

**REPORT TO:** Local Economy Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 26<sup>th</sup> January 2026

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

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

**SUBJECT:** Halton Adult Learning Position Statement 24/25

**WARD(S)** Borough wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide Members with an overview of the Halton Adult Learning Service performance in the academic year 24/25.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **3.1 Background Information**

Funded through the Liverpool City Region's (LCR) devolved Adult Skills Fund, Halton Adult Learning delivers a range of accredited and non-accredited 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.

- 3.2 In the academic year 24/25, the service recruited a number of new teaching staff, which led to a broadening of the curriculum to include a range of Arts, Crafts and Wellbeing programmes (both accredited and non-accredited).

### **3.3 Curriculum Intent**

All programmes delivered by Halton Adult Learning are designed to empower local residents in taking their next steps, whether that be on to further training, skills development or employment.

- 3.4 Working closely with Halton Employment Partnership (HEP) and Halton People into Jobs (HPIJ) the service develops a responsive curriculum which aligns with local skills gaps and seeks to develop the skills that employers are looking for – literacy, numeracy, digital skills, communication and teamworking. Additionally, the service regularly collects Learner Voice data through course evaluations, feedback and Learner Forums, and develops curricula that align with residents' own personal goals – developing social relationships, practical skills and

confidence building.

### 3.5 **Accreditations**

In the academic year 24/25, over 300 learners were registered on regulated qualifications with the service, from Entry Level 1 to Level 3. Accredited courses delivered by the service include English, maths, Digital Skills, ESOL, Creative Craft, Art and Design and core transferrable skills such as Equality and Diversity, Safeguarding and British Values.

- 3.6 Entry Levels, Level 1 and Level 2 accredited programmes accounted for £241,280.08 of Adult Skills funding drawn down in 24/25. An additional £12,596.05 was drawn down for level 3 qualifications through Free Courses for Jobs funding.

### 3.7 **Test & Learn programmes**

A proportion of the service's annual funding is ringfenced for 'Test & Learn' projects, which afford the service the opportunity to deliver innovative projects in line with local need. In 24/25, the service capitalised on the success of its previous Creative Writing programmes and launched an additional Creative Writing Course (Write Your Own Memoir), delivered through Test & Learn in 24/25, to support learners in continuing to develop their reading, writing and communication skills. 58 learners completed Test and Learn courses in 24/25 (Memoirs and Write Your Own Children's story, which was in its second year of T&L).

### 3.8 **Inclusion**

Halton Adult Learning prides itself on offering inclusive and empowering learning programmes, seeking to remove barriers to teaching, learning and assessment faced by adults in the borough. The service regularly reviews those that may be seen as disadvantaged, through Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Metrics. In 24/25, 18.4% of learners at enrolment declared a Learning Difficulty, whilst 31.3% declared a disability. Learners in the over 50 age bracket increased, as well as those identifying as BAME.

### 3.9 **Performance/achievement**

Enrolment numbers for courses at Halton Adult Learning in 24/25 were:

Academic Year	Total for Year	Direction of Travel Year on Year
22/23	1331	↑
23/24	1578	↑
24/25	1588	↑

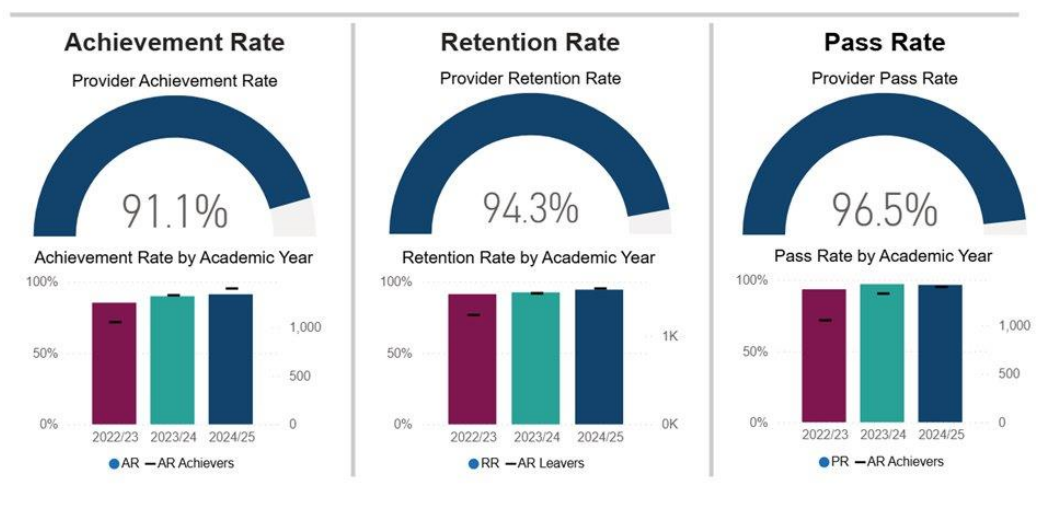
### 3.10 By subject area (24/25):

