

REPORT TO: Employment Learning and Skills and
Community Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 24th February 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director Environment and
Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Employment Learning and Skills and
Community

SUBJECT: Halton Adult Learning Summary – Academic
Year 23/24

WARD(S) Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Members with an overview of the current services provided by Halton Adult Learning.
- 1.2 To provide Members with a summary of the key performance indicators for the academic year 23/24.
- 1.3 To provide opportunities for Members to raise any questions with regards to the curriculum intent and its alignment with the local skills context.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Background Information

Halton Adult Learning delivers a range of accredited and non-accredited, community learning courses in Runcorn and Widnes which aim not only to improve residents' lives but also address the skills gaps in the borough and across the LCR. The service also delivers Family Learning in schools across Halton, and co-ordinates the Pathways to Teaching programme on behalf of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. Additionally, the service offers remotes learning opportunities where residents, including Halton Borough Council staff, can access accredited qualifications with remote support. The service is funded through the Liverpool City Region's Combined Authority Adult Education Budget (now titled the Adult Skills Fund from academic year 24/25).

- 3.2 Halton Adult Learning also co-delivers the Supported Internship programme with Halton People into Jobs. The service aims to

continuously improve the breadth of the curriculum offer in order to give adults within the borough wider opportunities for development.

3.3 **Maths, English and Digital Functional Skills**

These remain a core part of the Adult Learning Curriculum. The service aims to redress the balance for adults that have not developed key skills in English, maths and ICT so that they are able to move on to their next steps; either personally, through further training, employment or voluntary work.

3.4 Halton Adult Learning also offers support for Halton Borough Council staff through the Skills Pledge, where HBC staff can complete their Level 2 Functional Skills in maths and English in work hours, without paying their time back.

3.5 **English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)**

The service commenced delivery of its ESOL provision in September 2023, as a response to the increase in demand for English training for those in borough that do not have English as a first language. The Adult Learning Service worked in close collaboration with the local FE College (Riverside College) to ensure that the ESOL offer in the borough maximised opportunity for residents and did not duplicate – Adult Learning offers ESOL skills training for every day work and life, at pre-Entry (non-accredited) ESOL, and accredited Entry Levels 1, 2 and 3. Upon completion, learners are supported to progress onto higher level ESOL programmes with the College. The main ESOL provision was complemented by Adult Learning with additional courses specifically aimed at those looking to develop their English skills, for example Art for ESOL. The service celebrated World Refugee Week in June 2024, which was well received, and promoted through Halton's Resettlement team.

3.6 **Education Pathways**

The service continued to offer Education Pathways in 23/24, which consisted of Caring for Children (Early Years), Teaching Assistant (Primary and Secondary), and Pathways to Teaching (post-16) programmes. These programmes are delivered by skilled, experienced educational professionals and learners are supported into substantial placements in local schools (Certificate in Supporting Teaching and Learning) and within our own Adult Learning service (Pathways to Teaching).

3.7 The Liverpool City Region renewed the service's funding agreement for Pathways to Teaching for the year 24/25.

3.8 **Test & Learn programmes**

Test & Learn funding affords the service the opportunity to deliver innovative projects. In 23/24, the service offered Test and Learn courses in Creative Writing (short stories, Write Your Own Children's

stories), Early Years, Art for ESOL and Pre-ESOL. These have been instrumental in engaging new learners with the service and successful projects are mainstreamed into the core Adult Learning offer.

3.9 Family Learning

Family Learning was responsible for 692 enrolments in the academic year 23/24, which equated to 45% of all adult learning enrolments. Sessions delivered included numeracy, literacy and Mental Health. Delivery for Family Learning takes place in schools across Halton and are delivered by experienced Primary School teachers. Family Learning programmes receive consistently positive reviews from parents, who report that the courses they have completed help them to support their children’s learning journeys.

3.10 Multiply

Multiply was a national initiative funded from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and devolved to local regions to support improved numeracy levels for adults. Through the programme, Halton Adult Learning funded £50,000 worth of numeracy provision through Voluntary and Community Organisations Fresh Beginnings, Citizen’s Advice, SEND R Us and the Autism Wellbeing Project. These initiatives embedded numeracy development in a range of different activities including cookery, music and budget management.

3.11 Performance/achievement

Enrolments for Adult Learning increased again in the 23/24 academic year, resulting in almost 50% growth since the academic year 21/22:

Enrolments	Total
21/22	1033
22/23	1285
23/24	1521

Top three performing areas for enrolments were Family Learning, Arts and Crafts and ICT:

Subject Area	Enrolments 23/24	%
Family Learning	692	45%
Arts and Crafts	211	14%
ICT	111	7%

3.12 Retention & Achievement

Achievement overall across the service was good at 86.9%. Community, non-accredited courses achievement rate was 95.6%. Adult Skills, and accredited courses finished the year 23/24 with an achievement rate of 71.9%.

3.13 Retention overall across the service was also good at 91.1%. Community courses retained 96.2% of their learners, with Adult Skills and accredited courses at 85.3%.

