



meeting

**Cabinet**

date

**7 June 2006**

agenda item number

**REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE & PROPERTY**

**Nottinghamshire County Council Adult & Community Learning Service  
Priorities and Funding for 2006/2007**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to:
  - i) inform Members of the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) revised priorities for funding for 2006/2007
  - ii) endorse their inclusion within the Adult and Community Learning Service Development Plan
  - iii) seek Member approval for receipt of the financial allocation to fund the agreed activities as required by Finance Standing Order A3.4
  - iv) seek Members' approval for a revision to the Fee and Remission Policy.
2. The Cabinet member for Finance and Property is bringing forward this report in accordance with arrangements to undertake the duties and exercise the powers relating to the Culture and Regeneration portfolio for a temporary period made by The Leader under his delegated power at L.1 in the Constitution.

**Information and Advice**

3. Nottinghamshire County Council's Adult and Community Learning Service (ACLS) has been operating under contract from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), to deliver adult and community learning across Nottinghamshire, since April 2001.
4. The ACLS strap line is "Bringing Learning to Local Communities" as it looks to engage new and reluctant learners back into learning, focusing activity on the areas of greatest economic and social deprivation. In addition to focusing on areas of deprivation, the service also prioritises certain groups, including ex-offenders, ethnic minority groups, families and carers and those with low basic skills and low confidence levels.

5. ACLS “contracts out” its delivery to a wide range of providers, with most provision being delivered by the Community Colleges, Colleges of Further Education and the Workers’ Educational Association. The service also works with a wide variety of voluntary and community groups and a smaller number of private providers.
6. The Service has established, and continues to facilitate, Community Operations Groups (COGs), focused on small geographical areas. These bring together interested parties to discuss learning and facilitate the involvement of local people in the decision making process regarding the provision of learning in their locality. They also aid the planning of delivery between local providers, so reducing wasteful competition.
7. Last year ACLS produced a three year plan for the period 2005/2008. Members approved the funding and priorities outlined within this plan at the October 2005 Cabinet meeting. The LSC has now specified that the three year plan should be replaced with a development plan to identify priorities and targets; this is currently being discussed with the LSC.
8. The existing Fee and Remission policy has been in place since the mid 1990s but changes to the national funding priorities for adult learning require this to be revised to be in line with Government priorities.

### **Revised LSC Priorities**

9. Members may recall that the 2005/06 year saw some drastic revisions to the priorities set for ACLS by the local LSC; with the introduction of the following priority areas:
  - Personal/Community Development. This was set at 10% of the overall allocation with the remaining 90% split:-
    - Skills for Work (40%)
    - Skills for Life (40%)
    - Skills for Independent Living (20%)

This prioritisation resulted in a more limited adult learning offer; these changed priorities were eased during the Autumn Term 2005/06. However, the impact of these imposed changes are still being felt in that tutors for some subject topics that were ceased during this period are now difficult to locate as they have found alternative employment. ACLS is however now working hard with existing providers to ensure learner needs are being addressed.

10. Following the Government’s Skills White Paper”21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills - Realising Our Potential” LSC funding from August 2006 will change. Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL) will replace Adult and Community Learning (ACL) as the descriptor for this type of provision. PCDL has been developed to recognise that non-accredited learning has intrinsic value for individuals and/or communities. PCDL is not necessarily linked to prior levels of attainment, LSC funding priorities or to progression. Nationally, a “safeguard” of funds has been identified to safeguard PCDL and Family

Learning funding.

11. The national LSC Paper, "Priorities for Success" made clear the Government's intention to "raise the level of contributions from employers and learners who can afford to pay, in order to redirect funds to support growth in priority areas of learning". ACLS has previously offered the vast majority of its provision free of charge bar one element delivered by Community Colleges. Learners on these more traditional style courses were charged fees in line with Education Committee approved rates which were set in 1995 and last considered by Members in 2001.
12. The national priorities that have been established for safeguarded PCDL funding are as follows:
  - Learning for personal and community development
  - Citizenship
  - Learning through cultural activities
  - Work with libraries, museums and art galleries
  - Learning for older people (50+)
13. The national priorities established for family learning are family programmes inclusive of literacy, language, numeracy and ESOL.

### **LSC Funding**

14. LSC budgets, like so many others, have been squeezed because of the need to resource the 14-19 agenda. For Nottinghamshire ACLS this translates into an indicative 10% reduction in funding for PCDL for the 2006/07 year. Funding for Family Learning will also be cut. The percentage for Family Learning is, however, not so great as PCDL, but the loss is still to be regretted. Indicative allocations as at March 2006 are as follows:

### **ACLS – LSC Funding**

<b>Year</b>	<b>PCDL Allocation</b>	<b>Wider Family Learning</b>	<b>FLLN</b>	<b>*DDA/SEND</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
2005/06	1,908,284	52,856	370,932	118,000	2,450,072
2006/07	1,717,456	51,866	367,630	nil	2,136,952

\*Disability Discrimination Act/Special Educational Needs Disability Act

### **ACL Service Priorities and Targets**

15. As mentioned in paragraph 9, PCDL funding is not linked to national LSC priorities; this enables ACLS to look creatively at how these funds can more fully support County Council priorities. To respond effectively to the new safeguard agenda and add value to current local priorities, ACLS has identified the following sub-set of funding streams for 2006/2007:

**PCDL:**

- Activities that support learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability (LLDD) to improve their quality of life
- Activities that support the extended services agenda
- Activities that support healthy living
- Other activities that respond to a local identified need

**Family Learning:**

- Share – A programme designed to reach parents who want to help their children at home but who are not sure how to go about it. This helps parents to create and plan learning activities for their children that are fun.
- Peers Early Education Partnership (Peeps) – this programme (focused on disadvantaged areas) aims to raise educational attainment, especially literacy, by supporting parents and carers in their role as first educators, giving their children a good start at school.  
Both Share and Peeps are nationally approved family learning programmes
- Parenting
- Innovative project developments

**Family Learning, Language and Numeracy (FLLN):**

- As per the agreed national programmes

16. The service priorities for PCDL resources in 2006/07 will therefore be as follows:

- Those with low qualification and/or skill levels
- Families and Carers
- Older Learners (50+)
- Ethnic Minorities

in areas of greatest economic and social deprivation, and:

- Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (including Mental Health)
- Ex Offenders

across the County.

