

PEOPLE (CHILDREN) SCRUTINY PANEL

13 February 2014

INFORMATION REPORT ON THE RUTLAND ADULT LEARNING SERVICE

Report of the Director for People

STRATEGIC AIM:	Creating a Brighter Future for All
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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the Rutland Adult Learning Service 2014-15 as requested by People (Children) Scrutiny Panel.
- 1.2 The report also includes a summary of the strategic intentions of the service for the period 2014-16 and proposed changes and developments currently being addressed by the Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That People (Children) Scrutiny Panel considers the contents of this report noting the overview, strategic intentions of the service 2014-16 and proposed changes and developments.**

3. OVERVIEW

- 3.1 Rutland Adult Learning Service (RALS) is the name for the service within the People Directorate and Lifelong Learning Services structure of Rutland County Council.

The service delivers learning opportunities for adults under the contracts provided by the national Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and to a much lesser extent, the national Education Funding Agency (EFA). Accordingly, the service sits within the Further Education (FE) sector and is subject to the OFSTED inspection framework (Common Inspection Framework) that applies to FE Colleges.

- 3.2 Adult Learning: National Priorities

In addition to the need to provide a local regional adult learning offer, RALS also has to consider nationally determined priorities for adult learning which include:

- Apprenticeships

- Employability training
- Learning opportunities for 19-23 year olds
- Basic Skills – in particular, English and maths
- Community regeneration and increased participation (Community Learning)

3.3 The adult learning offer in Rutland is planned in response to these priorities and to the identified demand from local people (and employers) and according to the viability of courses. This has resulted in a current adult learning programme that broadly includes:

- Apprenticeships at Level 2 (Intermediate) and Level 3 (Advanced) in Health & Social Care, Childcare, ICT, Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools, Business Administration and Customer Service (Hospitality being developed)
- Single QCF qualifications in the same areas
- Functional Skills courses for English, maths and ICT from Entry Level to Level 2 and GCSEs in English and maths
- Opportunities to join A Level / GCSE, Vocational and Foundation Learning courses at Rutland County College, through the operation of a small sub-contract
- 'Universal' Community Learning courses in areas such as languages, arts and crafts and Computing
- 'Targeted' Community Learning courses for disadvantaged learners (including family learning programmes), Learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities, Jobseekers and others who are otherwise 'furthest from learning'.

3.4 In the 2013/14 financial year (1 August-31 July) the service has two main parts:

- ❖ Community Learning funded activity
- ❖ Adult Skills Budget activity

These are two largely discreet areas and types of adult learning provision although they have links, particularly in terms of learner progression from Community Learning into adult skills budget programme opportunities such as Apprenticeships.

3.5 The Community Learning provided by the service mainly involves short courses for adults without assessment and accreditation but in some cases can also lead to qualifications and progression to further learning.

3.6 The Adult Skills Budget provision organised by the service involves skills and work-based learning and development opportunities, often leading to qualifications and with the aim of supporting the employability of learners and meeting the needs of local employers in terms of skills and qualifications.

3.7 Both the Community Learning programme and the provision of the Adult Skills Budget seek to support the social, economic and educational standards of Rutland. Both areas are explained in more detail later in this report.

3.8 Funding for the Service

In the 2013/14 Skills Funding Agency financial year (1 August to 31 July), the funding for operating the Adult Learning Service which mainly comes from the Skills Funding Agency is as follows:

Adult Skills Budget	£314,727
(Of which minimum 19+ Apprenticeships)	(£104,108)
16-18 Apprenticeships	£49,853
Community Learning	£263,925
24+ Advanced Learning Loans	£38,914
Discretionary Learner Support Funds*	£9,325
16-18 Participation Funding (EFA)	£11,767
16-18 Student Financial Support Funding*	£864
24+ Advanced Learning Loans Bursary*	£2,080
Total:	£681,455

*These allocations are payable to support learners with accessing learning opportunities and are not to be otherwise spent in delivery of programmes.

3.9 Number of Learners

In a typical year, it would be expected that there would be c.100 enrolments to Workplace Learning, c.350 enrolments to Classroom-Based Learning and c.850 enrolments to Community Learning courses, reflecting the differing rates of funding applicable to these different models.

Actual numbers will always be determined by overall demand and the funding associated with the courses completed.

3.10 Delivery of Courses

Courses are mainly delivered from the **Adult Learning Centre** (part of the Community Hub) at Catmose College in Oakham, though there is some delivery at venues within the community across the county.

The service is hampered by the limited availability of appropriate facilities from which to deliver specialist courses and cannot fulfil all of the potential demand as a result.

In total, there are 15 programme organisers, managers and support staff and c.70 teaching and assessing staff involved in delivering the service, with many courses delivered on a casual basis by tutors with no fixed contractual hours.

