HILLINGDON
LONDON

A

Children, Families and Education Select Committee

Councillors on the Committee

Councillor Heena Makwana (Chairman)
Councillor Roy Chamdal (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Kishan Bhatt
Councillor Tony Gill
Councillor Rita Judge
Councillor Peter Smallwood
Councillor Jan Sweeting (Opposition Lead)

Co-Opted Member
Tony Little, Roman Catholic Diocesan Representative

Date:	**TUESDAY, 18 APRIL 2023**
Time:	**7.00 PM**
Venue:	**COMMITTEE ROOM 5 - CIVIC CENTRE, HIGH STREET, UXBRIDGE, UB8 1UW**
Meeting Details:	Members of the Public and Press are welcome to attend this meeting

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Published: Thursday 06 April 2023

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London Borough of Hillingdon - Committee details - Children, Families and Education Select Committee

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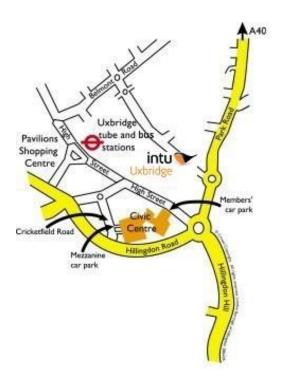**Attending, reporting and filming of meetings**

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Terms of Reference

Children, Families, & Education Select Committee

To undertake the overview and scrutiny role in relation to the following Cabinet Member portfolio(s) and service areas:

Cabinet Member Portfolios	• Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education
Relevant service areas	1. Children's Services (including corporate parenting) 2. Children's Safeguarding 3. Youth Justice 4. Youth Services 5. SEND 6. Education 7. Children and Families Development 8. Skills & lifelong learning

This Select Committee will establish a Panel to support strong oversight of the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities. The Committee may appoint 3 Members to this Panel based on political balance. Membership may include non-Cabinet Members not on the Committee. The Committee may also appoint relevant Council officers and other external stakeholders to the Panel and agree its chairmanship and operation. In agreeing its operation, the Committee will provide for the Panel not to be able to establish any other sub-group or body to carry out its responsibilities.

Agenda

Minutes

CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE

14 March 2023

**Meeting held at Committee Room 5 – Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge, UB8 1UW**

	Committee Members Present: Councillors Heena Makwana (Chairman), Roy Chamdal (Vice-Chairman), Philip Corthorne, Tony Gill, Rita Judge, Peter Smallwood, and Jan Sweeting (Opposition Lead) **Co-Opted Member Present:** Tony Little **Officers Present:** Anthony Madden (Head of Service, First Response, MASH and Out of Hours Social Work), Julie Kelly (Executive Director of Children's Services), Michael Hawkins (Interim Service Manager -Education Partnerships and School Improvement), Dan Kennedy (Corporate Director of Central Services), and Ryan Dell (Democratic Services Officer) **Also Present:** Siobhan Appleton (Assistant Director for Safeguarding Adults, Safeguarding Children and Children Looked After), Emma Kay (Named Nurse for Safeguarding Children (Hillingdon)/ CNWL Interim Head of Safeguarding Children), and Sian Thomas (Head of Children's Services, Hillingdon)
68.	**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** *(Agenda Item 1)* Apologies were received from Councillor Kishan Bhatt with Councillor Philip Corthorne substituting.
69.	**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING** *(Agenda Item 2)* No interests were declared.
70.	**MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING** *(Agenda Item 3)* Members thanked officers for the minutes.

	RESOLVED: That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed.
71.	**TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED AS PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT THE ITEMS MARKED AS PART II WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE** *(Agenda Item 4)* It was confirmed that all items would be heard in Part I.
72.	**WITNESS SESSION 5 – PARTNERSHIP WORKING** *(Agenda Item 5)* The Committee held its fifth witness session into its review of the Stronger Families Hub. This session focused on partnership working with health representatives. Witnesses in attendance were the Head of Service, First Response, MASH and Out of Hours Social Work; the Assistant Director for Safeguarding Adults, Safeguarding Children and Children Looked After; the Named Nurse for Safeguarding Children (Hillingdon)/ CNWL Interim Head of Safeguarding Children), and the Head of Children's Services for Hillingdon. The Head of Service, First Response, MASH and Out of Hours Social Work introduced himself and his role with the Stronger Families Hub. It was noted that this session related to partnership working with health representatives and that a future session would be held with education representatives. The partners worked with families who were under pressure, and also dealt with impacts of COVID-19 and the cost of living. Despite the challenges, the partners remained committed to providing support, and there was close collaboration between health partners and the Stronger Families Hub. The main source of referrals had come via the Police, with up to 11 officers on site within the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH*) to enable the quick exchange of information. The second most referrals had come via health partners. *(*MASH was the Stronger Families Hub's safeguarding element where professionals shared information quickly about police referrals of domestic abuse (Merlins) and referrals where there were concerns about a child's safety or welfare.)* The Head of Children's Services, CNWL, noted that their portfolio included children aged 0-19, health visiting, school nursing, child development centres, community paediatricians, children integrated therapy, occupational therapy, paediatric occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech and language, children's community nursing team and working with those with life-limiting conditions. Health representatives were a large partner of the Stronger Families Hub. The above noted services had been asked about their experiences with the Stronger Families Hub prior to this witness session, and the feedback was positive, despite some teething problems. Partners highlighted the benefit of the Stronger Families Hub as one forum for a range of issues, and this was linked to the early identification of needs. It was also noted that partners had a strong relationship with the Local Authority.

The Named Nurse for Safeguarding Children (Hillingdon)/ CNWL Interim Head of Safeguarding Children noted that they worked with all children's services when they had safeguarding concerns and delivered training to staff. They line managed the MASH Health Practitioner within Hillingdon. There was lots of interaction with MASH and these services used the Stronger Families Hub a lot. The Named Nurse further noted the initial teething problems but that they were pleased with the work of the Stronger Families Hub.

The Assistant Director for Safeguarding Adults, Safeguarding Children and Children Looked After at CNWL NHS North West London worked in close collaboration will all health services including Primary Care, Primary Medical Care, Acute Trusts and Community Trusts. Part of their role was to ensure that health colleagues were discharging their safeguarding responsibilities appropriately. The Stronger Families Hub came under this remit. They noted that there had been issues for the Acute Trust with the online portal when initially launched but commended the Local Authority for its response to this. A sub-group has been established which had discussions around the initial operational issues with the online portal, which had helped to resolve some of these issues and to reduce anxieties. It was noted that there was still some work to do with Primary Medical Care via support for GPs in terms of accessing and using the portal. A positive aspect was the useful guidance document that had come out alongside the launch of the portal. This had been well received by Primary Care.

Members questioned how feedback was received from or on behalf of non-verbal children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND). Witnesses noted that training was ongoing with key workers as well as social workers which included training on communication tools, such as parent-child observations for non-vernal children. Continuous improvement was reviewed on a four-weekly basis through one-to-one supervision, while there was also peer supervision and group supervision. There were also workshops taking place with partners. There was a reliance on universal services for information sharing, but once information was shared, the process was more streamlined that it was prior to the establishment of the Stronger Families Hub due to its one number, one email, one online portal that children, parents, carers and professionals can access.

Partners further noted that training was assertive in knowing that children with SEND were at higher risk of safeguarding concerns. This was linked to the Early Health notification.

Members questioned how feedback was received from young people after any case of safeguarding breach. Partners noted that there was a focus on getting better at obtaining feedback and that the Care Quality Commission (CQC) asked for evidence of this feedback. Reference was made to the Teddy Bear's picnic but it was noted that improvements were needed and so partners gave a partial assurance to the Committee on partners getting feedback from young people.

Members further highlighted other voluntary groups such as scouts and girl-guides, and sports teams as avenues for feedback or for direction to the Stronger Families Hub. Partners further noted Young Health Watch, the Children in Care Council, and the Child's Voice Panel as other avenues for feedback. Feedback was also received during the statutory SEND process. It was, however, noted that sometimes feedback was sought from the easier-to-reach groups as opposed to all groups. A possible future group for children with epilepsy was referenced as a potential new route for engagement as part of the plan for 2023.

Partners noted that for children with disabilities, when a referral was made, partners had close relationships to identify which professionals know that individual child well, for example a Speech Therapist or Occupational Therapist, who could identify their communication needs and identify which tools to use to get the child's voice heard.

Reference was made to Speech and Language therapists within the Youth Offending Service – these were key in the communication process and were often linked to undiagnosed cases of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Members asked about the challenges faced and what areas of improvement could be identified. Partners noted that quality assurance of referrals being made was one area to look at, as well as mental health services. On quality assurance, partners further noted that this was tracked, and there was practitioner-to-practitioner tracking where possible. This had led to less escalation to managers. Partners noted other partner organisations such as Border Force and noted an increase in quality in Early Help Assessments. Partners noted that the form on the online portal had been amended to be more concise, and now consisted of drop-down boxes. Further noted was the importance of ensuring that staff were supported in quality assurance.

Members referred to the next agenda item and asked if there was a capacity issue. Partners noted that some staff were on lean contracts and there were some vacancy issues around Paediatric Occupational Therapy, although this reflected a national issue. It was acknowledged that funds were tight but that an Asylum-Seeking Health Visitor would be beneficial as well as a Paediatric Occupational Therapist. It was noted that there was a struggle with the increase in the number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), and that the number of referrals to the Child Development Centre for concerns regarding Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) were increasing. Creative and innovative ideas were often pursued as a way around capacity issues.

Members commended the more joined-up nature of the service with partners, and asked about any issues with data sharing between agencies and how these were overcome. Partners noted that GDPR should not be a barrier to keeping children safe. It was noted that the Stronger Families Hub was a consent-based service, and it was recommended through a review that parents and carers be better informed that consent meant to more than one agency. This was known as universal consent.

There was also a named nurse for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), who was trained in information-sharing. Data was provided through the Safeguarding Children Partnership for CAMHS. It was noted here that a CAMHS post within MASH would be beneficial.

Members asked the partners about their work with other Local Authorities and how this differed from its work with Hillingdon. Partners noted that most of their work was with Hillingdon and that the service being 24-hours was impressive, as not having to use emergency teams outside of core hours kept the quality of service high. Also, having the one front door was beneficial. Partners noted that there was not enough experience of other Boroughs to give an accurate comparison. Partners again referenced the earlier point about quality assurance as an area for improvement. It was noted that the voice of the child runs through all sub-groups, and this was something that Hillingdon did well.

Members asked about the percentage of children with additional needs being identified through ASQ checks, how many were missed, and where any were missed, what was done to bridge this gap, in particular between children with and without SEND. It was noted here that further information could be shared outside of the meeting.

Partners noted the importance of early identification, and that they worked with a designated officer for SEND. The multi-agency approach of the EHCP was noted, and there was good signposting to, for example, resources available in alternative languages. Partners noted that the multi-agency work around SEND was strong.

Members asked partners for their input into possible recommendations for the major review. Partners noted that there were concerns around new arrivals in hotels, and so an Asylum-Seeking Health Visitor would be beneficial in terms of early identification of needs. Partners also had concerns over the number of vacancies within their services. Investment into children's integrated therapy services was recommended, as was more focus on children with ASD. ASD navigators or pathways was suggested as a new approach to ASD. Stronger integration was needed between children's services and adult services, as well as the transition when young people more from children's services to adult services. The new Transition nurse was highlighted as a recent benefit. More focus on mental health provision and on neurodiversity support was recommended.

Members sought clarification on, and partners confirmed that, communication within the partners' services was good, but communication with other agencies was what required improvement. It was further noted here that quality assurance was a high priority for the Stronger Families Hub sub-group.

RESOLVED: That the Committee asked questions of the witnesses and noted the updated scoping report.

73.	**ANNUAL EDUCATION STANDARDS** *(Agenda Item 6)*
	The Interim Service Manager – Education Partnerships and School Improvement introduced the item on Annual Education Standards. It was noted that outcomes had depressed nationally in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was highlighted that there was some strong performance among Early Years, however there were concerns around performance at Key Stage 5, especially in A Level results and especially when compared to other London Boroughs, although this was again in line with the national picture. There was an element of reverting back to pre-COVID performance levels, although there was also a national issue around attendance, which had knock-on effects on outcomes.

Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) numbers were referenced, and it was noted that there was good information sharing with schools, as well as a partnership with the London Borough of Ealing. It was noted that there were currently just over 100 NEETs, however there were lots of unknowns, for example where young people may have left the Borough but were still identified as unknown. It was noted that more capacity was needed as some staff were currently borrowed from the DWP. Mental health issues leading to young people becoming NEET was highlighted, and this was linked to the capacity issues and being able to hold conversations earlier in the academic year.