17. Performance Indicators for the service for 2006/07 will be agreed with the LSC based on 2005/06 actual performance; however, the overall learner number figure will be 7,775.

18. The table below shows a breakdown of learners and enrolments to date for the current year.

	Actual	Target	Target %
Learners	5097	8000	64
<i>Enrolments</i>	7195	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
No of males	1189	1600	74
No of students with learning difficulties/disabilities	562	1000	56
No of students from Ethnic Minority groups (BME)	165	160	103
No of students age 60+	1383	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>

*Figs as at 3rd April 2006*

19. ACLS has contributed to the achievement of learning targets in the County Council's Strategic Plan "Building a Future". As the revised funding streams for 2006/07 indicate, the Service is keen to continue to build on the work already underway to support NCC priorities. This will manifest itself through:
- Extended Services support
  - Funding programmes in Children's Centres
  - Work with Social Services Day Centres to promote the Valuing People agenda
  - Work with Older Learners to support independent living
  - Work with the Education Department to support family learning
  - Work with the library service

### **Fee and Remission Policy**

20. In line with Government policy, it is proposed that ACLS introduce a revised fee and remission policy, on a pilot basis, with effect from August 2006. The policy will be trialled by Community Colleges in the first instance, with a view to full implementation in August 2007.
21. The previous fees policy was last revisited by Members in 2001. This policy was only operated by the Community Colleges for their "non-accredited" funding stream and all other ACLS provision was free of charge.
22. The revision to a fee and remission policy is a sensitive issue and it can be anticipated that it will generate a reaction from those who have previously had free tuition. The introduction of the policy as a pilot will obviously lessen the overall reaction. The Service consulted with its main providers regarding the proposed changes.
23. The proposed revised fee structure is £2.00 per hour, (previously £1.75 per hour), it was felt that this would be an acceptable increase bearing in mind the target client group.
24. The proposed remission policy is to allow remission of fees to the following groups:
- a. Those in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance
  - b. People in receipt of other income based benefits, the main ones being:
    - i) Council Tax benefit
    - ii) Housing benefit

- iii) Income Support
- c. The unwaged dependants of those listed above
- d. Those on Basic Skills programmes
- e. Asylum seekers in receipt of the equivalent of income based benefit and their dependants.

These categories are in line with LSC policy and those used by other providers in the area.

- 25. The new policy will remove automatic remission for learners over 60 year of age, (only those on a means tested benefit would now be eligible) and those on incapacity benefit.
- 26. The Pay as You Learn (PAYL) option will be maintained.
- 27. Family learning provision, discrete provision for learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability and provision where the learning aim is a basic skills qualification will be exempt from fees.

### **Financial Implications - LSC Grant**

- 28. The LSC Grant figures for the period 1/8/06 to 31/7/07 are:

Main Grant:	£1,717,456
Family learning:	£51,866
Family literacy/language and numeracy	£367,630
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 2,136,952</b>

The total LSC grant for 2005/06 was £2,450,072 so the service reduction for 2006/07 is £314,120.

- 29. The budget will be split notionally between the two county council financial years 2006/07 and 2007/08. Funding agreements with providers are not yet agreed, making an accurate split impossible at this stage.
- 30. The estimated fee income will be £60,000.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

- 31. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, personnel, Crime and Disorder and those using the service. Where such implications are material, they have been described in the text of the report. Members' attention is however drawn to the following:

### **Crime and Disorder Implications**

- 32. The Adult and Community Learning Service aims to combat social exclusion and to target provision at those adults at greatest risk including ex offenders.

## **Recommendations**

33. It is recommended that:
- a. the revised priorities assigned to ACLS by the LSC are noted;
  - b. approval is given to the revised priorities for inclusion within the updated Development Plan;
  - c. approval is given to expenditure of the Learning & Skills Council grant funding of £2,136,952 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2007 as outlined in paragraph 27 in accordance with Finance Standing Order A3.4;
  - d. approval is given to the introduction of a fee and remission policy on a pilot basis as outlined in paragraphs 19 to 26 of the report.

**Councillor Chris Baron,  
Cabinet Member for Finance & Property**

### **Director of Resources' Financial Comments (CC)(PB)**

The Financial Implications are outlined in the report.

### **Legal Services' Comments**

This decision falls within the delegation to Cabinet due to the value of the LSC grant under Finance Standing Order A3.4. The Council has powers under the Local Government Act 2000 to do anything likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of its area or people within its area. In exercising its decision making powers, Cabinet should have regard to the Council's Community Strategy which has, amongst its priorities a commitment to learning and earning, allowing all people to achieve their potential through adult, lifelong and further education opportunities.

Although Personal and Community Development Learning is no longer linked to national LSC priorities allowing ACLS to look creatively at how the LSC grant monies can support County Council priorities, in spending the grant funding on the service priorities identified, officers and members will need to have regard to any terms and conditions of the LSC grant funding which may be set out by the LSC in the funding approval. [CEH 15.5.06]

### **Background Papers Available for Inspection**

"Planning for Success"  
ACLS Development Plan 2006/2007  
Fee Policy Consultation Paper

### **Electoral Divisions Affected**

All

