

**REPORT TO:** Employment, Learning & Skills and Community Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 18 September 2023

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Executive Director Environment & Regeneration

**PORTFOLIO:** Employment, Learning and Skills, and Community

**SUBJECT:** Halton Borough Council Adult Learning Annual Position Statement 2022 / 2023

**WARD(S)** Borough Wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To provide members with an overview of the Halton Adult Learning Service's performance for the Academic Year 2022 / 2023.

To provide members with the opportunity to raise any questions about the Adult Learning provision.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

**1) That the report be noted.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 The Adult Learning provision for 22/23 was funded through the Adult Education Budget (AEB), devolved to the LCR Combined Authority (CA). In addition to the mainstream AEB provision, funding was also available for Test and Learn initiatives and for the City Region Wide Pathways to Teaching project (co-ordinated by Halton Adult Learning). All budgets are managed and monitored through regular scrutiny and accountability meetings between the CA Relationship Manager and Senior Service Leaders within Halton Adult Learning.

3.2 **The service received its first Ofsted Inspection since 2017.** During the academic year 22/23, Ofsted undertook a 2-day inspection on the 28<sup>th</sup>/29<sup>th</sup> June, covering 4 'Deep Dive' areas: Child Care and Teaching Assistants, Functional Skills English, Wellbeing and Supported Internships (High Needs). The service was inspected by a Lead and 4 other inspectors. The service was also part of an Ofsted Quality Assurance Visit by a Senior His Majesty's Inspector.

- 3.3 **The service maintained its 'Good' grading.** The [report](#) outlined how the service equips local residents for work and life, as well as designing curriculum delivery in response to the local and national skills context. In order to improve, feedback should be consistent across the curriculum and tutors must reinforce high expectations for attendance across the service.
- 3.4 **Spend / allocation current position.** The service achieved 97.5% of its funding allocation for 22/23. The CA tolerance benchmark is 97%, meaning that the service was within allocation for the first time in 3 years and no clawback is required.
- 3.5 The service as a whole has identified key factors that will enable it to continue on this upward trend; previous recruitment challenges have now been addressed with no vacant tutor posts, meaning that a full suite of AEB and Community Learning programmes are available from the first half term of the new academic year. In addition, Test and Learns for 23/24 are innovative and responsive to local need, meaning that they will be attractive to new and returning learners. Furthermore, new relationships with Awarding Organisations allows the service to respond more flexibly to the needs of the borough; For example, Family Learning will now be offering accredited courses in schools linked to Mental Health & Well-Being, in response to schools' requests for this form of provision post-covid.
- Additionally, there will continue to be an allocation for the DFE Multiply funding, which has been able to fund community and volunteer programmes - 'Send R Us', 'Fresh Beginnings' and 'Citizens Advice Halton' - with projects that support local residents to develop and enhance their maths knowledge and understanding through cookery, budgeting and counting and measuring sessions.
- 3.6 **Pathways to Teaching** spend at the end of July 2023 was at 49.5%. This was due to a combination of fewer actual enrolments across the City Region compared to planned, and significant underspend on the programme across all of the 6 local authorities. The largest proportion of spend was on teaching / co-ordination costs and progression costs for learners. After consultation with the CA, the project will continue into the academic year 23 / 24 with a reduced spend and a reduced target of learners. 8 out of the 38 learners from the 22/23 LCR cohort will progress onto higher level teaching qualifications with a view to teaching in the Adult Education Sector (this includes 4 from Halton).
- 3.7 **Achievement** in non-accredited Adult Learning, Employability, Family Learning and 'Getting Started' maths and English improved. Non-accredited Adult Learning improved its achievement rates significantly (40%) as a result of the introduction of Wellbeing and

Craft courses. Conversely, accredited Adult Learning programmes and Accredited maths and English achievement rates declined, due to Quality Assurance Issues, such as: assessment practices and marking of learner work requiring improvements; learner withdrawals; and national delays in the release of exam results.

3.8 Learner recruitment denotes an upward trend, with learner and enrolment numbers increasing on last year, closing the gap between pre-covid numbers. Optimistically, more new learners were enrolled into the service than in the academic year 20/21, demonstrating the effect that a strong curriculum offer has in attracting new learners to the service. Withdrawals for 22/23 sit at 8% overall, which is 2% under the tolerance target of 10% and 6% lower than last year.