Subject Area	Enrolments	%
Family Learning	607	38%
Arts and Crafts	323	20%
ICT	148	9%
ESOL	118	7%

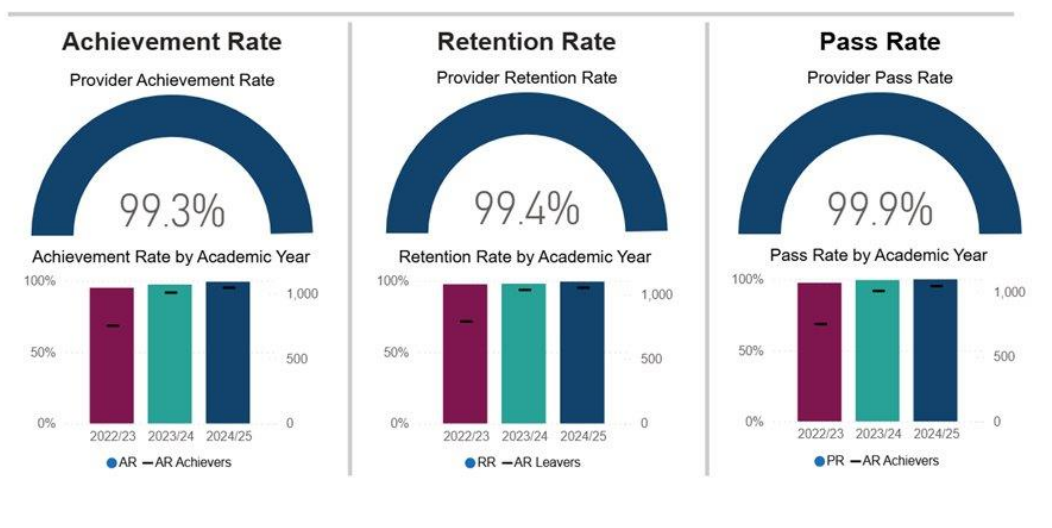
Distance Learning	86	5%
Test and Learn	59	4%
English	50	3%
Education & Childcare	49	3%
Maths	47	3%
Personal Development	44	3%
Wellbeing	41	3%
Writing	16	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1588</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 3.11 Retention & Achievement

Overall, achievement and retention rates in Adult Learning programmes have improved steadily over the last three years. The overall pass rate has dropped by 0.6%, but more learners passed in 24/25 (1397) than they did in 22/23 (1052) and 23/24 (1328)



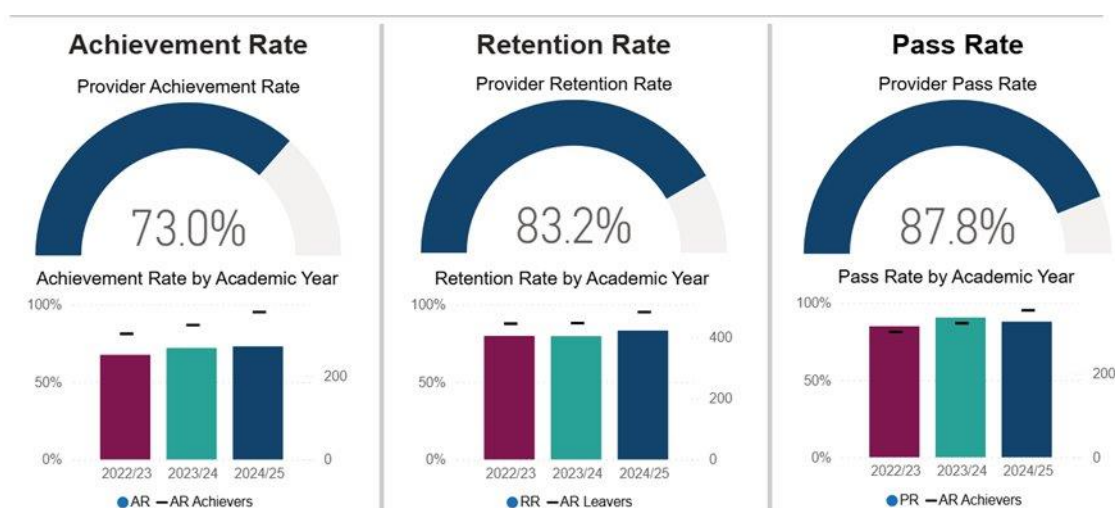
### 3.12 Achievement – Tailored Learning (Courses without a qualification attached)



