 September 2013 will focus on the following:

- Overview of the Adult Learning & Skills
- National Priorities
- Moving forward – the review of the Adult Learning & Skills Strategy

Recommendations

- 19 That the members of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee note and comment upon the information provided in the overview presentation.
- 20 That the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive a further update on the development of the Adult Learning Strategy at a future meeting.

Background Papers

Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Report – Adult Learning Strategy – 24 September 2012

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – Funding has been reduced and this will impact upon the level of provision.

Staffing – There have been staffing implications as the service has undertaken a restructure.

Risk – There are risks around the level of provision possible given the levels of funding available

Equality and Diversity – An impact assessment has been undertaken as part of the MTFP.

Accommodation – Premises for adult learning are being reviewed.

Crime and Disorder - None

Human Rights - None

Consultation – Consultation on changes to staffing structures have been undertaken.

Procurement – Commissioning arrangements have been made for services that will not be directly provided by the Adult Learning and Skills Service.

Disability Discrimination Act - None

Legal Implications - None