Members referenced page 7 of the report, which stated that 56 childminders had resigned from the sector since the start of the pandemic and asked about the impact this had had. Officers noted that some young people were difficult to engage with, and this this was in part due to COVID-19, but schools were doing all that was expected of them to this end.

It was further noted that officers were tracking numbers of exclusions and suspensions, and reached out to schools where these numbers were high. Reference was made to the inclusion toolkit for early intervention and ensuring that the right steps were taken.

Members asked about the role of the Council in monitoring and evaluation and stepping in. Reference was made to previous questions submitted by the Committee for which answers were forthcoming.

Officers referenced the school improvement approach and the three-tier approach of universal, targeted and intensive. It was noted that this depended on the school type and for academies, the process would have instead involved the Regional Schools Commissioner. There were regular meetings with the CEOs of multi-academy trusts (MATs). Two new School Improvement Partners (known as Education Advisors in Hillingdon) had been appointed, and there was a Primary and Secondary Lead. 16 schools were listed on the Council's Schools At Risk Register at the end of 2021/22; this comprised of 8 academy schools and 8 maintained schools. It was noted here that concerns could be educational or financial. |

Further to this, Members referenced section 1.6 Performance Outcomes of the report, and it was noted that there was a Regional Schools Commissioner for academies. Some schools were within Single Academy Trusts which presented challenges. There was still work to be done with schools at risk, and engagement improvements were also required. Members asked about receiving a sub-analysis of the data by age and ethnicity. Officers confirmed that this could be provided outside of the meeting.

Members referenced School Attendance Orders and asked for further information pertaining to resourcing issues. Officers confirmed that this could also be provided outside of the meeting.

Members asked about how the role of the Committee differed in relation to academies as opposed to maintained schools. Officers noted the more direct accountability over maintained schools and again referenced the role of the Regional Schools Commissioner in the accountability of academies. Officers re-iterated that the Council had a responsibility to all children, but that more engagement was needed. The focus on data had been skewed by COVID-19. Sessions had been run via the Primary Education Advisor on the topic of inspections, and sessions would be run on data.

Members asked about attainment for children with SEND and how it was ensured that targets were set appropriately. Officers noted that in interpreting SEND outcomes data, it was important to note that every child was different, and that attainment could be measured via certification, pathways or employment. Officers noted that challenge with increasing numbers of children with concerns of ASD. The need to upskill the education workforce was noted and part of this should be around higher expectations for children with SEND. It was noted that this had been impacted by COVID-19.

Members referenced the 3.5% of schools requiring improvement. It was noted that Early Years settings rated as Inadequate and Requires Improvement were encouraged to sign up for the Experts and Mentors programme. This was led by the Department for Education. Members asked officers for further information on Pen Green. Further information could be provided on this outside of the meeting.

Members referenced the Key challenges, which stated that there was a higher number of children starting Early Years provision with SEND concerns than pre-COVID. Officers noted that there were occasions of children displaying, for example, a communication delay or attention delay prior to coming into Early Years settings as opposed to as a result of COVID-19. There was also a staffing issue for Early Years settings, which was linked to training needs.

Members asked about the issue of repeat absences and the adequacy of sanctions and officers noted that this had not been raised as a concern by headteachers, and that there was a follow-through in terms of sanctions. The issue of absences in holiday seasons was raised. Officers noted that it was often the case that repeat absentees were known to headteachers, and often these cases were referred to the Stronger Families Hub to identify underlying

issues such as mental health and wellbeing, or travel costs. It was highlighted here that absence was a symptom not a cause.

Members referenced the poorer outcomes for Key Stage 5 and asked for possible reasons for this. Officers noted there may be more robustness in Key Stage 3 and 4; that there was a big gap between Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5; and the impact of COVID-19, where some students had sat A Level exams but not GCSE exams. This was being reviewed with schools through a peer review process and via the Hillingdon Learn Partnerships. It was noted that students were building resilience. Members asked about students leaving the Borough after Key Stage 4 to attend out-of-Borough settings for Key Stage 5, if there was a way to measure this, and whether this had a significant impact on the results at Key Stage 5. Officers noted that most 6th Forms in the Borough were full and students moving outside of the Borough was not seen as an issue. Officers noted that they may be able to provide further information on this.

Members asked about the reference in the report to low practitioner morale, and whether this was still the case. Officers confirmed that it was still the case and was linked to low pay and scarcity of opportunity.

Members asked about the table of Placements of Children of Gypsies, Roma Travellers, Refugees and Asylum Seekers, and asked if more details could be provided, possibly through an audit of information for primary schools, either during the next annual report or sooner. It was referenced that the Fair Access Panel worked with secondary schools. It was noted here that representations were being made frequently to the Home Office; that there was lots of turnover; and that this was a huge pressure on resources such as NEET unknowns. Officers noted that there was a strategy for Ukrainian children, and also a strategy for asylum-seeking children.

Members referenced safeguarding in inadequate settings and officers noted that this was a high priority, although a Safeguarding Officer would be beneficial to enable more work done in-house. There was collaboration between schools and via the Primary Forum, Hillingdon Association of Secondary Headteachers, and the Hillingdon Learning Partnerships through which new headteachers were offered mentoring from experienced headteachers.

In relation to Bishop Ardern, a proposed new secondary school in Ruislip, this was currently under review.

Members asked about the Five to Thrive programme which was being introduced across all providers – this was a partnership approach to working with Parents and Practitioners in recognising the importance of and supporting healthy Brain development. This was being rolled out as the result of a pilot scheme.

Members asked about the numbers of children with SEND in mainstream schools and what the proportion was. Members asked if it would be possible

	in a future Committee to have an audit of numbers of SEND children by individual school and to include comparisons of standards and funding. Officers noted that some of this information could be taken from the school census.

Members referenced the addendum, which noted an area of concern in relation to staffing insufficiencies within a NEET team. Officers noted that this was under review. Officers noted that an update on this could be brought to a future Committee.

Members asked if there was a register of elective home educated children. There were links to the Stronger Families Hub in terms of safeguarding, and there was a robust policy that was robustly implemented including a trigger review of the appropriateness of home education. It was noted that a register of home educated children would not identify those who had never been in school unless identified elsewhere.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

1. **Noted the key findings set out in the report; and**

2. **Delegated to the Democratic Services Officer in conjunction with the Chairman (and in consultation with the Opposition Lead) to agree comments to be submitted to Cabinet** |
| 74. | **UKRAINIAN CHILDREN UPDATE** *(Agenda Item 7)*

The Corporate Director of Central Services introduced the report on the Ukrainian Children Update. The Corporate Director of Central Services coordinated an officer group comprising a range of services, such as Children's Services, Adult Social Care, Counter Fraud and Housing with a view to placing guests with vetted hosts. Over the past year, officers had been working with the voluntary sector to help, for example, register with GPs, to obtain school places, and to connect with other Ukrainians. The focus had also turned to adult learning and preparation for work and other employment opportunities. It was highlighted that schools had been provided with information and access to the LEAP digital platform, and that officers had responded to needs including psychological needs, and the Virtual School had helped with the placement of refugee children and with help for non-English speakers.

There was also the intention here of avoiding children becoming NEET and that the Council had access to grant funding based on head count. Support had also turned to achieving educational outcomes, and it was noted that Ukrainians were not saturated in specific schools. A cluster model had been employed and met the needs of both the individual and the school. Internal services were all involved in this process, to identify any red flags, and to identify any issues at an early stage. It was noted here that some websites were available in Ukrainian. |

	Members asked about how targeted support was measured, and officers noted that it was too early to say at this point, although a further report could be brought to a future Committee.

Members highlighted the difference between Ukrainian children placed under the Homes for Ukrainians scheme, as opposed to those that were not placed under the scheme. Officers noted that this related to the type of visa and to funding. Funding was received for those placed under the scheme only. In November 2022, Hillingdon had received notification of a grant of £712,896 for the integration of Ukrainian children into schools and the wider community on arrival into the UK under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. The grant funding was to be distributed throughout 2023/24 on a needs basis.

Members put on record their support for Ukraine. Member asked about numbers of bi-lingual officers; about how the Council was supporting those who had suffered bereavements; and about the partnership with Wealdstone FC. Officers noted that there was a shortfall of bi-lingual officers, but this was not seen as an issue as there were other avenues/ networks to deal with this; there was an educational psychology service and health services available for help with bereavement, and officers were making schools aware of this; and the partnership with Wealdstone FC offered places for children to attend training events and to watch matches.

Members asked about preparations for longer-term arrangements and plans for more integration. Officers noted that arrangements were being made for the next financial year with a focus on integration and re-settlement. There were also arrangements for Ukrainians to network with each other. Officers and volunteers were working together on this and in some cases Ukrainian guests worked on networking with more recent arrivals.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the information presented within the report and asked questions about the support being provided to children. |
| 75. | **CPP MINUTES** *(Agenda Item 8)*

Officers noted that the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 24 January 2023 had come to the Select Committee for noting.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Panel. |
| 76. | **UPDATE TO CPP TERMS OF REFERENCE** *(Agenda Item 9)*

Officers highlighted the two updates which the Corporate Parenting Panel wished to make to their Terms of Reference. These updates were brought to the Select Committee for their approval.

RESOLVED: That the Committee: |

	1. **Noted the contents of the report; and**
	2. **Approved the updates to the Corporate Parenting Panel's Terms of Reference**
77.	**FORWARD PLAN** *(Agenda Item 10)*
	Members asked about the Early Years item and whether the Select Committee would be consulted. It was confirmed under the Work Programme item that Cabinet may agree to consult on the 'Hillingdon 0-19 years core offer to children, young people and their families' and on the 'Hillingdon's Youth Offer and Delivery Model'. If Cabinet agreed to consult on these items, the Select Committee would be part of the consultations and so these items had been provisionally placed on the Work Programme for June 2023.
	RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the Forward Plan
78.	**WORK PROGRAMME** *(Agenda Item 11)*
	Members clarified the above. Officers noted that the SEND Strategy Update had been added for June 2023. The Twice-Yearly School Place Planning report had moved from April and September to July and November at officers' request in order to provide better information to Committee. Members asked if the Youth Offer report would include information from, for example, any third-party groups, as opposed to a Council-only view. Officers noted that the report that may be considered for consultation by Cabinet was on Hillingdon's Youth Offer. In terms of the wider offer, which included the Youth Directory of Services, this would not come to Committee in June, but could be scheduled at a later Committee.
	RESOLVED: That the Committee considered the report.
	The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 9.03pm

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information of any of the resolutions please contact Ryan Dell at democratic@hillingdon.gov.uk. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.

The public part of this meeting was filmed live on the Council's YouTube Channel to increase transparency in decision-making, however these minutes remain the official and definitive record of proceedings.

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Hillingdon Adult and Community Learning Review 2021-2022 - Update

Committee name	Children, Families and Education Select Committee

Officer reporting	Debbie Scarborough – Children's Services Directorate

Papers with report	Hillingdon's Adult and Community Learning Service Review 2021-2022 report

Wards	All

HEADLINES

This report provides an update on a previous review into Hillingdon's Adult and Community Service, now known as Learn Hillingdon Adult Community Education, which was reviewed by the Residents, Education and Environmental Services Policy and Overview Committee during 2020-21. The report, attached, was submitted to Cabinet in November 2021.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee notes the report and questions officers on the report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

See report.

RESIDENT BENEFIT

The review was conducted to see how Learn Hillingdon Adult Community Education was performing, and if any improvements could be made to the service.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications for this matter.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications for this matter.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL.

Report to the Children, Families and Education Select Committee
Date: 18 April 2023
Presenting Officer: Debbie Scarborough. Service Manager, Learn Hillingdon ACE.

Hillingdon's Adult and Community Service, now known as Learn Hillingdon Adult Community Education, was reviewed by the Residents, Education and Environmental Services Policy and Overview Committee during 2020-21.   The report, attached, was submitted to Cabinet in November 2021.

It made five recommendations and requested that the Service Manager return to committee over time to report on progress against these recommendations. This report supports that progress update for presentation to the Families, Education and Wellbeing Select Committee in April 2023.

Recommendation in the Report	Progress update
That Cabinet recognises the good work and improvisation and HACL service during the recent COVID pandemic and notes the new ways of working identified and underway.	The Cabinet meeting of November 2021 considered the report and noted the recommendations of the review.
That the service be rebranded to Learn Hillingdon ACE (Adult Community Education), supported by a communications campaign to support a 'soft relaunch' of the service to stimulate demand and uptake of courses.	The rebranding was completed in line with the service's relocation from Brookfield to the Civic Centre in August 2022. A new and more modern look and feel for the service was rolled out across all printed and digital marketing materials for the 2022/23 academic year. Traditionally a printed brochure had been produced annually outlining all courses. For 2022/23, the brochure was replaced by three smaller A5 booklets focusing on 'English, Maths, ESOL and digital skills', 'Learning for yourself', and 'Learning for work and life.' These signpost residents to key course information online to provide better value for money and increase digital marketing opportunities. In the past the brochure was uploaded to the council's website which wasn't particularly accessible. The council's website was improved by extracting the key information from the brochure and creating website pages and improving the integration with the booking portal for each subject. The result is an improved user journey and accessibility. Termly adult education e-newsletters are now being sent out to those who have subscribed to receive information on this topic. The subscriber list has grown to 1,800 and the open rate for each newsletter is extremely high between 69 per cent and 71 per cent (Usually a 20 to 25 per cent open rate is considered good). The council's e-newsletter continues to be promoted to increase subscriber rates.