4. Community Learning

4.1 **Community Learning** programmes are varied and loosely defined, but are generally described as being non-formal learning opportunities that meet the wider needs of sections of a given local community. They are available only to **learners aged 19 and above** and include four main types of learning provision:

- Personal and Community Developmental Learning (PCDL)
- Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC)
- Family English, Maths and Language (FEML)
- Wider Family Learning (WFL)

4.2 In broad terms, PCDL courses are the mainstay of Community Learning provision and encompass a range of universal and targeted provisions from language courses and beginner's IT sessions through to tailored provision for Learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities.

4.3 NLDC has never been offered in Rutland but is particularly targeted to support community renewal in particularly disadvantaged areas. FEML and WFL are both elements of Family Learning and aim to support the acquisition of improved English, maths and language skills in parents and carers to break cycles of intergenerational underachievement in the case of the former, and to promote improved understanding of parenting skills and child development in the case of the latter.

4.4 Courses are generally delivered to groups of learners and may be free of charge, although some courses attract tuition fees, according to the nature and aim of the course in question.

5. Adult Skills Budget: Classroom Learning

5.1 **Classroom learning** refers to qualifications delivered with a focus on theoretical knowledge although in some cases, some work experience may be required to complete a qualification. The majority of programmes delivered by RALS under this remit is in the areas of basic skills (maths, English and ICT) and GCSEs (maths and English), with some limited programmes offered in niche provision according to demand e.g. employability courses.

5.2 Courses may be delivered under the Adult Skills Budget, 16-18 Participation Funding and 24+ Advanced Learning Loans and are typically delivered to learners in groups.

6. Adult Skills Budget: Workplace Learning

6.1 **Workplace learning** refers to vocational qualifications delivered in partnership with an employer in order to address skills shortages within an organisation. This may be through delivery of a single Qualifications Credit Framework (QCF) qualification (similar to an

NVQ) through an assessment-only model, or through delivery of Apprenticeship Frameworks in a given occupational area, which may include:

- A Competency element (typically a QCF Certificate or Diploma)
- A Technical element (a relevant theory-based qualification)
- Transferable Skills (English / maths / ICT)

6.2 The Technical and Transferable elements constitute 'off-the-job' training whilst the Competency element is deemed 'on-the-job' training. Only on successful completion of all of the required elements of a given Framework can a full Apprenticeship be conferred and certificated. The Competency elements are generally delivered through a one-to-one training and assessment model and the other elements are delivered in group learning situations.

6.3 Courses may be delivered under the Adult Skills Budget (for which there is a minimum expectation of funding drawdown in relation to 19+ Apprenticeship programmes), 16-18 Apprenticeship Funding, or through 24+ Advanced Learning Loans.

7 Monitoring Performance and Inspection

7.1 The Rutland Adult Learning Service is subject to inspection by the external regulatory framework of the Ofsted Common Inspection Framework. It is also subject to audit by the Skills Funding Agency and is part of the Rutland County Council programme of internal audit.

7.2 Further to the above, the service conducts evaluations of all learning provision, courses, programmes and events and this is fed in to the management system to inform future practice.

7.3 Additionally, the service reports to an Adult Learning Improvement Board chaired by the Head of Lifelong Learning with elected member representation and in future will be part of the proposed Learning and Achievement Strategy which will introduce regular monitoring by a performance board.

7.4 The next inspection of the service under the Ofsted Common Inspection Framework is anticipated to take place imminently and may well be conducted during February 2014. Significant preparation has been undertaken for this inspection and improvement and progress has been reported on a regular basis to the Adult Learning Improvement Board against an agreed Action Plan. The outcome of the inspection, despite the range of improvements and progress is expected to be that further work will be required before a 'Good' grade is secured, probably at the next inspection. The main areas for continued improvement are:

- a. Leadership and management;
- b. Systems development (including data systems);

c. Programme management processes including Information, Advice and Guidance, learner progression pathways and monitoring and recording of learner progress.

7.5 Teaching and Learning standards have improved significantly during the period of the Improvement Board and its inception in August 2013. However, inspection will look for 'improvement over time' in this area and further time is required to establish a trend of high quality teaching and learning. This will take the service into the latter part of 2014 to achieve, realistically.

8. Future Developments

8.1 The broad direction of development of the service is clear. The strategic intentions of the service are set out in **Appendix A**.

8.2 The service must also become stronger in business terms and in the area of skills provision. **Appendix B** sets out the Business priorities of the service for 2014-16.

8.3 Apprenticeships remain a cornerstone of Government policy for adult learning and the Rutland Adult Learning Service aims to continue to develop opportunities in this area, in order to support local businesses as well as the employment aspirations of younger people in particular (though adults aged 25+ may still access Apprenticeships).

8.4 The main development by the service to secure greater business strength is the proposed sub-contract of the ASB funding to an experienced and capable organisation which it will work closely in partnership with and will effectively and robustly monitor as required as the Primary Contract Holder of funding from the SFA.

