

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ADULT AND COMMUNITY
LEARNING SERVICE: PRIORITIES FOR 2014/2015****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to:
 - a) report on the Adult and Community Learning Service's (ACLS) priorities for funding for 2014/2015 and approve their inclusion within the Adult and Community Learning Service Business Plan for 2014/2015.
 - b) seek in principle approval for expenditure relating to the expected allocation of £2,145,428 from the Skills Funding agency (SFA) to the Adult and Community Learning Service.
 - c) seek approval for an hourly tuition fee of £2.75 to be applied for the 2014/15 academic year.
 - d) seek approval of the Fees Policy for 2014/15.

Information and Advice

2. The Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) published its strategy document 'New Challenges, New Chances. Further Education and Skills System Reform Plan: Building a World Class Skills System' in December 2011. This policy document led to the requirement that all contract holders of Community Learning funds work within a partnership that will identify key local priorities for community learning and produce a strategic plan for the delivery of adult community learning.
3. 'Notts Loves Learning' is the strategic partnership for community learning in Nottinghamshire and Nottingham and includes a core membership of organisations which directly contract with the Skills Funding Agency for community learning. These are: Nottinghamshire County Council; Nottingham City Council; Central College Nottingham; and the Worker's Educational Association.
4. In December 2013 a Nottinghamshire County Council Adult and Community Learning Reference Group chaired by the Service Director, Youth, Families and Culture, considered and endorsed the Adult and Community Learning Service Annual Plan (ACLS): 2013 – 2014. This Plan outlines the proposed direction for the service, responds to the requirements of 'New Challenges, New Chances' and forms the basis of Nottinghamshire County Council's contribution to the 'Notts Loves Learning' Community Learning Plan.

5. A consultation event with invited representation from relevant services in Nottinghamshire County Council is planned for 9 April 2014. The event aims to highlight how involving adults in community learning can enhance their employability, confidence, and health and wellbeing. It will offer the opportunity to invite ACLS to work together with other services to enable them to better deliver their own priorities.
6. The SFA defines Community Learning as non-formal and as '...a broad range of learning that brings together adults, often of different ages and backgrounds, to pursue an interest, address a need, acquire a new skill, become healthier or learn how to support their children.'
7. The SFA Funding Rules 2013/14 version 3 states that the funding must:
 - maximise access to community learning for adults, bringing new opportunities and improving lives, whatever people's circumstances
 - promote social renewal by bringing local communities together to experience the joy of learning and the pride that comes with achievement, and
 - maximise the effect community learning has on the social and economic well-being of individuals, families and communities.
8. Learning which leads to a qualification which can be funded through other SFA funding streams is excluded from PCDL delivery in the SFA Funding Rules.
9. The Service recognises that some learners cannot access specific short qualifications that enable them to progress into employment or contribute to their community through volunteering. Therefore the Service will continue to support a small number of qualification courses funded through generated income. In 2014/15 the Service intends to contribute towards income generation by directly delivering some courses that attract fee-income.
10. In 2014/15 ACLS will receive a single line budget from the SFA to deliver a balanced programme of activity across the following types of provision:
 - a) Personal Community Development Learning (PCDL) - learning for personal development, cultural enrichment, intellectual or creative stimulation and enjoyment
 - b) Wider Family Learning (WFL)
 - c) Family English, Mathematics and Language (FEML).
11. ACLS provision is delivered by a network of 16 major providers and annually up to 20 voluntary and community sector partners. The majority of provision is delivered under annual commissioned contracts by an academy, four colleges of further education and the Workers' Educational Association. The Service also invites bids for small grants to deliver adult learning from voluntary and community groups, schools, children's centres, charities and a number of private providers. Through working with a large and diverse range of delivery partners the service is able to reach the most disadvantaged adults and offer a flexible programme of short courses that meets the needs of learners.

12. To comply with the requirements of BIS and SFA, the Service targets its resources on those facing barriers to learning, living in areas of greatest disadvantage and who are often unconvinced of the benefits of learning. This approach has synergy with and supports the achievement of County Council priorities such as 'Closing the Gap'. ACLS will seek to align activities more closely with Nottinghamshire County Council's strategies and policies as reflected in individual Service areas. With this in mind, ACLS will require its provider network to deliver learning activities that address one or more of the following themes:
- developing stronger communities and promoting social wellbeing
 - supporting parental and community engagement in schools and children's centres and equipping parents and carers to assist and encourage their children's learning
 - fostering aspiration, independence, personal development and responsibility, improving health, wellbeing and quality of life
 - developing skills that prepare people for training, employment or self-employment.
13. ACLS priority learners for PCDL resources in 2014/15 are:
- those with qualifications below the equivalent of GCSE grade A – C (below Level 2) and/or low skill levels
 - individuals or groups who are socially excluded
 - Black and minority ethnic individuals with low qualification and/or skill levels (below Level 2)
 - those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those experiencing mental health difficulties.
14. Priorities for Family English, Mathematics and Language programmes will be parents/carers who do not have a qualification equivalent to a GCSE at grade A – C (below level 2) in English and/or mathematics. For Wider Family Learning the focus will be on disadvantaged parents/carers with low skills and/or qualifications.
15. The majority of the above mentioned priority learners will be from the areas of greatest economic and social disadvantage. The Service has a target for 2013/14 that 73% of learners will be from the 250 most disadvantaged super output areas (SOAs). There are 497 SOAs in the County.
16. Providing short courses in communities to engage adults who may have multiple barriers to joining an accredited course demonstrably raises aspirations, increases confidence and builds social capital. Questions to learners about their progress following a course give examples such as:

***Kerry** who began as a learner on an ACLS funded basic computer course and a Computer Literacy & Information Technology (CLAIT) course. Kerry progressed onto an NVQ Level 2 in Business Administration and is now enrolled as an apprentice on a Health and Social Care course and is employed as a carer.*

***Stephen**, who is visually impaired, achieved 2 units towards an OCR ITQ award (an Information Technology Qualification) via the NewLink Home-based Training Scheme, for people unable to attend a course outside their home. When Stephen lost his sight, he feared that he wouldn't be able to continue to use a computer, but the training he*

received gave him confidence in his skills. He now produces posters for a relative to use in her shop and he uses a spread sheet to work out his finances. Stephen intends to progress to college to pursue a course in Counselling.

17. Comments from learners attending celebration events and their course evaluations provide evidence of the value of this activity and the impact that engagement in learning can have on their outlook and lives. Comments made by learners include:

"I am so grateful for the community learning courses giving me the start I needed to change direction.

This course has really helped me; after doing the course I felt more confident in helping my child with his school work.

It's really helped having someone who shows faith in you. Attending the courses has rebuilt my self confidence.."

18. The Service encourages Providers to use a wide range of community venues and will continue to locate a number of programmes, especially Family Learning, in schools and children's centres to benefit parents and carers. During 2012/13, 120 adults gained an English or mathematics functional skills qualification through family learning programmes. Activities are also provided in day care settings for service users. Locating learning activities within libraries has shown benefits for the two Services and the learners. These links will be maintained and strengthened in 2014/15.

19. Performance Indicators for the Service for 2014/15 will be based on our 2013/14 performance. The table below shows a breakdown of learner numbers to date for the current year i.e. 2013/14 (figures as at 19/02/2014):

SFA PCDL	Actual to Date	Year End Target
Learners	4058	6300
No of males	28.7%	34%
No of students with learning difficulties/disabilities	30.8%	29%
No of students from Ethnic Minority groups (BME)	3.28 %	2.7%
Learners who feel their course met their expectations (greatly)	93.7%	93%
Overall Learners from the 250 most disadvantaged SOAs	69.9%	73%
Wider Family Learning		
Learners	447	750
Children	474	N/A
Family English, Mathematics and Language		
Learners	610	900
Children	425	N/A
Pound Plus		
Learners	162	2050
Total Learners Community Learning and Pound Plus	5113	10,000

20. BIS has placed a requirement on Community Learning contract holders to identify how much additional funding or in-kind contributions come as a result of spending on community learning ('Pound Plus'). The Service has set a target to generate additional 'Pound Plus' income of £214,644 in 2013/14 and achievement against this target will provide a benchmark when setting the target for 2014/15.
21. When proposing the Fees Policy, ACLS has consulted with groups of learners and taken feedback that indicates that a small increase of fees would not have a detrimental impact on reaching target learners. It is proposed that an hourly tuition fee increase from £2.50 to £2.75 will be applied for 2014/15 academic year. Fees have not increased since 2010/11 academic year.
22. Providers will continue to be encouraged to target a small number of activities outside the top 250 Super Output Areas where participants are more likely to be able to pay fees. Provider income targets will reflect this requirement. Family Learning activity remains free of charge in line with national policy. The proposed Fee Policy for 2014/15 is attached as **Appendix 1**.
23. It is proposed that the fee remission categories remain unchanged from the agreed policy for 2013/14.

Other Options Considered

24. None. ACLS has a proven record of delivering an effective and efficient Service. A self assessment is undertaken on an annual basis to identify areas for improvement and strengths. In November 2012 the Service was graded as 'Good' by Ofsted and is developing an action plan to achieve 'Outstanding' at the next Ofsted inspection.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

25. The Adult and Community Learning Service wishes to utilise the SFA funding to engage the most disadvantaged members of our communities in learning activity.

Statutory and Policy Implications

26. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Implications for Service Users

27. The proposed Service targets will focus the majority of the SFA funding on areas of greatest economic and social disadvantage. This will leave a small balance to support activity in less disadvantaged areas of the County.

Financial Implications

28. The expected FA grant figure for the period 1 August 2014 to 31 July 2015 is £2,145,428 and it is expected that this will be fully utilised delivering the services as set out in the report.

Public Sector Equality Duty Implications

29. This paper is not proposing any significant change to policy. The Service has robust monitoring arrangements in place in relation to the learning activity that takes place. Equality and diversity are standing items on monthly management meetings where engagement and performance of minority groups is reviewed. The Service prioritises certain geographical communities and communities of interest in line with national policy guidance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That:

- 1) information on the national and local context for community learning be noted
- 2) ACLS Service Priorities and activity for 2014/2015 be approved
- 3) expenditure relating to the receipt of a provisional allocation of £2,145,428 from the Skills Funding Agency be approved in principle
- 4) approval be given for an hourly tuition fee of £2.75 to be applied for the 2014/15 academic year
- 5) approval be given to the Fees Policy for 2014/15 as outlined in **Appendix 1**.

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Constitutional Comments (SB 11/03/14)

30. Culture Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report, subject to any additional revenue expenditure that is funded externally being approved by Finance and Property Committee.

Financial Comments (KLA 04/03/14)

31. The financial implications of the report are set out in paragraph 28 above.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Department for Business Innovation and Skills: Skills Funding Statement 2012-2015: December 2012.

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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