	There was also increased social media on the council's corporate channels before the start of each term to raise awareness of the service and promote courses.

A range of posters, including JC Decaux, vinyl banners and pull up banners were also produced to relaunch the service, and the service continues to be promoted by way of adverts and editorial in each edition of Hillingdon People, as well as in internal communications to council staff.

Following the soft launch of the service, digital marketing opportunities will be maximised. This will include paid social media and commissioned videos to focus on learner experiences. |
| That the service continues with the new ways of working identified because of the pandemic, including increased use of technology, support for blended learning, instigation of new courses, and increased interdepartmental and partnership working via new processes. | <u>IT and digital learning for courses</u>
Additional funding during the pandemic allowed us to purchase 75 Chromebooks to support a 'loan and learn' scheme. This enabled us to continue to deliver learning opportunities online.

From the start of this scheme in 2021, 71 learners, and a few tutors, have used these Chromebooks to access online learning, online resources and complete homework. This year, 26 learners are engaged in the Loan and Learn scheme.

Most high-level vocational courses are delivered using a blend of centre-based and online learning. There are 320 enrolments in digital skills courses, 69 of which lead to a qualification.

In the recent move to the new Uxbridge location as a service we transitioned from desktop PCs to Chromebooks at all centres, providing increased flexibility for learners and tutors and improving digital skills. These are also used to teach specific digital skills courses to increase learners' ability to access online services.

<u>New courses</u>
Courses are reviewed and planned annually and adapted in-year to meet changing priorities.
Entry courses like 'Become a Care Assistant'; 'Become a Mental Health Practitioner' progress into qualifications in mental health up to and including Level 3, complemented by professional development courses in dealing with domestic abuse or palliative care.
In childcare, career progression qualifications like 'Understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences' and 'Supporting Children's Speech, Language and Communication' qualifications have been introduced to meet local need.

<u>Interdepartmental and partnership working</u>
The service held two Careers and Employment events since the report. |

	In 2021, 201 residents made up 335 attendances at 18 workshops held as part of our virtual careers fair.
	In 2022, 196 attendees engaged in 19 online workshops held on 16 different topics over two days as a blended event. 13 partners also exhibited in our centre, including the COVE Mental Health Café, the London Air Ambulance service, W London colleges and the NHS Trust. National Careers Advisors provided one-to-one support across 15 advisory sessions.
	Learners commented: 'I could talk about my professional experience and gain confidence about myself'; 'I got lots of useful information about jobs, apprenticeships and volunteering'.
	Partners commented, 'Met and networked with people who were a good fit for the vacancies we have'; 'We would be delighted to take part again'.
	In 21-22, the service worked directly with Heathrow hotels, leading to 123 asylum seekers beginning to learn English, and 69 of these are attending ESOL courses now. Additionally, a new partnership with Care for Calais this year has led to 154 new enrolments by asylum seekers this year.
	The Adolescent Development Service has continued to deliver targeted sessions between 3-6pm midweek at our Uxbridge Centre. Monica Gaga, (Targeted Programmes: ADS) said, 'We wouldn't be able to deliver our services without teaming up with yours because it removes the pressure on our budget that would otherwise stop sessions running. Also, the team at Learn Hillingdon are so welcoming. They make young people feel able to be themselves and that atmosphere and support means that young people are happy to come back to use the service again and again.'
	Learn Hillingdon is delivering the 'food' element of the council's Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme for families in receipt of free school meals from Easter 2023, currently managed by the Adolescent Development Service. Daily 'Cookery Club' during Easter and summer (x4 weeks) holiday periods support parents and children to prepare, eat and clean away one hot, healthy meal per day in the Uxbridge Centre.
	To extend the impact of this project, during the summer term we will pilot weekly 'Cookery Club' courses aimed at parents from the same target group. From the autumn term, we hope that this will be combined with a clothes bank and food bank at the centre, run by learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, which will provide further support to these families.
That officers continue lobbying the GLA to increase their grant funding allocation, in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for	The service was successful in attracting additional funding for the Multiply project of £291,829 over three years from August 2022 to July 2025. The purpose is to improve residents' numeracy skills in the context of work, supporting children's education, and everyday life. As a result, Teaching Assistants in schools are currently undertaking

Families, Education and Wellbeing, and also investigate other funding or lobbying options.	courses targeted at improving their ability to support children's maths development.

We have gained a grant increase from the GLA for an additional £200k in grant funding from 1 August 2023. This will increase our grant funding allocation level to £1.935m per annum. |
| That council continues to review and develop oversight and scrutiny, and includes an annual report to the Families, Education and Wellbeing Select Committee and Cabinet Member (inclusive of feedback from learners and tutors). | The annual self-assessment report was presented to this Committee in January 2022 and February 2023 for the relevant academic years.

Monthly meetings with the Cabinet Member and her commitment to attending service events provide closer oversight of the service. |

Debbie Scarborough
April 2023.

Hillingdon's Adult and Community Learning Service

A review by the Residents, Education & Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee (2020/21)

Members of the Committee: Councillors Wayne Bridges (Chairman), John Morgan (Vice Chairman), Jan Sweeting (Opposition Lead), Allan Kauffman, Devi Radia, Colleen Sullivan, Alan Chapman, Stuart Mathers, Paula Rodrigues & Mr Tony Little

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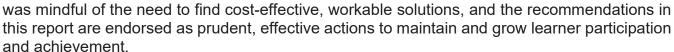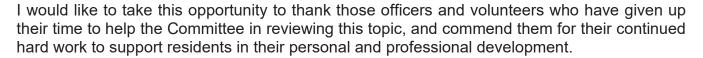|	Page
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Chairman's Foreword

On behalf of the former Residents, Education and Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee, I am pleased to present this report detailing the Committee's review into Hillingdon's Adult and Community Learning Service.

Following presentation of the Ofsted review of the service carried out in December 2019, and the following self-assessment report by the service itself, it became clear that the service was performing well. The review therefore focused on how to make further improvements to promote resident awareness and broaden participation, together with ensuring that the service remained agile to learner needs in a post-Covid world.

Information gathering focused on understanding the current service offering to residents, how the service had adapted to ensure service continuity throughout the pandemic, and what further challenges were to be overcome to turn a 'good' service into an 'outstanding' one.

Through all information gathering, the Committee was mindful of the need to find cost-effective, workable solutions, and the recommendations in this report are endorsed as prudent, effective actions to maintain and grow learner participation and achievement.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those officers and volunteers who have given up their time to help the Committee in reviewing this topic, and commend them for their continued hard work to support residents in their personal and professional development.

Councillor Wayne Bridges

Chairman of the former Residents, Education and Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee, and current Chairman of the Environment, Housing and Regeneration Select Committee.

Summary of recommendations to Cabinet

Through the witness testimony and evidence received during the detailed review by the Committee, Members have agreed the following recommendations to Cabinet:

1	That Cabinet recognises the good work and improvisation of the HACL service during the recent COVID pandemic and notes the new ways of working identified and underway.
2	That the service be rebranded to 'Hillingdon ACE' (Adult & Community Education), supported by a communications campaign to support a 'soft relaunch' of the service to stimulate demand and uptake of courses.
3	That the service continues with the new ways of working identified as a result of the pandemic, including increased use of technology, support for blended learning, instigation of new courses, and increased interdepartmental and partnership working via new processes.
4	That officers continue lobbying the GLA to increase their grant funding allocation, in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Families, Education and Wellbeing, and also investigate other funding or lobbying options.
5	That Council continues to review and develop oversight and scrutiny, and includes an annual report to the Families, Education and Wellbeing Select Committee & Cabinet Member (inclusive of feedback from learners and tutors).

Background to the review

At its meeting of 03 November 2020, the Residents, Education and Environmental Services Committee (now retired) considered the topic of Hillingdon's Adult and Community Learning Service (HACL) as its next major review.

Members were provided with an overview of the service, and understood that the service provided the following:

- Courses for Adults with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD)
- Community based courses that engage residents facing particular disadvantages (Engagement - delete engagement)
- Emotional Health and Wellbeing
- English, Maths and ESOL
- Digital Skills, IT and Business
- Vocational Learning
- Courses for Personal Development

The service's main learning centre was confirmed to be located at Brookfield in Uxbridge, with Harlington acting as the centre in the south. Two additional centres were located in South Ruislip and Ruislip Manor, both of which are shared with the Library Service. Courses were run in centres and online, or as a blend of the two, and many are run in the community as outreach provision.

It was noted that the service was externally funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and the GLA following the delegation of funds to the Mayor of London in August 2019. Historically, approximately 3000 learners have taken courses a year, resulting in approximately 5000 enrolments, the vast majority of whom are Hillingdon residents.

The Service Manager, Adult and Community Learning, advised that whilst grant funding remained stable, the additional funding generated by the Strategic Investment Pot funding bid would end when the two-year project completed in March 2021. Any reduction in fee income because of declining learner numbers (for example, due to the Covid-19 pandemic), could also impact on the financial viability of certain courses.

While courses aimed to be as accessible as possible to residents, the Covid-19 pandemic and periodic lockdowns had meant that some residents had been unable to attend classes in person. The move to virtual learning, using remote meeting technology, had 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.

Members were keen that any review focused on understanding how the service was helping support resident participation, how the service was helping residents to prepare to enter or re-enter employment, and how the service was helping residents to manage stress and mental health within

its cohorts (particularly as residents were learning to cope with the pressures of the pandemic). In addition, Members requested that the review addressed how the service was set up to cope with demand for its current, and potential new, courses, and how the service was addressing the areas for further improvement raised by Ofsted following their inspection in December 2019.

It was expected that a greater understanding of these areas of the service could highlight potential improvements, including how to further support learners in a post-pandemic world, whether there were any efficiencies to be gained by increased interdepartmental or partnership working, how to further promote the service to residents across the Borough, and whether there was any scope for increased funding.

The Committee considered that a strong understanding of these issues was a source of great importance for the residents of Hillingdon, and therefore, approved the topic as its next major review.

Evidence & Witness Testimony

The Committee's first information gathering session was held on 23 February 2021 and was themed around broadening an understanding of the service through feedback from officers and service users. The session was attended by Debbie Scarborough (Service Manager, Adult and Community Learning), Thoria King (Curriculum Manager for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities team), Ginette Powis (Sessional tutor for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities) and Ebbony Gonzalez (Learner who completed ESOL and Maths courses during the lockdown period).

The second information gathering session was held on 17 March 2021 and focused on the planned service offer for 2021-22, including the available funding and how it was to be used in comparison with other West London providers. The session was attended by Debbie Scarborough (Service Manager, Adult and Community Learning), Cristi Gonzalez (Ealing Adult Learning Manager), and Eamon Scanlon (Head of Adult Learning and Skills Service, LB Hammersmith and Fulham).

The final information gathering session was held on 20 April 2021 and was themed around current and future challenges and opportunities, and was attended by Debbie Scarborough (Service Manager, Adult and Community Learning).

The sections below summarise the information presented to the Committee by way of witness testimony and supporting written data.

The benefit of Adult Education to residents & Hillingdon's mission statement:

Firstly, the Committee wished to understand the current service offering and resultant benefits to residents. To aid this, the Committee was provided with the 'LGA Handbook for Councillors', (**Appendix E**), which suggested that adult education services had 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 handbook went on to list several clear positive impacts on learners because 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.

Hillingdon's Adult and Community Learning's mission statement was therefore aligned to these six categories, and promised 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'.

Performance of the service

The Committee was advised that each year, the service produced its own self-assessment report (**Appendix B**). Each report contained an overview of the service, including learner profiles and achievements, recent Ofsted inspections, and now, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the most recent report, the service gave itself a score of **'2 – Good'**, which was in line with the grade given by Ofsted following their most recent inspection in December 2019.

Ofsted's Review

Ofsted inspects all publicly funded education providers on a 3-year cycle, inspecting against criteria laid out in its Education Inspection Framework. HACL was last inspected in December 2019 and as due for inspection again in the 2022-23 academic year.