8.5 RALS will continue to focus on the basic and functional skills needs of the local population in order to provide the baseline ability and self-confidence that an increased grasp of key skills brings and that employers wish to see in prospective and contracted employees.

8.6 Finally, the Community Learning offer will be further developed to maintain an appropriate level of 'universal' courses whilst ensuring that learners contribute (financially) more where they can afford to do so.

8.7 It is also a priority for the service to provide targeted courses for the most vulnerable in order to boost the life chances of those most in need and to add social value through the Community Learning programme and opportunities.

9. Risk Management

RISK	IMPACT	COMMENTS
Time	High	It should be noted that procurement arrangements for the sub-contract of the Adult Skills Budget (ASB) element of the Rutland Adult Learning Service (RALS) should be completed by the end of March 2014 in order to achieve completion of sub-contracting including all TUPE agreements by 31 July 2014. This will provide readiness for commencement of delivery of the new service configuration and learner programme by 1 August 2014.
Viability	High	The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) will cease to contract with any provider that is below the Minimum Contract Value (MCV). RALS will not be able to operate unless it meets the MCV set by the SFA which is currently set at £500k. The funding receipt in 2013/14 is £681,455 as set out in Section 3.9.
Finance	High	RALS is funding externally and does not draw upon core RCC funds at the point of this report. However, there would be some impact on finances in the form of corporate recharge and salary contribution, were RALS to cease or enter in to sub-arrangements that moved the Service out of direct control of the Council.
Profile	High	If not managed effectively, there is the potential for RALS to cease to exist as a funded body, with the loss of employment for staff and training opportunities for local people that would entail. Conversely, effective sub-contracting will lead to increased opportunity locally (though future staff reduction is currently built in to the re-structure proposal to address anticipated efficiency and funding criteria factors).
Equality and Diversity	Medium	Appropriate provision needs to continue to focus on the most vulnerable and deprived members of the local community. Significant opportunity for that section of local society would be lost, were the Service to cease to exist. However, the service will come under increasing pressure to adjust to a Skills-led programme offer to meet year-on-year and projected changes in SFA funding criteria. Council support for the Community Learning element of the Adult Learning Service is therefore likely to be required to maintain its profile in future years.

10. REASONS WHY THE REPORT IS MARKED “NOT FOR PUBLICATION”

10.1 The exempt Appendix C is Not For Publication in line with paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of Part 1 to the Local Government Act 1972: “Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)”.

Background Papers

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A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577.

Appendix A

Strategic Intentions of the Rutland Adult Learning Service 2014-16

The service has set out its strategic intentions for the period 2014-2016 in the Adult Learning Service Strategic Plan 2014-16 which is available as a separate document. In summary the service is seeking to:

- a. Build organisational capability and resilience to deliver new and innovative adult skills based learning and community learning that secures a sustainable future for the service;
- b. Establish a 'fit for purpose' adult learning service that is effectively positioned to contribute to the Council's strategic aim to 'Create a Brighter Future for All'.

The specific annual strategic intentions for the next three years are set out below:

2013-14:

- Restructuring of staff structure for Community Learning and ASB funded staff
- Procurement of ASB sub-contract provision
- OFSTED Inspection Preparation
- RCC Internal and SFA Audit Programme

2014-15:

- Improved marketing and focus on community learning and adult and employer skills needs
- Effective sub-contract implementation
- Development of skills and Apprenticeship offer
- 'Good' OFSTED Inspection grade

2015-16

- Consolidation and growth of Community Learning provision and ASB sub-contract profile
- 'Outstanding' OFSTED Inspection Grade

Appendix B

Business Priorities 2014-16

In order for RALS to succeed there is a need for the service to secure improved organisational experience and resources in the area of skills provision and to diversify and maximise funding to help mitigate against potential future reductions in SFA funding levels and to develop robust financial planning and management systems.

To become secure the service needs to:

- a. Be increasingly responsive and flexible in its business planning. It must be highly effective at needs analysis and agile in aligning with local and national policy and priorities for the provision of adult learning to secure funding;
- b. Achieve transparent and full cost analysis of curriculum planning, reduce costs and maximise the effectiveness of flexible and innovative delivery in the workplace or in partner community venues driven by a robust Employer Engagement process;
- c. Be efficient and effective in its management of funding received from the Skills Funding Agency as the Primary Contract Holder including the use of such funding for sub-contract purposes;
- d. Identify and manage risks within safe limits including the use of performance monitoring and reporting;
- e. Ensure the right curriculum and skills development opportunities are available in Rutland which attract adult learners and provide for their needs;
- f. Recover costs of provision wherever possible whilst providing value for money opportunities for Rutland learners;
- g. Design, market and deliver appropriate curriculum provision to support employability, employer development needs and responsive and relevant adult learning that achieves progression, qualifications and leads to work;
- h. Explore new business opportunities including internal markets, other public sector bodies, Apprenticeships Schemes within the Council and public sector and promote these through partners, stakeholders and other organisations contracted to deliver services.