3.9 The service monitors and reports on a number of **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Measures (EDIMs)** including gender, ethnicity, and disability / learning difficulty. These EDIMs have shown positive trends this year; the number of male residents aged 19+ engaging with the service increased by 1.9% this year bringing the total to 26.2%. This was as a direct consequence of introducing short courses and Employability programmes. In comparison with local statistics (48.7%) there is still some work to do here.

Learners identifying as Black, Asian or any other minority ethnicity (BAME) rose by 3.2% to 13.4%, which is in stark contrast to the local figure of 1.8%. 57% of our BAME learners enrol onto English courses and we expect this to increase again with the introduction of the new ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) courses in 23/24.

Learners declaring a disability increased by 8.2% to 38.4% in 22/23 (local data 26.5%), and those declaring a learning difficulty increased by 1.7% to 15.6%. These upward trends reflect the curriculum design, our divisional values (Empowerment, Opportunity, and Resilience) and the robust Initial Advice and guidance all learners receive.

All local statistics used for comparative purposes relate to residents aged 19+.

3.10 **Attendance remains a focus for improvement.** Attendance overall dropped by 5.4% to 84.6% in 22/23. Moving into the academic year 23/24, the data team will ensure managers receive weekly attendance reports so that early intervention can take place and underperformance / missed opportunities are addressed with tutors. Despite Behaviours and Attitudes across the service being excellent, with Learner Voice detailing the value of the provision, current attendance is not viewed by Ofsted as 'Outstanding' and so

will remain a Quality Improvement Plan target for this academic year.

- 3.11 **Safeguarding in the service remains effective.** Adult Learning operates within a culture of safeguarding, with all colleagues, volunteers and learners sharing the understanding that 'It could happen here.' Safeguarding for staff and volunteers is responsive to local and national context; for example, all staff within the Division undertook County Lines and Child Exploitation training in response to the high levels of these issues in Halton. Learners are able to report any safeguarding issues or incidents confidentially using the service's Confidential Reporting Form. QR codes for the form are provided at enrolment and are also visible in the safeguarding posters around the learning centres.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no specific policy implications. However, as a result of the findings of the Ofsted Inspection (June 2023), adaptations will be made to the Service's Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Halton Adult Learning is on track to meet its Liverpool City Region Combined Authority financial target (97% tolerance). The service aims to apply for growth of AEB in November 2023 linked to the expansion of its ESOL offer.

#### **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

##### **6.1 Children & Young People in Halton**

The service will offer the Supported Internship provision to those aged 16-24 with an Education Health Care Plan for the third consecutive year. In addition, the service has planned a curriculum whereby Care Experienced Young people are able to access training and development to help contribute towards a reduction in Halton's NEET figures.

##### **6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

The service works hard to bridge the gap between the needs of Halton's residents and the local skills and employment needs.

##### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

The curriculum for 23/24 builds on the success of the Wellbeing provision from 22/23 and the offer has been broadened both across

the borough and into local schools. Mental Health and Wellbeing support remains a priority for the service and, as such, a new Divisional Wellbeing Forum has been convened, which includes colleagues from Halton Adult Learning and Halton People into Jobs.

#### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

All learners receive information on how to keep themselves safe, alongside appropriate signposting to safeguarding support within the borough. Additionally, curriculum planning across the entirety of the service includes information on online safety, including how to keep safe online, as well as identifying the signs and risks of radicalisation and extremism.

#### **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

N/A

### **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The key risks, which will be monitored closely through our Quality Improvement and Quality Income meetings, are to ensure that we are meeting our end of year expected funding targets for 23/24 and to be responsive in developing and adapting our delivery on a termly basis if we are not reaching the funding targets.

### **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The service continues to measure and report on EDIMs and these are reported on a regular basis to the Combined Authority.

8.2 The new Adult Learning Marketing Strategy outlines those in the borough that are furthest away from economic prosperity and /or the job market. Activity will target the wards in which the densest populations of those that are economically inactive or of working age, but currently unemployed, reside.

### **9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Kingsway Adult Learning Centre is a 'Warm Hub', whereby residents can come into the centre, use the breakout area and help themselves to hot drinks and snacks. The introduction of the Warm Hub and associated purchases has led to an increase in the use of single-use plastics. However, the long-term environmental impact has been considered but the service considered the short-term Cost of Living Crisis impacts on benefits of priority. This increase in social value has had a positive impact on residents and it is felt that the socio-economic and wellbeing benefits of the Warm Hub mitigate the long-term impact of this provision on the environment.

**10.0 LIST OF BACFROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF  
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

10.1 None under the meaning of the Act.