During its review in December 2019, Ofsted's focus was on the impact of the education provided to learners, with judgements made against four key areas:

- Quality of Education through the 'Intent', 'Implementation' and 'Impact' of the curriculum offer
- Behaviour and Attitudes
- Personal Development
- Leadership and Management.

Within the Leadership and Management section of their guide to reviews, Ofsted states that inspectors evaluate the extent to which,

'those responsible for governance understand their role and carry this out effectively. They ensure that the provider has a clear vision and strategy and that resources are managed well. They hold leaders to account for the quality of education or training', (Ofsted Inspectors Handbook, 2019).

Following the most recent review in December 2019, a 'good' verdict was achieved (**Appendix C**). However, inspectors highlighted a number of areas requiring improvement, set out below, alongside the work currently underway to address these:

Ofsted recommendation	Officer response
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."	The service had addressed this through additional training for staff.
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.	To address this, the service's data systems were to be reviewed and updated to improve data capture.
Senior leaders should put in place arrangements that provide the support and challenge managers need to improve further the quality of education provided.	To address this, officers, together with the Cabinet Member for Families, Education and Wellbeing, were working to provide additional support. Officers had also reviewed the feasibility of creating a regular 'advisory board' meeting with the relevant stakeholders to share best practice and canvas opinions regarding direction of travel for the service.

On the last recommendation, the Committee noted that due to the new Select Committee structure in place as of May 2021, Councillors would not attend any such meetings, and to demonstrate that Hillingdon was providing support and challenge as highlighted by Ofsted, it was suggested that the Service Manager, Adult and Community Learning, bring an annual report to the new Families, Education and Wellbeing Select Committee as a regular part of its work programme.

Learner Profiles

The Committee was provided with additional detail regarding the profile of residents engaging with the service, and their achievements. 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**

Two thirds of learners were from the south of the Borough, likely due to the fact that the area had a proportionately higher number of lower skilled or unemployed residents, who were attempting to

upskill with the aim of furthering their job prospects or career development. Learners in the north tended to be an older group that chose take up more courses focusing on personal or social development, particularly during retirement. In addition, this older group had often been less comfortable using online meeting tools, and so learner numbers had fallen during the pandemic.

The Committee was advised that the majority of residents engaging with the service were women, often with low confidence or with little formal education.

Achievement Rates in a pandemic:

The Committee was advised that achievement rates across the service in 2019-20 had been good for learners who had adapted to online learning and there had been no significant difference in achievements between learners living in the north and south of the Borough. However, lower enrolment and retention rates had impacted on results in some curriculum areas leading to varied and nuanced rates within and between curriculum areas and provision types. Further detail is set out in the table below:

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%

Pass rates within Hillingdon for the last year were confirmed to be approximately 90%, despite the impact of the pandemic.

The Committee considered the strengths of the service identified by officers which included 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 had been seen in the swift efforts to address the impact of Covid-19 on the way in which the service was delivered, and which had resulted in the positive numbers of learners achieving their qualifications in June 2020.

It was noted that comparisons to statistical neighbours were difficult to determine due to differences in population sizes, learner demographics, and grant funding levels.

Enrolment numbers for the 20-21 academic year were confirmed as 3860, which equated to 1758 learners. More recent retention, pass and achievement data was not yet available, as the service was awaiting outstanding qualification results to be confirmed from the awarding bodies, or the signing-off of portfolio work.

Bidding for additional course offerings & certification

The Committee learnt that the service regularly bid 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 intensive support for learners to overcome 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.

The service also has a manager whose role includes overseeing vocational and employment partnerships, with the aim of furthering partnership working including film and television-based courses covering make up, costume design and creation, etc, and another whose role includes targeting outreach programmes at the most deprived and disadvantaged of Hillingdon's residents.

The Committee learnt that the service regularly bid for additional projects to develop the course offer and provide support to residents that was not possible within the grant funding rules. In 2019-20 these included the Talk English project (for residents with low levels of English to begin speaking and listening in English); work to develop and upskill childminders, in partnership with local authority colleagues and the Strategic Investment Pot. The latter funding was for a 2-year project which enabled HACL to provide the most disadvantaged residents with education and careers advice, intensive support for residents to overcome additional barriers to learning, staff training and bespoke courses for community partners, and targeted work-skills development for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities. Although the funding for this project has ended, most of the support developed for residents has been sustained by the service.

The Committee were informed that a wide range of English, maths and vocational qualifications were available to Hillingdon's adult residents. As of September 2020, the Government had funded new courses on developing digital skills, for which certifications were given upon completion. Whilst awaiting publication of the new qualifications, courses until this point had focused on introducing learners to digital learning, while adults with learning difficulties or disabilities (ALDD) had been provided with a low-level 'how it works' courses in an effort to promote comfort with online learning. Once introductory courses were completed, learners could move into the higher-level certified courses. In January 2021, new funding was released, which allowed for more digital skills courses across all learner groups.

Mental Health & Wellbeing of learners

The Committee was particularly keen to understand how the service was promoting and supporting good mental health within its learner cohorts and were advised that the service had been building mental health provision for several years, called 'emotional health and wellbeing'. When courses had moved online as a result of Covid-19, mental health provision was also moved online. For some learners, this was not suitable, however optional online wellbeing questionnaires had seen increased submissions vs. in-person questionnaires, possibly due to the increased confidentiality that the online medium afforded. Enrolments into the mental health provision had decreased, though this was expected to rise once people were allowed back into centres. The 'In Your Shoes' provision, a course designed to help parents support their children's mental health, had seen a significant rise in numbers. Recent team restructuring had resulted in a dedicated officer whose role was to help support health and social care within the service.

Hillingdon's support for mental health was provided free of charge to all learners, with general service fees used to support those learners who did not pay for courses. The Committee was advised that interdepartmental working had increased, for example via referrals to the social care teams, and external organisations such as MIND and Hillingdon Carers were regularly engaged.

Officers were proactive, with targeted outreach involving GP's, neighbourhood care teams, public health etc. Ealing and Hammersmith and Fulham highlighted additional engagement with partners such as MENCAP, housing associations, Holex, and the Education and Training Foundation, among others, reflecting the position in Hillingdon.

The Committee recognised that further work could be done to promote the services available among Hillingdon residents, many of whom were unaware of the availability of the service. Such promotional work could result in increased uptake of the service among all demographics.

Funding

The majority of funding for the Council's Adult Education service was via the Department for Education's (DfE's) adult education budget, apportioned by the ESFA. However, funding had reduced markedly in recent years, with national funding reduced by 47% between 2009/10 and 2018/19. In March 2021, with the externally funded Strategic Investment Pot completed and a reduction in learner numbers due to ongoing Covid-19, fee income had reduced.

The Committee noted that Government funding levels were allocated to different boroughs based on historical figures and had not been reviewed in many years. It was highlighted that the GLA could potentially review funding in the future, but that this would require successful lobbying by officers. Hillingdon was recognised as having the third lowest funding in West London. LBH funding compared to that of Hammersmith and Fulham can be found in the table below:

Hillingdon vs. Hammersmith and Fulham LA Adult Education services comparative data.

Data type	LB Hillingdon Adult Education service		LB Hammersmith and Fulham Adult Education service	
		Notes		Notes
Annual grant funding level	£1.489m		£2.8m	
No of learners	2,917	93% Hillingdon residents	6,480	87% H&F residents
No of enrolments	5,170		9,320	

Officers provided the figures below which summarised the service's income in 2018-19, (the last full year of education and funding prior to the interruptions brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic). 'Learners' are the total individuals engaging with the service, with some learners signing up to multiple courses ('enrolments').

Academic year 2018-19	Data	Notes
No of learners	2917	
No of course enrolments	5,170	(93% Hillingdon residents)
Funding total (only ESFA in 18/19)	1,489,375	AEB devolved to GLA in Aug 2019.
	761,079	
of which qualifications	728,296	

of which non-qualifications		GLA funding this academic year is £1,524,877, plus ESFA funding 20-21 of £60,217
Adult Learning Loans allocation	127,461	

Additional funding:
 	
  Flexible Learning Fund
  Talk English project
  Strategic Investment Pot (SIP)
	61,976
	42,250
	470,000
		
		Year 2 of 2
		Year 1 of 2 (total sum shown)

Local Authority income:
  Fee concession subsidy
  Early Years funding
	
	70,000
	
	20,000
		20-21: £60k

The Committee noted that in November 2020, the GLA granted an additional £100k for courses focusing on employment due to increased threat of redundancy due to the pandemic. However, the funding had come with the caveat that qualifications were required, and so the service was trying to balance this requirement with the needs of residents. In the academic year 2020/21, the service used approximately £40k of this £100k, with the remaining £60k rolling over to the academic year 2021/22.

In April 2021, a further £15k was granted by the GLA to take into account a new funding initiative that gave some free funding for a selection of L3 courses, if the learner reached the correct criteria to benefit from this pot of funding.

£25k had recently been granted for new equipment, with £77k approved for the remainder of equipment, with the aim of increasing lending stock of chromebooks and laptops, among other resources. This enabled the service to introduce a new 'learn and loan' scheme, which allowed learners to borrow the devices to support their learning. At times, procuring sufficient equipment from suppliers had been difficult, due to overall marketplace demand during the pandemic.

Similar to neighbours such as Ealing or Hammersmith & Fulham, core funding was received via grants from the GLA or ESFA. Where appropriate, fees were charged in line with funding rules, with lower fees or concessions provided for learners receiving benefits, or from certain socio-economic backgrounds. Additionally, in Hillingdon, residents were subsidised by £60k annually, to ensure tuition fees remain low.

Grant funding levels varied between West London councils but were recognised as being too low to meet demand for qualifications in Hillingdon. In addition, the removal of the £60k Council subsidy in the current economic climate could require an increase in fees and charges.

Strategic Investment Pot (2019-21)

The Committee were informed that in 2018, the City of London Corporation had launched the Strategic Investment Pot (SIP) project, utilising newly devolved rates to fund London's councils to identify and meet local skills needs in their area. Hillingdon was awarded £470k against the Skills Agenda for the Adult and Community Learning service's bid (HACL) to deliver against the following five identified strands. One of the challenges facing the service was to identify ways in which to ensure this legacy work continued:

1.   Increasing the reach and scale of ESOL to get residents into work.
2.   Providing opportunities for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) to engage with work.
3.   Developing an information, advice and guidance hub that provides residents with support and work experience.
4.   Enabling tutors and partner organisations to support residents with English, mathematics and digital skills. We wanted to reach out to more community-based 3rd sector partners to support their survival and to access some of these target residents.
5.   Targeting support to remove barriers to progression for particular groups, for example we wanted to target new home-base childcare micro-businesses and help them to overcome the barriers of the first two years, when enterprises are most at risk of failure.

The Committee was advised that the Strategic Investment Pot funding was unlikely to be repeated. To utilize the funding efficiently, a decision had been made at an early stage to manage the project in-house, to ensure the skills and expertise developed was retained rather than lost through engaging with external contractors. Officers advised that, despite this funding stream ending, the service was well placed to continue to sustain many of the benefits for residents, including offering free careers and education advice.

GLA Good Work for All (2021-23)

Led by the 'Good Things Foundation', the Committee were made aware of a new bidding opportunity designed to help Londoners recover following the pandemic. Focused on Digital, Health and Social Care, Green Economy and Creative Industries, it asked bidders to offer 'training, education and employability support that helped Londoners gain relevant skills, retrain and move into good work in sectors key to London's recovery'. In March 2021, the service had submitted a bid for £200k over two academic years, and though this had since been confirmed as unsuccessful, new courses have been launched to help residents gain qualifications to work in local creative industries.

Details of the programme planning for the 2021-22 academic year are attached as **Appendix D**. The AEB funding for these programmes included learning support and splits into two sections: qualification and non-qualification courses.

Funding for courses that lead to qualifications

The Committee were briefed on funding courses leading to qualifications. It was noted that the priorities for this funding were driven by improving the economic prospects for learners by increasing qualifications, to strengthen skills and CVs and lead into work/improved prospects. The ethos underpinning the funding rules was that learners should progress from beginners in their subjects (often English or maths) to qualified status in their chosen field (usually vocational) and preferably into employment or a new career.

These qualification courses attracted fixed amounts of funding for each enrolment. Some qualifications were fully funded for all, so learners made no financial contributions, e.g. English, maths and digital skills up to and including level 2 (GCSE). Where this was the case, the full amount of funding was drawn from the Council's grant.

Other qualifications were fully funded for the unemployed and those on a low wage (less than London living wage). Learners not in these categories are co-funded, which meant the service could utilise its grant to pay up to 50% of course fees. 25% of the balance had historically been paid by the Council in concessions, with the learner contributing the rest. Each course had four Fee Bands attached, and fees were paid according to means, (for example, Band 1 was the fee for learners not in receipt of any benefits, whereas Band 3 was for the unemployed or low waged i.e. below London Living Wage). By recruiting enough 'learners', the Council 'earned' its grant allocation for qualifications of £823k.

