



Residents, Education and Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee Review Scoping Report

A review into Hillingdon's Adult and Community Learning Service

1. REVIEW OBJECTIVES

Aim and background to review

The Hillingdon Adult and Community Learning (HACL) service provides courses for adults in Hillingdon, externally funded by the Education and Skills Funding Service (ESFA) and the GLA following the delegation of funds to the London Mayor from August 2019. Historically, approximately 3000 learners have taken courses a year, resulting in approximately 5000 enrolments, the vast majority of whom are Hillingdon residents.

Avenues of funding for the Council's wide range of courses is due to change in March 2021, with the completion of the additional externally-funded Strategic Investment Pot project, while any reduction in fee income as result of declining learner numbers (for example, due to the Covid-19 pandemic), could impact on the financial viability of certain courses. A key focus of the review should therefore be the identification of additional sources of funding to ensure service continuity or expansion, as well as ensuring effective use of existing funds to ensure continuing value for money.

While courses aim to be as accessible as possible to residents, the current pandemic and periodic lockdowns have meant that some residents have been unable to attend classes in person. The move to virtual meetings through the use of remote meeting technology has also proved difficult for some learners, through a combination of lack of IT skills or lack of availability of the requisite IT equipment at home. A further focus of the review could be to assess how to provide services to those residents who are unable to attend classes in person, or who lack confidence in their ability to use virtual meetings tools.

In addition, the unique circumstances of the pandemic could provide the service with additional opportunities to assess its current service offering and ensure the courses provided are responsive to newly identified or emerging requirements in a post-Covid world, including increased working arrangements with other Council departments or external partners.

The review should also carefully consider the recommendations resulting from Ofsted's inspection in December 2019 and the actions being taken to address these concerns. In addition, the Committee should obtain feedback from learners and service providers, to ensure the service offering is agile and responsive to changing learner needs.

Terms of Reference

1. To understand Hillingdon's current adult education service offering, including feedback from learners and from recent Ofsted inspections;
2. To review existing best practice and identify further innovative ways of working, as identified through research and examination of other local government and volunteer service providers;
3. To examine how the service is currently funded, any risk of reduced funding, and how to ensure service continuity or expansion through the identification of additional funding opportunities;
4. To identify budget considerations and determine the service's value for money proposition;
5. To examine departmental, partnership, and multi-agency working to identify any gaps and opportunities to draw together the different strands of activities, ensuring the service is agile and responsive and is meeting the needs of its learners; and
6. To make practical, prudent recommendations to Cabinet, (and other bodies if applicable), from the Committee's findings to support residents engaging with the service.

2. INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS

Current intelligence, best practice and research

The 'LGA Handbook for Councillors', attached as a background paper, suggests that adult education services have outcomes in six main categories:

1. Employment, skills and qualifications
2. Health and wellbeing
3. Integrations and inclusion
4. Culture and creativity
5. Attitudes, aptitudes and characteristics
6. Life transitions.

The report goes on to list several clear positive impacts on learners as a result of adult education, including gaining and retaining employment, increased earnings and aspirations, improved mental health, healthier lifestyle choices, boosted social connections and cohesion, greater community involvement and democratic participation, and reduced crime and antisocial behaviour.

In line with these six categories, Hillingdon Adult and Community Learning has the following mission statement: that ‘every learner receives an outstanding learning experience that supports them towards a clearly identified and ambitious goal and encourages their economic, social and emotional wellbeing’.

Each year, the service produces its own self-assessment report, attached as a background paper, with key points reproduced below. The report contains an overview of the service, including learner profiles, achievement results, recent Ofsted inspections, and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The service gave itself a score of ‘2 – Good’, in line with the grade given by Ofsted as a result of their most recent inspection in December 2019.