3.14 Areas for concern in retention and achievement are as per below:

Area	No. of Learners	Retention	Achievement
Level 1 Maths	17	66.7%	33.3%
Level 2 Maths	25	75%	45.8%
Entry 3 English	9	77.8%	55.6%
Level 1 English	24	55%	30%
Level 2 English	24	81%	61.9%

3.15 Funding and Reconciliation

Funding allocation for the service vs. actual spend below:

Funding	Allocation	Actual	Difference from actual	%
Current AEB Funding	£222,434.08	£200,772.73	-£21,661.35	-10%
Adult Community Learning	£376,246.00	£376,246.00	£0.00	100%
EAS	£11,300.00	£22,029.96	£10,729.96	95%
Test & Learn Pilots	£150,000.00	£94,928.34	-£55,071.66	-37%
TOTAL	£759,980.08	£693,977.03	-£66,003.05	-9%

3.16 The service achieved 91% of its allocation target in 23/24, operating with a tolerance of 97%. Therefore, the Adult Learning was required to pay back to the Combined Authority £27,000 of its allocated AEB budget, and £37,539 of its Test and Learn allocation. The ability of the service to meet its allocated budget was conversely impacted by a growth request for additional ESOL provision that was submitted based on local intelligence, but did not convert into enrolments.

3.17 Income and expenditure are closely monitored through a combination of internal and external mechanisms, to ensure that contracts are delivered efficiently. This includes termly scrutiny of performance on profile through Quality, Income and Marketing meetings and Review meetings with the service's Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Relationship Manager.

- 3.18 Where possible, funding streams are maximised to support the delivery of the service. For example, the service utilised its learner discretionary support fund to maintain the service's Warm Hub which offered hot drinks and snacks to learners attending classes in both of its centres. In addition, the service utilises this fund to pay for childcare and travel costs to remove as many barriers to learning as possible.
- 3.19 Halton Adult Learning engaged with the Liverpool City Region's Digital Inclusion Initiative to provide over 40 residents with free devices (tablets), 6 months of free Wi-fi and bespoke training to reduce digital exclusion and support with the development of digital skills and connectivity.
- 3.20 **Key Successes**
Adult Learning increased its enrolments from 1285 (22/23) to 1521 (23/24). Of these, 768 were new learners.
- 3.21 18.1% of Adult Learners in 23/24 identified as Black & Minority Ethnic (BAME), an increase from 13.4% in 22/23. This is compared with Halton data (3.5%) and Liverpool City region data (7.9%). These enrolments can be attributed mainly to ESOL courses and Family Learning programmes.
- 3.22 The service hosted its first Supported Intern work placement, who successfully completed their Internship and progressed into a voluntary position elsewhere.
- 3.23 The service continued to develop its curriculum offer to deliver tangible outcomes for learners. For example, learners on Creative Writing programmes became self-published authors and began to sell their products through online stores.
- 3.24 **Key issues**
Recruitment issues and sickness absence has impacted on the capacity of the service and has limited potential enrolments / accreditations.
- 3.25 Achievement rates in accredited courses need to be consistent across the service. Tutors and support teams should continue to work closely to ensure retention, and ultimately achievement rates remain high.
- 3.26 The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority's expectation for 24/25 is that 100% of the allocation must be met. To achieve this, the service must run at full capacity to maximise the income from accredited and non-accredited enrolments.
- 3.27 **Concluding comments**

Overall performance (Recruitment, Achievement and Retention) for the service remains good, with continuous improvements being made.

- 3.28 The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority are committed to supporting Adult Learning in sustaining its support of Halton Residents and helping them to improve their lives. Through regular review and robust monitoring, the CA and Halton Adult Learning seek to minimise any reconciliation.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None identified at this stage

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Halton Borough Council's Adult Learning Service is 100% externally funded. The service must achieve 100% of its expected delivery outputs in 24/25 to prevent reconciliation and to be able to sustain the Service.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

Halton Adult Learning will continue to collaborate with various health and wellbeing initiatives that are delivered by Halton Borough Council and other external agencies including the Health Improvement Team to support individuals with a range of complex health barriers. The Adult Learning service provides accredited and non-accredited programmes in health and wellbeing and seeks to reduce social isolation and other barriers to happy, healthy lives.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

The service continues to offer learning programmes and opportunities that reflect the needs of the residents in the borough and the local skills needs. Leaders remain partners of the Halton Employment Partnership in order to keep abreast of the emerging skills need in Halton, and to explore opportunities for collaboration.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

The service trialled a programme in 23/24 for Care Experienced Young People in Halton that did not attract any enrolments. Service leaders continue to work with the Corporate Parenting Board and the Virtual School team to generate new ideas to engage Care Experienced Young People in the borough.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

Halton Adult Learning are committed to empowering its residents

and providing development opportunities on a range of 'safe' topics such as Safeguarding for Work, Education and Life, Health and Safety and Online Safety. Learners and staff are provided contextual safeguarding training to ensure that they are equipped to recognise risk (for example, County Lines and the Prevent agenda).

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

None

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

Halton Adult Learning will continue to develop its curriculum in line with residents' and employers' needs to ensure that individuals are developing the skills and behaviours needed to support the local economy.

7.0 Risk Analysis

7.1 The management of the Adult Learning service has been meticulous and close monitoring both internally and externally ensures any risks identified are carefully mitigated, with clear action plans in place to address any underperformance, quality and compliance factors.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None

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

'None under the meaning of the Act.'