Although the service could deliver any qualifications it wishes, only those specifically listed on the Learning Aims Register and in line with government priorities attracted funding, which influenced choices when designing the qualification programme offer.

Funding for courses that do not lead to qualifications

The Committee noted that this was funded differently from qualifications funding and termed "community learning". The priority for this £705k funding was to engage those furthest away from seeking learning opportunities and encourage them to improve their social and mental wellbeing, as well as support, for example, their children's own learning and development.

The 'Community Learning' funding was broken into two distinct types of provision:

a. **Community Development** courses relied on partnership work, most often with the 3rd sector but also with schools, children's centres and libraries, and were targeted at the most disadvantaged residents and those in deprived areas, many of whom were least likely to have the time or financial resources to attend classes or who may have had poor educational experiences as a child resulting in personal barriers to learning.

This provision was delivered in partner premises across the Borough. It was offered free, funded from the Community Learning funding stream, and was usually made up of shorter (e.g. 10 hour) courses that build up in duration and difficulty over time.

Target groups included:

- those with mental health issues;
- carers;
- parents who need to improve their own English and maths to support their children's education;
- families who would benefit from multi-generational learning to encourage cooperative interactions and strengthen relationships;
- those with long-term health issues, such as stroke, dementia, diabetes, obesity;
- those most isolated from the wider community, such as older members of minority ethnic groups who are most likely to stay within their own communities;
- asylum seekers who often need basic English skills to support their settlement;
- specific vulnerable groups, through work with partner organisations e.g. Hillingdon Women's Centre re domestic abuse; Hestia re modern slavery;
- those who are the lowest skilled/lowest paid who would not otherwise recognise or engage in learning as a means to enhancing their life chances.

The purpose of this provision was to help learners progress into the wider community, such as volunteering and/or progressing into formal qualifications through more demanding, stepping-stone courses. Along the way, most began to build their social and emotional capital and see their own potential, increasing their self-esteem and allowing them to imagine a better future for themselves and their families.

b. Personal Development courses. Traditionally seen as 'leisure courses', learners reported that their learning these new skills reduced isolation (especially for older learners), improved wellbeing and 'keeps the brain cells ticking over' for working and post-retirement learners. These learners used their disposable income to pay tuition fees and while they did not often progress into qualifications, they did go into volunteering, self-directed clubs and new social networks. Learners could spend years trying out new courses with the service, whether learning a language, developing arts and crafts skills or keeping fit through yoga classes. Courses were run day and evening, usually in the north of the Borough where demand was greatest.

Other funding

Members were informed that from April 2021, residents who were attempting their first full Level 3 qualification would be fully funded through the government's Lifetime Skills Guarantee; if they already had a full level 3 qualification (2 'A' Levels or equivalent), they were able to take out a student loan or pay their fees independently.

A long-standing partnership with the Council's Early Years team allocated £20k p.a. to the service to provide initial training and CPD opportunities to the Borough's childminders, which had raised standards of childcare in the Borough. The service's online Childminder's Forum had encouraged online learning, networking and peer support opportunities for these micro-businesses.

A pilot project working with Adult Social Care whilst utilising the Designated Schools Grant had funded the service to provide bespoke courses for eight young people with learning difficulties and disabilities who had Education, Health and Care plans or through the Council's Education Support Allowance. Adult Social Care officers have since confirmed continued funding for those already on the pilot, though there is no confirmation to date that this funding will be approved for any more residents with LLD.

Response to the Pandemic

The Committee was particularly invested in understanding how the service had adapted its course delivery and learner support as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Debbie Scarborough (Service Manager, Adult and Community Learning), Thoria King (Curriculum Manager for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities team), Ginette Powis (Sessional tutor for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities) advised the Committee that this had been a uniquely challenging period for the service, especially for residents with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) most of whom struggle to learn online.

In March 2020, with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, delivery of the courses had been forced to change to online or stop. Although some classroom and homework activities were already carried out online within the courses delivered in person at the services learning centres using the service's virtual learning environment (Moodle), when the lockdowns came delivery of face-to-face courses had to be postponed and the centres were closed. Those learners in higher level qualification courses who could manage online learning were able to continue their classes with additional support in place. However, whilst some residents did not wish to learn online, others were unable to do so, for example most adults with learning difficulties and disabilities have remained unable to adapt to online learning sufficiently to continue their classes, which resulted in a 25% achievement rate for these classes. (Courses resumed in centres once the Government's lockdown rules were relaxed.)

It was noted that in May 2020, during the first lockdown, service staff were offered training to upskill digital teaching skills. Learning more about the tools available in Moodle and using the Google G-Suite tools provided the tutors with more confidence and alleviated some of the fears they had toward using technology in teaching and learning. This contributed to the high pass rates for learners doing qualifications. Additionally, many of the general tools were not suitable for Adults with Developmental Difficulties (ALDD) and especially learners with profound cognitive disabilities so the delivery tools therefore needed to be rigorously adapted in order to be fully effective but many adults with LDD were reluctant or unable to engage in online learning despite significant additional support.

In June 2020, the service tested out its newfound skills for adults with LDD in a 5-week online pilot project involving some of its high-needs learners. Each session was taught by a pair of teachers who delivered a topic they wanted to experiment with. As the pilot progressed, whatever was learned from previous sessions was shared forward, and in this way each session improved week on week. Since September 2020, teachers of those with LDD had placed all learning activities for their sessions on Moodle and used this in their classrooms so that the learners became more

familiar with the platform. Teachers had also moved Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) online. These ILPs were posted onto Moodle pages to encourage learners to visit when out of class. Learner work completed in class each week was also posted to encourage learners to want to go online and admire their work, which helped those learners who missed classes to catch up. Then, with increasing instances of shielding and Covid-isolation, the service had encouraged learners and teachers to continue to attend remotely when necessary, providing they were well enough to do so, though this had proved challenging for learners who depended on their parent/carers, and without whom they were unable to connect.

Members heard that since some learners had been reluctant to transfer to online learning, leading to an adverse impact on their achievement rates. Other courses that relied on in-person learning, or which were held in community centres, had been paused and then resumed once lockdowns had ended. It was advised that a 'Loan and Learn scheme' had been introduced for learners that did not have devices, which had been positively received, but they still required an internet connection which was not always possible. As a result, the service had identified an area for improvement in their self-assessment report that, 'Sustainable 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'.

It was welcomed by Members that the service had provided many hours of telephone support to assist learners, and their parent/carers where appropriate, to join online, which was challenging when there was no face to face physical assistance.

As many learners with LDD were in residential care or supported living, they sometimes relied on the staff to support them 1:1. This is not always possible due to staffing numbers which could result in a lack of attendance. In addition, the environment in such locations was not always appropriate and conducive to learning. e.g. in residential homes, several learners may be in the same room which makes it noisy. While this situation was out of Council control, attempts had been made to support carers to connect, and staff had demonstrated the functions of Google Meet and other meeting tools, to enable them to encourage the learner to participate as fully as possible.

The service had an established optional wellbeing and health self-assessment for learners to self-assess and disclose any mental health issues they may be facing. This assessment was refined and adapted to become an online form. Completion of this online assessment had proven popular, likely due to the additional privacy afforded to learners. Once received, the team was well placed to provide support and target interventions, where necessary, but health and financial issues meant many of this cohort were unable to join online courses.

The Committee were informed that changes to the service as a result of the pandemic would include continued provision of 'blended learning' with a number of courses remaining online, alongside an increased focus on courses linked to health and wellbeing. Members recognized that adults need a wide variety of learning models and providing face-to-face learning to allow for social interaction and engagement between learners, as well as for those learners who were unable to use remote learning technology was important. It has been noted that social interaction formed a core influence over the mental health of learners. Internal working practices between departments

had also been strengthened to better support new working practices, and by extension, learners.

Partnership working between Hillingdon and other authorities has included regular online meetings to discuss how to overcome challenges or share best practice. Joint training sessions and the sharing of resource materials was also carried out, while authorities often submitted joint bids for funding, where appropriate. Each authority engaging with Hillingdon also drafted their own annual self-assessment of their service, which was then peer reviewed by the other councils.

Work placements and volunteering opportunities for adults with learning difficulties aged over 25 were recognised as needing to increase, and to this end the service was developing pre-employment workshops to help these learners make the transition into employment. Some learners were particularly strong with regard to digital skills and were being trained to be 'digital champions' to help support their peers.

Feedback from learners & witness testimony

An important area of the Committee's interest was the user experience and feedback from the learners themselves. In general, officers advised that feedback received throughout the last 18 months had shown that learners were reporting good progress in their own personal development, behaviours and attitudes to learning. Learners had advised of feeling increased confidence, skills, and self-sufficiency. Attendance had 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, was detailed within the self-assessment report. Results showed that learners felt overwhelmingly positive regarding the service offering.

The Committee's witness session on 17 March 2021 was attended by Ebbony Gonzalez, a learner who completed ESOL and Mathematics courses during the lockdown period. A full learner profile for Ebbony is attached as **Appendix A**.

Feedback from Ebbony had been very positive. The service had provided help and support for both learning and mental health, as well as other matters, through what had been a difficult personal time. Ebbony advised that communication from service staff had been excellent and confirmed that the courses provided much needed social interaction with officers and other learners, especially during the periodic covid lockdowns.

The service had provided equipment which allowed Ebbony to log in and attend courses via laptop, which was felt to be much easier than through a mobile phone. The course had helped Ebbony to increase her self-confidence and allowed her to present a positive role model for her children.

More general feedback from some older residents had been that they were less comfortable with online tools, and had therefore been disproportionally affected by the pandemic, through an inability to attend classes in person and a reluctance to join them online.

In addition, the Committee viewed video testimony from learners, who outlined their positive experiences with the service.

Improvements made since 2020:

The Committee were made aware that the service had made several improvements since 2020, including specific improvements relating to service delivery and learner support as a result of the pandemic. These 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.
- Following Brexit, there was the potential for EU learners to be unable to complete settlement forms. To address this, forms had been simplified and support was available to help residents complete the paperwork successfully.
- General encouragement for parents/carers to gain and improve digital skills. Encourage learners to enroll on a digital skills course to improve their ability to join in online. Encourage parents and carers to do the same.

Challenges and Opportunities

Throughout the review, the Committee acknowledged that all evidence from Ofsted's review, the service's own self-assessment, and feedback from learners, showed that the service was performing well. However, the service remained ambitious to make further improvements, with the aim of achieving a rating of 'outstanding' moving forward. To this end, a number of risks and challenges to overcome, and opportunities for further improvements, were identified:

1.   **Funding**

As set out earlier in the report, the Committee recognised that historic grant funding levels had led to an imbalance between different local authorities, and while the service continued to lobby for increased grant funding to extend the offer to a greater number of residents, additional support through consultation with the Cabinet Member for Families, Education and Wellbeing could help achieve this.

2.   **Ofsted and the Quality of Education provided by Hillingdon's Adult and Community Learning Service**

The required further improvements identified by Ofsted were being addressed, as set out earlier in

this report, though work remained to fully address them.

3. Development of a clearly identifiable service 'brand' and widely highlighting the service offering

The Committee considered that some residents were perhaps not aware of the services provided. In addition, the Committee heard that learner enrolments post Covid-19 had reduced somewhat. Of those residents aware of the service, most referred to the service as 'Brookfield' or 'Harlington' and that the actual service name 'Hillingdon Adult and Community Learning' was felt to be too long a title to slip off the tongue.

The Committee expressed a view that a possible rebranding of the service to 'Hillingdon ACE' or something similar, together with a concerted communication campaign highlighting the rebranding and promoting the service widely amongst residents, Council staff and Members, could result in increased engagement with residents and improved learner numbers. It was felt that a positive communications campaign could highlight the varied service offering and as part of the rebrand the online Adult Education and Careers Hub could also be further updated and developed.

4. Increased interdepartmental and community working

The service currently works with other council departments to benefit residents, such as the qualifications and professional development it delivers to local childminders funded by the Early Years team. A long history of working with local 3rd sector organisations has led to community partnerships that include Carers Trust, MIND, Hillingdon Dementia Action Alliance, Austin Sewing Group, Hillingdon Women's Group and Care for Calais, each of which targets residents facing additional challenges and barriers to learning. The service has a robust volunteering offer for residents (currently 40+ engaged), who are trained as ESOL or Digital or Community [Interpreting] Champions in order to support and encourage learners on courses.

Members noted that voluntary sector partnerships remained strong but strengthening partnerships with other Council services and micro-employers could increase the impact of the service's offer for residents. Additional interdepartmental working with other areas of the Council, as well as external partners such as the NHS, and increasing engagement with local volunteers, could allow the service to provide further support to residents engaging with the service.