### 3.13 In Tailored Learning provision, achievement, retention and pass rates increased

in 24/25 and show a steady increase over the past 3 years. Tailored learning provision remains a buoyant element of the Adult Learning offer. In addition to achievement and retention rates improving year on year, actual numbers of learners passing continues to grow (752 in 22/23, 1007 in 23/24 and 1045 in 24/25). Family Learning remains the biggest area in Tailored Learning provision, with parents accessing learning in schools across Halton.

### 3.14 Achievement – Accredited Programmes



3.15 Achievement and retention rates on accredited programmes increased again this academic year, with 73% of learners achieving, and 83.2% of learners completing their learning programmes. Pass rates fell by 2.6%, despite 31 more learners passing in 24/24 than in 23/24. In terms of level; Entry and Level 1 qualifications have seen a small increase year on year, whereas level 2 has decreased by 4.5% compared with last year. Level 3 achievement shows a sharp upwards turn, but this is reflective of the relatively small cohort (4 last year, 8 in 24/25)

### 3.16 Funding and Reconciliation

The service achieved over 97% of its funding target in 24/25, compared with 91% in 23/24. Halton Adult Learning are therefore required to reconcile approximately £25,000 to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, compared to £75,000 in the year 23/24.

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 offers 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. On creative courses, training materials were free for learners, and the service was able to pay for travel to Hazlehurst Studios with Halton Community Transport. Additionally, the service took part in the Liverpool City Region's Digital Inclusion initiative, offering free tablets and data to residents in return for undertaking a short training session.

**3.19 Key Successes.**

Overall, achievement and retention rates in Adult Learning programmes Have improved steadily over the last three years. In Tailored Learning provision, achievement, retention and pass rates increased in 24/25 and show a steady increase over the past 3 years. The difference in achievement rates for those that do not declare LLDD at enrolment, compared to those that do, is 3%.

3.20 The service held a successful Art Exhibition and Open Day in July 2025 with over 100 visitors to Kingsway Learning Centre. Learners exhibited their own work and provided information, advice and guidance to prospective new learners. In the year 25/26, this will be expanded in conjunction with Culture 26, and learners will have the opportunity to display their work at Runcorn Town Hall.

3.21 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; Creative Enterprise learners received tuition on how to establish themselves as self-employed.

3.22 Learner Voice remains strong at Halton Adult Learning, with learners expressing how programmes have impacted on their confidence, employability, academic skills and social wellbeing:

3.23 *'I have had a great experience whilst being a learner here, it has built up my confidence, and I have also gained new qualifications to help improve my chances of finding a job. Everyone I have been with have been kind, friendly and just overall lovely people who want to help you.'*  
(Digital Inclusion Learner)

3.24 *'Amazing, I love the atmosphere, the teachers. Everyone is very nice and helpful. I'm very thankful that the childcare costs are covered, I wouldn't be able to do the course otherwise. It's really nice to get out of the house and meet new people.'*  
(Write Your Own Children's Story Learner)

3.25 *'I felt really supported and given clear goals and expectations. Sometimes it felt like information overload at first but then criteria would be broken down into easy, manageable chunks with plenty of support and guidance to hit assessment criteria.'* (Award in Education and Training Learner)

3.26 Managers in the service have worked hard to foster collaboration across other Council services and organisations across the borough. The service maintains strong relationships across Halton and the Wider Liverpool City Region with operational and strategic partners in Employment, Skills and Inclusion, driven by

the Halton Employment Partnership (HEP) and membership of various multi-agency groups.