In 2019-20, the HACL learner profile was:

Residency	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Hillingdon resident	4610 (91.2%)	4798 (92.8%)	3566 (90.9%)
London resident	318 (6.3%)	256 (5.0%)	301 (7.7%)
Out of London resident	123 (2.4%)	116 (2.2%)	58 (1.5%)
Total	5051	5170	3925

Achievement Rates:

Achievement rates across the service in 2019-20 were good for most learners who adapted to online learning. There was no significant difference in achievements between learners living in the north and south of the Borough, however, lower retention rates had an impact on results in other areas leading to varied and nuanced rates within and between curriculum areas and provision types.

Service Headline Data	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Enrolments	5051	5170	3925
Retention	93%	92.6%	84.7%
Pass Rate (results of those who stay until the end of the course)	95.5%	96.6%	92.9%
Achievement Rate (results of those who left before the end of the course)	88.9%	89.5%	78.6%
Underpinning data			

Qualification courses and non-regulated ASB	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Enrolments	2423	2236	1992
Retention	93.4%	93.6%	79.2%
Pass Rate	95.0%	95.9%	92.0%
Achievement Rate	88.7%	89.8%	73.0%
Community Learning: Personal Development courses	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Enrolments	1816	1351	1012
Retention	94.6%	92.2%	93.0%
Pass Rate	93.6%	96.9%	95.9%
Achievement Rate	88.5%	89.9%	89.2%
Community Learning: Targeted Outreach	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Enrolments	722	1512	921
Retention	93.2%	92.1%	86.9%
Pass Rate	93.6%	96.9%	93.4%
Achievement Rate	88.5%	89.4%	81.2%

- Strengths of the service include effective leadership and management, team working, and financial and resource management, as well as the quality of the education provided. The team's ability to respond to emerging issues was seen in the swift efforts to address the impact of Covid-19 on the way in which the service was delivered, and which resulted in the positive numbers of learners achieving their qualifications in June 2020. Actions as a result of Covid included transferring to online delivery of classes through existing online platforms. However, some learners were reluctant to transfer to online learning, which had an adverse impact on their achievement rates. Other courses that relied on in-person learning, or which were held in community centres, were paused and then resumed once lockdowns had ended. As a result, the service identified an area for improvement in their self-assessment report that, 'Sustainable new models are needed for areas of provision and activities that didn't transition well during the pandemic, including ALDD courses, outreach, IT, volunteering and enrichment activities'.

Adults with learning difficulties and disabilities were unable to adapt to online learning sufficiently to continue their classes. Following the closure of the community centre venues, the courses were closed, which resulted in a 25% achievement rate for these classes. Courses resumed once the Government's lockdown rules were relaxed. The

Committee should carefully consider how the service can work to further support such learners moving forward.

The service regularly bids for additional projects to develop the course offer and provide support to residents. In 2019-20 these included the Strategic Investment Pot (education and careers advice and support for learners to overcoming barriers to learning), the Talk English project (for residents with low levels of English to begin speaking and listening in English) and work to develop and upskill childminders, in partnership with local authority colleagues.

Improvements made in 2020 included:

- A refreshed course offer for adults with learning difficulties, including pre-employment workshops and a pilot programme for high needs learners;
- Targeted course delivery for learners with emotional health and wellbeing issues;
- Newly created systems to support online learning, including online learning walks and shared folders;
- Support for learners moving to online learning;
- Creation of a new online initial assessment process to ensure learners join the most appropriate courses;
- New processes to progress learners to next qualification levels upon completion of their current courses; and
- New webpages to support online enrolment and the access of information and support.

Further background papers detail Ofsted's most recent inspection of the service, which took place in December 2019, and which resulted in a Good judgement. However, inspectors highlighted a number of areas requiring improvement, which have been set out below, alongside the work currently underway to address these:

- ☐ Targeted professional development is required to ensure that feedback from tutors consistently helps learners improve the standard of their writing including their spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- ☐ Existing measures to robustly and effectively capture the impact of the curriculum on learners' lives should be strengthened. Improved progression data will help managers to better understand the learner journey and plan for learner progression over longer periods of time.
- ☐ Senior leaders should put in place arrangements that provide the support and challenge managers need to improve further the quality of education provided.