5. Accommodation for adult and community learning courses

The service has two main sites in the borough: Brookfield in the north and Harlington in the south, with smaller centres based in two library sites in Ruislip and a range of classes delivered in community venues across the borough.

Spread of classes within the borough					
North			South		
Residents	Enrolments	% of total	Residents	Enrolments	% of total
1,651	3,045	57%	1,250	2,303	43%

Notwithstanding the move to more online courses, the Committee considered that the Uxbridge (Brookfield site) was well-established in resident minds in relation to adult learning, as was Harlington. However, it was recognised that the new Harlington School build taking place could somewhat limit the learning accommodation available to adults in the south of the Borough, and officers indicated that they would explore new teaching locations that would meet the needs of residents, including suitability of public transport links.

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The Committee's Findings

General conclusions

From the information presented to the Committee throughout the review, the Committee concluded that the service was one of great value to those residents that use it, not only through upskilling and providing a platform for employment and career development, but also as an avenue for social interaction and the promotion of mental health.

Through the 2019 Ofsted review, the service's own self-assessment and feedback as part of this review, the Committee also concluded that the service was performing well, and the Committee was particularly impressed with the timely and effective measures put in place to support service continuity throughout the pandemic.

However, the Committee acknowledged the challenges ahead and also the potential for further improvements to ensure the continued service and financial sustainability of the service and, therefore, agreed the following recommendations to Cabinet set out below.

The Committee's recommendations to Cabinet

The Committee was appreciative of the uniquely challenging circumstances presented by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, and wished to place on record their admiration for the manner by which the service has adapted and improvised to ensure its continued support to its service users. To this end, the Committee recommends:

1	**That Cabinet recognises the good work and improvisation of the HACL service during the recent COVID pandemic and notes the new ways of working identified and underway.**

The importance of reaching as wide a demographic of learners as possible was recognised as key to growing the service user base. Following the new ways of working identified as a result of the pandemic, and the service's continued commitment to maintaining these new practices to include blended learning moving forward, the Committee believed that a strong communication campaign would be extremely beneficial.

To provide structure and aim, and to help identify the key messaging for the campaign, it was suggested that the service be rebranded as part of a 'soft relaunch' of the service. The campaign could include use of social media platforms and YouTube to deliver short, punchy messaging to residents highlighting the courses available (inclusive of the provision for adults with learning difficulties and support for guardians and carers to help support their dependants/learners), the new ways of engaging with the service (including online meeting tools and available equipment),

how the service helps to support physical and mental health and wellbeing of its learners through social interaction, and engagement with health partners, To this end, the Committee recommends:

2	That the service be rebranded to 'Hillingdon ACE' (Adult Community Education), supported by a communications campaign to support a 'soft relaunch' of the service to stimulate demand and uptake of courses.

Further to recommendation 1, the Committee recognised the importance of increased co-operation with partners, including health services, as well as greater interdepartmental working as part of a continued review of service delivery to ensure it is meeting the needs of learners. The Committee, therefore, recommends:

3	That the service continues with the new ways of working identified as a result of the pandemic, including use of technology, blended learning, new courses, increased interdepartmental and partnership working via new processes.

The historic way councils are allocated funds from the GLA was recognised by the Committee as having resulted in significant inequality of available funding for use in delivering adult education services, with Hillingdon receiving the third lowest allocation of funds within West London. Members viewed this as a potential threat to the continued delivery of high-quality services to Hillingdon residents, and that additional funding routes and sources must be sought wherever possible. To this end, the Committee recommends:

4	That officers continue lobbying the GLA to increase their grant funding allocation, in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Families, Education and Wellbeing, and also investigate other funding or lobbying options.

While the most recent Ofsted review into the service resulted in a 'good' determination, the Committee wished for the Council to continue its ambitions and further improve the service to 'outstanding' status. As part of their review, Ofsted made a number recommendations for improvement to be made, including evidencing that oversight and challenge of the service is regularly taking place. To assist in meeting these recommendations, in particular to ensure that greater scrutiny is being carried out, the Committee recommends:

5	**That Council continues to review and develop oversight and scrutiny, and includes an annual report to the Families, Education and Wellbeing Select Committee & Cabinet Member (inclusive of feedback from learners and tutors).**

About the review – witnesses and activity

The following Terms of Reference were agreed by the Committee from the outset of the review:

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, ensuing 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.

The Committee received evidence from the following sources and witnesses:

Witness Session 1 – **23 Feb 2021**	Debbie Scarborough (Service Manager, Adult and Community Learning) Thoria King (Curriculum Manager for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities team) Ginette Powis (Sessional tutor for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities) Ebbony Gonzalez (Learner who has completed ESOL and Maths courses during the lockdown period)
Witness Session 2 –	Debbie Scarborough (Service Manager, Adult and Community Learning)

17 March 2021	Cristi Gonzalez (Ealing Adult Learning Manager)
	Eamon Scanlon (Head of Adult Learning and Skills Service, LB Hammersmith and Fulham)
Witness Session 3 - **20 April 2021**	Debbie Scarborough (Service Manager, Adult and Community Learning)

References

HOLEX (2019), *Adult Community Education – Supporting Place and People: Characteristics of Success*
The Further Education Trust for Leadership

UK Parliament, Education Committee, House of Commons (2019), *A plan for an adult skills and lifelong learning revolution*

Appendices

Appendix A – Learner Profile, Ebbony Gonzales

Appendix B – HACL Self-Assessment report 2019-20

Appendix C – Ofsted HACL Report December 2019

Appendix D - Curriculum plan for academic year 2021-22

Appendix E - Learning for Life: the role of adult community education in developing thriving local communities – A handbook for Councillors

Appendix A – Learner Profile for Ebbony Gonzalez

Born in the Dominican Republic, Ebbony had spent her childhood travelling the world with her working mother, a model. Although she had learned five languages, her formal education had been frequently interrupted. When she settled in the UK in October 2015, with her husband and two children, she knew she wanted to acquire formal qualifications to fulfil her dreams of using her languages to build a career, either in teaching or interpreting.

At the time of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, Ebbony was studying English and mathematics with the service. By then, her 9-year-old and 15-year-old daughters had a 3-year-old sister, but sadly her husband was suffering from Parkinsons and was increasingly depressed. During the lockdown, Ebbony struggled to balance her children's welfare with her role as her husband's carer, though she tried hard to continue her studying. Her courses had transferred online and, with the family's laptop so often used by the children for their schoolwork, she found it difficult to attend regularly and keep up with homework. She managed to pass her English exams, but failed her mathematics qualification.

When her husband died in the summer 2020, Ebbony returned to college to pick up her studies again. Following a conversation with the staff there, she decided to concentrate on just one of her subjects while she helped her children manage their grief, and with the help of a laptop borrowed from the service, she is now studying English at Entry Level 3. She has also struggled with her own grief and has felt isolated and exhausted much of the time. Despite this, she values her time at college and is determined to show her children that studying and working hard is the way to a better life.

Hillingdon Adult and Community Learning

SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT

2019-20

Date submitted: December 2020

1. Overview of the service

Hillingdon Adult and Community Learning (HACL) service works towards the following mission: 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'. Although the service attracts adults from all walks of life into a wide range of provision, it particularly targets low-skilled, low-paid residents, those facing disadvantages and those living in deprived areas of the borough.

The learner profile in 2019-20 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

The service had a successful Ofsted inspection in December 2019 resulting in a Good judgement (Grade 2). Inspectors were impressed with the provision overall, stating that,

'Learners look forward to attending their classes. Whatever type of course to attend they learn much that helps them in their daily lives, their wellbeing or in their search for a job or further training. Many greatly develop their self confidence and esteem. Learners say that the centres are great places to learn and they would recommend them to their friends. Learners feel safe and are safe wherever they study. They benefit from learning in an environment where there is mutual respect whatever background they come from.' (Ofsted Inspection Report, 2020).

HACL officers work very effectively as a team. They are committed to the service's aims and to supporting residents to achieve their goals. Staff work hard to put learners first and their significant effort to adapt to online learning so swiftly and effectively during the Covid-19 lockdown was the critical factor in so many learners achieving their qualifications in July. All 62 staff members surveyed by Ofsted said they were proud to work for the service and thought it was well led and managed.

Inspectors also highlighted areas where the service could improve: inconsistent correction of learners spelling, punctuation and grammar; improved capture of progression data; and increased support and challenge by senior managers to further improve the quality of education provided. These are reflected later in this report and work is underway to address them.

The service regularly bids for additional projects to develop the course offer and provide support to residents. In 19-20 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.

In March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown interrupted the provision. Learners on 85% of qualification-based courses benefited from their swift and efficient transfer to online delivery, utilising the groundwork that was already in place by using existing online platforms to enhance their learning.

Other classes also transferred online, including many language and arts classes but not all of these could continue and some learners were reluctant to transfer to online learning which was clearly seen in the poor achievement rate in IT. Learners on floristry qualifications could not access flowers so their courses were paused and resumed in September 2020. Classes scheduled to run in community venues in summer term had to be cancelled but some new online outreach courses were introduced such as e-safety for parents and a digital skills course for carers.

Adults with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) were unable to adapt to online learning sufficiently to continue their classes. When the centres were closed in March, these courses were also closed, leading to a 25% achievement rate for LDD courses. Tutors for these courses kept in contact with learners and completed training and preparation work for safe re-opening and introduction of blended delivery in September 2020.

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%

Achievement rates across the service were good in 19-20, although they present a mixed picture. Results were good for most learners who adapted to online learning and continued with qualifications at a range of levels, particularly for those on vocational courses. 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.

2. Overall Effectiveness

2.1 Key Strengths

- Leadership and management is good. Leaders, managers and staff use their expertise well to ensure that residents can access and engage in learning and achieve their goals, despite the challenges in 2019-20 leading to curtailed provision for some learner groups. Committed, highly-skilled staff; a culture of flexibility and 'going the extra mile'; and a determination from learners who continued their learning led to sustained, high quality education for learners.

- Good financial and resource management enables the service to provide a high quality service to residents. The service made highly effective use of externally-funded projects to provide additional services to residents and to overcome barriers to learning. As a result 47 tutors were trained to deliver courses and provide support effectively online; learners benefitted from the development of new systems that provided online initial assessment; and residents accessed individualised, online education and careers advice supported including 1-1 telephone placements in classes, ensuring they could make informed decisions whilst staying safe. Funding targets were met at 97%, significantly above the London average of 88%.

- The quality of education is good. Teaching staff work hard to meet the needs of learners, building their skills and knowledge and adapting their sessions to new delivery modes and assessment methods to ensure the best possible chance of success. The long-term development of online learning expertise within the service enabled the very effective transition needed during lockdown. Learners benefited from a focus on digital skills through bespoke courses and electronic portfolios. Tutors and managers with experience in running online sessions put in rapid online support to their peers.

- Support for learners is very good. Learners benefit from targeted support based on accurately identified needs at enrolment and support is put in place where needed during courses. Good use is made of skilled learning support assistants and volunteers to support learners and well-established pastoral mechanisms provide individualised support for learners struggling with their mental health and wellbeing. These existing systems were adapted during lockdown and worked well together to support achievement contributing to a pass rate of 92.85%.

- A range of good progression routes underpin the overall programme. The focus on building the basic skills of low-skilled learners and encouraging them to progress into vocational training and employment also encourages them to try new things. For example, increasing numbers have trained as volunteers, who report benefits in their own self-esteem as they support their peers.

2.2	Improvements made in year and their impact on learners

Learners benefited from an effective programme of improvements in-year, including:
- The refreshed course offer for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) was embedded and pre-employment workshops were begun to help learners raise their expectations and consider new horizons. A pilot programme for high needs learners was embedded into the wider LDD provision, maximising integration for learners whilst ensuring the specific support they needed was in place.
- Well-adapted course delivery targeted at learners with emotional health and wellbeing issues and some family learning courses allowed them to continue learning online during lockdown. Learners reported that this continuity significantly helped them maintain their wellbeing during the uncertainties of the lockdown period.
- New systems were created and others adapted to support online learning, such as online learning walks and shared folders where electronic evidence could be uploaded, marked and returned to learners supported managers well to maintain high quality provision. The introduction of online individual learning plans, shared between learners and tutors, effectively supported ongoing communication between the two.
- Support for learners in moving to online learning was strong and a system was put in place to immediately contact learners who were struggling. 414 tutor referrals enabled learners who were struggling to receive support to access online learning. Across the service 57% of learners said that their digital skills improved while on their course and this figure was higher for courses which ran during summer term 2020.
- A new online initial assessment process was devised and successfully introduced in July 2020, with learners completing assessment and receiving IAG online for most subjects and by telephone for ESOL learners. Consistent initial assessment and start of course advice throughout the year ensured that learners joined the right course. 94% of learners stated that they received good information before joining the course which helped them to make decisions.
- Learners completing qualification courses benefitted from new initiatives that supported them to progress into the next level of qualification as they finished their courses. This ensured that learners' next steps were confirmed swiftly and efficiently, negating the

need for them to return to the centres in the summer to enrol and beginning to address Ofsted progression concerns (see below).