### **3.27 Next Steps**

The service aims to improve its achievement rates in 25/26, particularly in accredited programmes. This will be achieved by continued review of retention and achievement in these programmes, particularly in areas of concern such as maths and English. The service has recruited new members of staff in these areas; these members of staff will be closely supported by leaders in order to increase retention and achievement rates. The service has also changed to a new Awarding Organisation for maths, English and Digital Skills, who provide a more robust Initial Assessment platform. This will enable tutors to get a clearer view of learners' starting points and enable them to work with the learner to progress more securely through their qualifications.

3.28 The service will continue to improve and increase its relationships with key stakeholders to ensure that curriculum intent, design and implementation is as inclusive as possible and ensures equality of opportunity for those facing disadvantage. For example, continuing to maximise opportunities borne out of HEP partnerships and utilising the expertise of HBC colleagues, such as those specialising in disability and accessibility.

3.29 Leaders will implement three new Test and Learn projects in 25/26, aimed at further removing barriers for those facing disadvantage: a Care Leaver Ambassador project aiming to increase the number of Care Experienced Young People accessing Adult Learning provision; an Adult Learning mentoring project for existing learners to broaden their skillsets in supporting newer learners; and an ESOL Baby Steps project aiming to support those who do not have English as a second language to access health services.

### **3.30 Concluding comments**

Halton Adult Learning has sustained a strong position since the start of the academic year 25/26; with the inclusion of a summer timetable and an increased number of accredited programmes in the Autumn term, the service has performed consistently at over 100% of its planned delivery allocation. With this in mind, the service will apply for growth at the next LCR Performance Management Point in March 2026.

3.31 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 continue to provide residents with the opportunity to access new learning opportunities that will provide them with the transferable skills they need for their next steps, whether that be improved personal circumstances, further learning or paid employment.

## **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 to prevent reconciliation and to be able to sustain the Service. As the service only achieved 97% of its target in 24/25, the reconciliation is anticipated to be around £20,000 this year. The Combined Authority recognises the continued progress made by the service and has not reduced the overall allocation for 25/26. As of December 2025, the service is currently performing at 101% of its funding target, with another 30+ courses to begin in the Spring term. The service will apply for a growth in allocation in March 2026.

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

### **6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**

Learners have explored ways to monetise their talents, setting up Amazon accounts to sell their published stories, and taking commissions for craft projects. Learners writing memoirs found the process to be cathartic and empowering; learners undertaking 'Mindfulness Mondays' and 'After Work Art' found the courses invaluable to their mental health and ability to relax away from their stressful 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. For 25/26, the service has broadened its level 2 offer, supporting learners in achieving substantial qualifications. From a learner progression perspective, the service aims to introduce a wider level 3 offer via Free Courses for Jobs funding in 26/27.

### **6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families**

Many of the skills developed on courses at Adult Learning seek to address skills gaps in adults that have a direct impact on children, grandchildren and other family members. Family Learning remained a core part of the Adult Learning Curriculum in 24/25, with 607 parents enrolling on to courses in literacy, numeracy, child development and mental health programmes.

### **6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**

Halton Adult Learning are committed to empowering its residents and providing new opportunities for those in need. Adult Learning programmes in 24/25 were free for those earning under £33,958.60, and the curriculum designed in a way that provided opportunities to develop cultural capital – for example studying others' published writing, artist's pieces and visiting educational attractions. Through the Adult Skills Fund Learner Support Funding the service was able to fund transport, childcare and Warm Hub (food and drink) supplies to those in need to ensure barriers to learning were removed wherever possible.

### **6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future**

Sustainable materials were utilised where possible. For example, learners on sewing courses were encouraged to bring in pre-loved pieces from home to re-use the material instead of purchasing new. Learners are provided with reusable water bottles in their welcome packs to reduce the use of single use plastics.

#### **6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**

Through curriculum design and development, appreciation for the borough and community was embedded into the delivery of courses. The service offered creative sessions during World Refugee Week to promote social cohesion and a sense of belonging. Learners visited local landmarks such as the Dukesfield murals and designed and created a new mural in Widnes Library.

#### **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 identified

#### **9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 None identified

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

'None under the meaning of the Act.'