During the relevant information gathering sessions, the Committee should request further detail of how these concerns are being addressed, with a view to endorsement or identification of further actions.

Hearing directly from learners will comprise a key part of the forthcoming information gathering sessions, as set out further in this document. However, feedback received throughout the last 12 months has shown that learners are reporting good progress in their own personal development, behaviours and attitudes to learning. Learners have advised of feeling increased confidence, skills, and self-sufficiency. Attendance has

remained high, with learners committing to their courses while managing their additional responsibilities.

An annual survey of learners carried out by HACL, as well as a separate survey conducted by Ofsted, is detailed within the self-assessment report. Results show that learners feel overwhelmingly positive regarding their service offering.

The majority of funding for the Council's Adult Education services is via the DfE's adult education budget, apportioned by the ESFA. However, funding has reduced markedly in recent years, with national funding reduced by 47% between 2009/10 and 2018/19. In March 2021, the externally-funded Strategic Investment Pot is due to be completed, and a reduction in learner numbers due to ongoing Covid-19 could further reduce fee income. The Committee will therefore need to carefully investigate the impact of this reduced funding on the service provision, identify any potential new avenues for funding, and explore innovative or effective ways to ensure that existing funds are used most effectively, with a view to ensuring value for money.

The background papers 'LGA Handbook for Councillors' and 'Adult Community Education – Supporting Place and People: Characteristics of Success', include greater detail of the role of Councillors within adult education, the importance of scrutiny of such services, and a number of case studies from local government adult education services. Links to these documents are provided below.

Further lines of enquiry, research, and ideas for best practice will be identified as the review progresses.

Responsibilities

The portfolio Cabinet Member responsible is Councillor Susan O'Brien, Cabinet Member for Families, Education and Wellbeing.

Further information

Throughout the review, Members will be made of aware of publications and studies which will help inform Members during the review. A selection of background papers are attached to this document.

3. EVIDENCE & ENQUIRY

Lines of Enquiry and Witness testimony

Lines of enquiry and potential witnesses could include:

- A review of LBH's current service offering
- Current funding mechanisms and risk factors for reduced funding
- Alternate funding opportunities
- Receipt of feedback and response to requests from learners
- Best practice and innovation from partners agencies or other local government officers
- Impact of Covid-19 on the service offering, and opportunities for changes to the service moving forward

Emerging conclusions or themes for development

These will emerge and become apparent as the review progresses.

4. REVIEW PLANNING & ASSESSMENT

Proposed timeframe & milestones for the review up to Cabinet and beyond in terms of monitoring:

Meeting Date	Action	Purpose / Outcome
27 January 2021	Agree Scoping Report	Information and analysis
23 February 2021	Witness Session 1	Feedback from service users: learners, volunteers, staff and community partners / Learner Council
17 March 2021	Witness Session 2	Planned service offer in 2021-22 including the available funding and how it is used in comparison with other West London providers
20 April 2021	Witness Session 3	Future challenges and opportunities
XX June 2021	Findings	To discuss key findings and identify potential recommendations
XX July 2021	Approval of draft final report	Proposals – agree recommendations and final draft report

Resource requirements

None.

Equalities impact

TBC.

Background Papers

HACL Self-Assessment Report 2019-20 (attached)

Ofsted Report 2019: Short inspection of Hillingdon London Borough Council (attached)

[Learning For Life: The Role Of Adult Community Education In Developing Thriving Local Communities - A Handbook For Councillors](#)

[Adult Community Education – Supporting Place and People: Characteristics of Success](#)

[A plan for an adult skills and lifelong learning revolution - Education Committee - House of Commons \(parliament.uk\)](#)

[MPs call for adult skills revolution to foster new culture of lifelong learning - Committees - UK Parliament](#)