- New webpages were designed and the learner portal was updated ready for summer enrolments. Residents could more easily access information about the course offer online, could ask questions and receive 1-1 support and enrol electronically, maximising the efficiency of enrolment procedures and minimising the need to visit centres.

2.3	Areas for improvement in 2020-21

- 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.

- 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.

Personal development, behaviours and attitudes, including learners' feedback

Learners have reported good progress in their own personal development, behaviours and attitudes to learning during 2019-20. Despite the upheaval of the Covid-19 lockdown, and partly because of it, learners felt proud of their achievements. In addition to increased confidence, learners on low level qualification courses developed the skills to participate successfully in online sessions by learning how to behave in online meetings and became more autonomous learners, for example by using online self-study resources that were tracked by tutors.

Attendance remained high, and learners demonstrated their commitment to learning whilst managing multiple personal responsibilities during lockdown, such as childcare while schools were closed. However, as mentioned above some learners were either unable or reluctant to continue and retention and achievement rates fell as a result. Despite the challenges, many learners appreciated that continuing learning online gave them a sense of some normality and personal progress. The following comment from a learner is typical of what learners told staff during summer term 2020.

> *'Staying at home while learning online was the best thing and it was a great experience….If I will be given the opportunity to do more courses I will love to do so. It was my motivation during the lockdown and it kept me busy. Now the course is about to finish and I will miss the online learning.'* (Learner feedback, June 2020)

Learners actively participate in, and benefit from, a range of events and initiatives throughout the year. They have a strong voice in influencing both curriculum design and the quality of education through individual feedback and through course representatives and the learner council. In Parliament Week, 2019, 505 learners elected 15 learners onto the Learner Council

which engages in a range of organised activities throughout the year from feedback about fire and lockdown drills, to carrying out Secret Shopper exercises and improving advice and guidance mechanisms provided by the service. Groups of learners took part in events including debates, diversity celebrations and visits to Parliament.

What learners say about their experiences in HACL
There was an extremely high response rate to the annual learner survey, with 1215 learners taking part.

- 98% (1190 learners) said they felt safe and respected in their class
- 96% (1163 learners) said their teacher gave helpful feedback
- 94% learners said that the information they received before joining the course was good and helped them make decisions.
- 96% learners agreed that they have made progress and developed their knowledge and skills
- 60% learners said they set an individual social skills goal and they achieved it and 59% learners said they set wellbeing and work skills goals and achieved them.

Questions about the online learning experience were added to the survey in the summer term. Most of the learners said that they benefited from online learning and improved their digital skills.

346 learners took part in a separate survey conducted by Ofsted. Of those,

- 98% recommend us to friends.
- Nearly all say they're getting the help they need, with comments such as:
  'Good teachers who explain things well'
  'Well organised, helpful pace of work'
  'Helpful and patient teachers'
  'Respectful'
  'Increased confidence'.

Additional comments included:
  'I look forward to going to class'
  'I have learned so much that I use at home and at work, and using technology helps every day'.

Appendix 1 - Summary of Provision for Academic Year 2019-20

97% of our funding allocation was achieved in 19-20 against a London average of 77%.

Provision type	ENROLMENTS			RETENTION RATE			PASS RATE			Overall Qualification Aims Rate (QAR)		
	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Qualifications	2406	2203	1992	93.3	93.7	79.4	95.1	96.1	90.7	88.7	90.1	72.0
Personal Development	1816	1351	1012	92.6	92.1	93.0	97.2	97.6	95.9	90.0	89.9	89.2
Targeted Outreach	722	1512	921	94.6	92.2	86.9	93.6	96.9	93.4	88.5	89.4	81.2
Overall Totals	**5051**	**5170**	**3925**	**93.0**	**92.6**	**84.67**	**95.5**	**96.6**	**92.85**	**88.9**	**89.5**	**78.62**

Curriculum Area	ENROLMENTS			RETENTION RATE			PASS RATE			Overall QAR		
	17-18	18-19	19-20	17-18	18-19	19-20	17-18	18-19	19-20	17-18	18-19	19-20
Childcare	231	480	498	92.6	91.0	92.4	97.2	98.9	97.9	90.0	90.0	90.5
Counselling	49	54	34	87.8	83.3	79.4	100.0	97.8	100.0	87.8	81.5	79.4
H&SC	27	55	87	92.6	100.0	91.9	92.0	90.9	93.4	85.2	90.9	85.8
Total for curriculum area	**307**	**589**	**619**	**91.9**	**91.2**	**91.6**	**97.2**	**98.0**	**97.4**	**89.3**	**89.3**	**89.2**
Floristry	331	228	243	97.6	96.5	90.9	98.8	98.2	99.1	96.4	94.7	90.1
Horticulture	66	59	150	93.9	100.0	98.7	83.9	98.3	99.3	78.8	98.3	98.0
Total for curriculum area	**397**	**287**	**393**	**97.0**	**97.2**	**93.9**	**96.4**	**98.2**	**99.2**	**93.5**	**95.5**	**93.1**
Art	526	467	260	93.2	93.1	92.3	97.6	96.8	96.2	90.9	90.1	88.8
Languages	688	503	351	91.6	89.7	92.6	97.3	96.0	93.5	89.1	86.1	86.6
Leisure	192	240	47	94.3	93.3	91.5	94.5	97.8	95.3	89.1	91.3	87.2
Total for curriculum area	**1406**	**1210**	**658**	**92.5**	**91.7**	**92.4**	**97.0**	**96.7**	**94.7**	**89.8**	**88.7**	**87.5**
Total for IT curriculum area	**228**	**82**	**95**	**96.9**	**91.5**	**86.3**	**94.6**	**98.7**	**79.3**	**91.7**	**90.2**	**68.4**
English	372	335	457	90.1	93.7	87.3	91.9	91.1	87.0	82.8	85.4	75.9
ESOL	624	621	469	94.1	93.6	86.0	95.1	96.0	87.7	89.4	89.9	75.4
Maths	374	268	311	88.8	93.3	91.5	95.8	97.6	91.5	85.0	91.0	83.7
Total for curriculum area	**1370**	**1224**	**1237**	**91.5**	**93.5**	**87.9**	**94.4**	**95.0**	**88.4**	**86.4**	**88.9**	**77.7**
Total for ALDD curriculum area	**470**	**444**	**290**	**96.2**	**94.6**	**29.0**	**98.7**	**99.5**	**88.1**	**94.9**	**94.1**	**25.5**
Family English, Maths and Language	100	301	52	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	90.4	100.0	100.0	90.4
Multi-generational family learning (WFL)	498	539	385	91.4	87.0	82.9	90.5	97.2	95.0	82.7	84.6	78.7
Total for curriculum area	**598**	**846**	**437**	**92.8**	**91.7**	**84.9**	**92.3**	**98.3**	**94.3**	**85.6**	**90.2**	**80.1**
Total for Emotional Health and Wellbeing area	**275**	**374**	**196**	**90.5**	**91.7**	**79.6**	**92.8**	**93.3**	**91.7**	**84.0**	**85.6**	**73.0**

Short inspection of Hillingdon London Borough Council

Inspection dates: 4–5 December 2019

Outcome

Hillingdon London Borough Council continues to be a good provider.

Information about this provider

At the time of the inspection, there were 1458 learners on roll. Most learners study on courses at level 1 and below with around two hundred and seventy studying at level 2. Around fifty study at level 3. A small proportion of these learners use an advanced learner loan to fund their learning.

Courses are provided to build learners' vocational skills, primarily in childcare and supporting teaching and learning in schools. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), English, mathematics, arts and crafts form a large part of the curriculum on offer. The service also delivers provision aimed at building the independent living skills of adults with a learning difficulty or disability and provision for learners with mental health concerns. Courses are taught at three main sites, plus several outreach locations across the borough. The previous short inspection in February 2016 confirmed that the service continued to provide a good quality of education.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Learners look forward to attending their classes. Whatever type of course they attend, they learn much that helps them in their daily lives, their well-being or in their search for a job or further training. Many greatly develop their self-confidence and esteem. Learners say that the centres are great places to learn and they would recommend them to their friends.

Learners feel safe and are safe wherever they study. They benefit from learning in an environment where there is mutual respect whatever background you come from.

Experienced and skilled tutors make topics easy to follow because they explain things clearly. Tutors are patient and work through topics at a pace that suits learners. They are easy to approach when learners need guidance or assistance.

Learners develop their enthusiasm for learning whatever subject they follow, including subjects in which they may have had negative experiences while at school.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

In line with local priorities, leaders and managers ensure that learners from the borough's most disadvantaged communities take part in the courses they offer. Working with a wide range of partners, they ensure that the curriculum meets effectively the needs of many different communities in the area. Leaders and managers introduce new courses that respond well to newly identified needs, such as the emotional health and wellbeing of residents.

Tutors teach their subjects in a logical order. They teach fundamental concepts first and check that learners understand these before moving on. For example, those on childcare courses are taught about basic child development before learning about the more specific needs of children, such as those with learning difficulties and disabilities. In ESOL, tutors help learners' recap on prior learning to ensure they have learned the language skills they need before moving on to the next stage.

Most learners receive effective advice and guidance that helps them plan their next steps. Learners seeking employment receive good guidance from external agencies, such as the national careers service, to help them get jobs. A few learners following the arts curriculum are not made aware of other courses that are available elsewhere.

Learners attend regularly and produce good-quality work. Those taking qualifications are successful and achieve well. A high proportion of learners on courses without qualifications achieve their personal goals. They gain pride and a sense of achievement in their work. Learners, such as those who are retired, gain a sense of purpose from attending classes. Those with mental health conditions build their resilience very well. They make friends, become more active in their community and learn to cope better with everyday life.

A few tutors do not provide helpful feedback on learners' written work. As a result, at times learners do not know what they need to do to improve. Too often, tutors do not correct spelling and grammar mistakes that learners make. This hinders learners improving their writing.

Managers have good expertise in adult learning. They have a good track record in making improvements and in ensuring that the quality of education that learners receive is good. However, senior leaders and the relatively new governing body do not provide enough support and challenge to managers to help them develop further the quality and impact of the curriculum. They are not sufficiently informed about the impact that the curriculum has on learners once they complete their courses.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Learners know how to report any concerns they have about their own or others' safety. Staff report any safeguarding concerns appropriately. These concerns are dealt with effectively. Managers and staff closely monitor and support learners where there are safeguarding concerns.

Managers provide effective oversight of safeguarding practices in the service through their 'staying safe' board. They have in place a suitable range of policies and procedures aimed at safeguarding learners. They meet their obligations under the 'Prevent' duty.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Managers should ensure that feedback from tutors helps learners improve the standard of their writing, including their spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Managers should establish measures that more effectively capture the impact of the curriculum on learners.
- Senior leaders should put in place arrangements that provide the support and challenge managers need to improve further the quality of education provided.

Provider details

Unique reference number   53129

Address   Adult and Community Learning –
                                 Hillingdon London Borough Council

                                 Park Road

                                 Uxbridge

                                 UB8 1NP

Contact number   01895 676 690

Website   www.archive.hillingdon.gov.uk/adultlearning

Principal   Debbie Scarborough

Provider type   Local authority

Date of previous inspection 18 February 2016

Information about this inspection

The inspection was the second short inspection carried out since Hillingdon London Borough Council was judged to be good in February 2016.

The inspection team was assisted by the service manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the further education and skills inspection handbook and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including observing learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

Jon Bowman, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kanwaljit Dhillon	Ofsted Inspector
Saher Nijabat	Her Majesty's Inspector
Christina Christou	Ofsted Inspector

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Curriculum plan for academic year 2021-22

Provision type	Delivery plan	Funding stream
Courses for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities	Offer all learners 1 digital skills course + any two other choices (except repeats from previous a/y). Mostly centre-based delivery.	Qualification
Community Engagement through targeted outreach	Family English, Maths and Language (FEML): ESOL and English and Maths to help your Children Learn; partnership approach Multigenerational learning: range of subjects based on target group. Gardening together; Discovering Nature; Healthy Eating and Cooking; E-safety for Families… Targeted outreach in the community for disadvantaged adults; free. Short intro courses themed around supporting partner organisations; Health, e.g. obesity, diabetes, dementia, stroke Digital, e.g. carers, lone parents, asylum seekers Reducing isolation, e.g. older people, esp from ethnic minorities who may be reluctant to engage with the wider community EHW (see below)	Non-qualification *Outreach, small amount of online delivery*
Emotional health and wellbeing	Core programme of support courses, including: Boost your confidence and self esteem Managing anxiety and understanding depression Healthy mind, healthy body Progression into self-care courses, including: Knitting to improve your mental health; therapeutic art; de-stress with yoga; mindfulness and meditation; tapping into positive health and wellbeing; 5 steps to wellbeing for men (men only course). Seasonal courses, including Coping with Christmas; Dig for Recovery Stepping-stone into mainstream courses, including Improve your confidence to try new things (qualification)	Non-qualification *Mix of centre, outreach and some online*
English, maths, ESOL Community Interpreting	Introductory speaking and listening ESOL Pre-Entry ESOL courses Build your English/Maths with Digital Skills between levels Stepping-stones units	Non-qualification Qualification

	Entry Level 1 ESOL Entry Levels 2 and 3 ESOL, English and Maths Level 1 ESOL, English, Maths Level 2 English and Maths GCSE English and Maths Community Interpreting L1, 2 and 3	*Mix of centre, outreach and online*
Digital Skills, IT and Business	Short introductory courses, e.g. Build your Basic Digital Skills Essential Digital Skills Qualifications at Entry Level and Level 1. Progression into… Data Analysis at L2 Introduction to Cyber Security at L2 Understanding Coding at L2 Bookkeeping at L1 and L2 Accounting at L2 Digital Marketing Start your own Business Online Learning Essentials Online Job Search	Qualification *Mix of centre, outreach and online* Non-qualification
Vocational learning: Childcare	Employability workshops and short courses *All qualifications supported by attached English/ maths/digital skills quals as appropriate or through an embedded approach* E3 Caring for Children L1 Caring for Children or L1 Preparing to work in schools L2 and L3 Early Year's Educator L2 and L3 Supporting Teaching and Learning L2 and 3 Children's and Young Peoples Workforce L2 Intro to Neuroscience in Early Years	Qualification
Childcare/H&SC (these courses can be used as CPD for professionals in the sector)	L2 Understanding Autism L2 Understanding Behaviour that Challenges L1 Award in Mentoring L1 Award in Safeguarding L2 Supporting individuals with Learning Disabilities Childminding quals and ongoing CPD in partnership with LA Early Years team L2 Supporting individuals with learning disabilities	*Mix of centre or online; some subjects in centre, e.g. floristry in Brookfield and South Ruislip; horticulture at RAGC.*
Health and Social Care, incl Counselling	L1 Award in Introduction to Health, Social Care and Children's and Young People's Settings L2 Understanding Working in the Health Sector L2 Diploma in Care; L2 and L3 Counselling qualifications L3 in Understanding Mental Health Plans to develop an Access to HE Diploma in Allied Health Professions during 21-22 a/y L1 Mental Health Awareness	
Floristry	E3 Award in Creative Craft (Floristry)	

Horticulture	L1 Award in Creative Craft (Floristry) with E3 Employability Skills embedded
	L2 Certificate in Floristry (Year 1)
	L2 Diploma in Floristry (Year 2)
	L3 qualifications to be decided (research ongoing)
	
	E3 Award in Occupational Studies (Horticulture)
	L1 Award in Occupational Studies (Horticulture)
	L2 Certificate in Practical Horticulture Skills and/or
	L2 RHS Certificate in the Principles of:
	  Plant Growth
	  Garden Planning
	  Practical Horticulture (3-year course)	

	Get Started with Floristry (3x 1-term courses) Flower Arranging History of Flower Arranging Contemporary Flower Arranging Get Ready for Winter/Spring/Summer Workshops both subjects	Non-qualification
Personal development	French, Spanish and British Sign Language Arts and Crafts, e.g. calligraphy, yoga, creative writing, textiles, painting and drawing, sketching on location Return to Learn intro courses Photography Drama Flower arranging Online cookery (healthy eating) Links with Hillingdon Heritage and Archives teams	Non-qualification *Mixed delivery: some online, most in centres*

View   Edit   Delete   Revisions

Learning for Life: the role of adult community education in developing thriving local communities - A handbook for councillors

The handful of case studies featured in this councillors' handbook demonstrate the excellent work of ACE services, but there are hundreds more great examples out there.

Employment and skills

27 Oct 2020

Jump to section   ⌄

Foreword

Council run or commissioned adult and community education (ACE) plays a vital role in supporting residents on their journey to learn skills to enter, return or progress in work. Alongside the economic benefits, it reduces loneliness and makes people happier, healthier, more confident, capable and resilient – making places smarter and more inclusive.

Put simply, ACE transforms people's lives. As the COVID-19 crisis continues to grip our communities, it is a more important lifeline than ever before. It is the cornerstone of adult learning. Without it, many of the 600,000 adults – including some of our hardest to reach, vulnerable or isolated residents – that access it every year would not progress into further learning and work or be able to cope with what life throws at them.

Delivering a range of informal and formal learning from entry-level courses to professional qualifications, as well as interview support and confidence-boosting programmes in a range of community settings, ACE gives residents a first, second, third or even fourth chance to access learning. It works with the grain of other place-based services including employment, regeneration, education, health and culture, and adds value to each, as well as connecting with agencies like Jobcentre Plus and local colleges.

The handful of case studies featured in this councillors' handbook demonstrate the excellent work of ACE services, but there are hundreds more great examples out there. We know that because 92 per cent of ACE providers are rated good or outstanding, the best performing in the further education sector. We should be extremely proud of that.

But there are challenges and opportunities ahead for ACE services.

Over the last decade, as national funding for adult learning halved, councils innovated to source new funding or faced a reduction in provision or a wind down of the service altogether. Just prior to the pandemic, national investment in retraining was boosted to enable people to adapt to a rapidly changing economy which is more likely to displace the least qualified. Today, as unemployment soars, we need all hands to the pump to direct that skills investment to where it is most needed and that must include local ACE services.

Soon, two White Papers – one on further education (FE) and the other on devolution – should provide an opportunity to develop a more coherent, place-based approach to adult skills that connects the entire provider base together across a local area. The LGA's Work Local model provides a framework for how that could happen.

So, it is a significant time for the future of ACE. That's why this handbook is so timely and a must-have for all councillors. You have a real leadership role in understanding, supporting, scrutinising and advocating for it, so you can make your service the best it can be. We provide some top tips on how you can do that which we hope you will find useful.

Cllr Sir Richard Leese CBE, Chair, LGA City Regions Board

Cllr Kevin Bentley, Chairman, LGA People and Places Board

Introduction

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This handbook for councillors focuses on the direct and indirect impact of adult community education (ACE). It aims to help councillors effectively plan, promote and scrutinise their local ACE service so that it is relevant, robust, efficient, responsive and ambitious.

It builds on a report by HOLEX, the lead professional body for adult community education and learning, which recommended that more should be done to explain and promote the vital role of councillors in ACE services and the value they add to this sector.

Councillors have a critical role to play in planning and promoting ACE; in support, oversight and challenge; and in ensuring that provision is joined up and responds to the needs of local communities. Their input, scrutiny and leadership are essential in realising the rich potential of adult community education.

This handbook will set out the importance of ACE in place shaping: how it brings economic and social benefits to local communities, enhancing the lives of residents and contributing to the culture and cohesion of the places in which they live and work. It will encourage planners and policy-makers to work in a way that acknowledges and makes use of the special role played by adult education in connecting and adding value to other council services.

We hope that this handbook will help councillors take an active role in planning, promoting and scrutinising ACE in their local areas, and that it will help councillors and officers to design services that improve the lives of residents and support the development of thriving, inclusive communities.

As we will see through the examples of good practice included here, the places in which ACE services deliver the most for their communities are the places where councillors recognise and champion their intrinsic value.

The role of ACE in shaping people and places

"Adult education is not just about what goes on in the classroom. It is about having the ability to support residents to develop wider outcomes for their own personal lives which, in turn, support and have an impact on their local communities, local businesses, and therefore the local economy."

Pat Carrington MBE, Assistant Director for Employment and Skills, Peterborough City Council, and Principal, City College Peterborough

ACE matters. As well as having clear and direct benefits in terms of economic prosperity, employment and productivity, adult learning is linked to the ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle, grow confidence and self-esteem and provide meaning and purpose in life. Associated outcomes of participation include the development of collaborative and creative thinking skills such as problem solving, innovation, curiosity and adaptability; enhanced physical and mental health; greater interest in politics and community engagement; and greater diversity in the workforce.

Despite the wide range of positive economic, social and cultural outcomes, ACE remains poorly understood, which means that its potential benefits often go largely unrealised. This is in part due to its complex nature, wide cross-sectoral reach and contribution to an array of different local services, portfolios and policy priorities, not to mention the variety of different ACE delivery models. As a result, adult education can be difficult to describe simply, which can make effective championing, advocacy and scrutiny challenging.

While there is a great deal of evidence on the broad benefits of adult learning, little has been written about how it is delivered in local communities, where it sits among the other services provided by councils, or how it supports and strengthens those services.

This handbook focuses on how effective leadership, planning and delivery of ACE has a demonstrable impact on six distinct but related outcomes:

- **employment, skills and qualifications**: getting people onto the skills ladder and helping them gain, retain and progress at work
- **health and wellbeing**: supporting people with physical and mental health issues, thus reducing health costs such as GP visits
- **integration and inclusion**: reducing isolation, promoting interaction and integration and bringing communities together
- **culture and creativity**: supporting individuals and communities in becoming creative and cultural producers
- **attitudes, aptitudes and characteristics**: helping people to acquire the characteristics needed to participate fully in work and life
- **life transitions**: helping people to navigate challenges such as redundancy, retirement and parenthood.

Chapter 1: Why ACE matters

A safe, empowering, local space Page 69

Adult community education (ACE) services educate, train and retrain more than 600,000 adults each year, including many from the most deprived wards in England. They have a combined annual income in excess of £350 million.

In 2017, the 222 community learning providers in England included 139 councils, as well as 72 not-for-profit organisations and 11 'specialist designated institutions' (independently constituted charities regulated by their own trust deeds).

Most council adult education services were founded early in the 20th century, though some can trace their history back further. Today they continue to provide a safe, empowering local space in which adults can build their confidence and capacity, learn new skills, and take steps towards further education and new employment opportunities.

A large proportion of ACE learners are considered 'hard to reach'. This includes the long-term unemployed, vulnerable families, people with substance issues and young people who are not in education, employment or training. For example, 75 per cent of Leeds City Council's adult learners come from the 20 per cent most deprived lower-layer super output areas on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

This first-step engagement, giving adults and young people a second, third or fourth chance to access learning, is a crucial part of what ACE services do. More than any other provider, ACE services reach people and communities experiencing multiple disadvantage, whose support needs often demand the coordinated intervention and engagement of different council services.

From the learner's perspective, ACE's reach into other local services, and its close connection with employers and other education providers, enables them to connect with employers, further learning opportunities and their community – and ultimately to maximise their own potential.

In brief: ACE within the further education sector
Further education (FE) is a diverse sector of the education system, comprising many different types of provider offering a wide range of vocational, academic and recreational courses.

FE providers are institutions or organisations (other than schools and universities) that receive government funding to provide education and training to people over the age of 16. There are five different types of FE provider:

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colleges, councils, independent training providers, the voluntary sector and employers.

- General further education **colleges** offer a wide range of programmes including vocational courses, apprenticeships, academic courses and higher education, from Entry Level to Level 4 and above. Most FE college students are aged 16 to 19, but they also provide courses for adult students and for 14/15-year-olds. While general FE colleges are the largest and most common provider in the sector, there are others including sixth-form colleges, land-based colleges, specialist designated colleges and art, design and performing arts colleges and Institutes for Adult Learning.

- **Councils** provide a wide variety of ACE and work-based learning. Some councils provide educational services directly to their communities, while others contract out to service providers. These services provide accessible learning to people from all backgrounds and abilities, usually on a part-time basis. Courses can be unaccredited or qualification-bearing.

- **Independent training providers** (ITPs) receive government funding to provide off-the-job training. While all work closely with employers, some are small and focus on a single area of vocational training (such as hairdressing or construction), while others are large and provide a range of vocational training opportunities across the country.

- **Voluntary sector providers** are non-profit organisations such as charities, foundations and community groups, usually directly providing adult community education, but also delivering other kinds of specialist courses to specific groups of learners.

- **Employer providers** deliver their own in-house training rather than contracting out to an external provider such as a college, an ITP or a council.

These organisations have a specific and important role in delivering skills in their communities. It is critical that they work together in partnership across a local area for the good of local learners and employers. This is why knowledge and expertise of local areas is critical to both the commissioning and oversight of skills provision.

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Despite the complex issues facing many of their learners, ACE providers are the best-performing part of the FE sector, with **92 per cent of services rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted inspectors** (compared to 81 per cent for colleges and 75 per cent for independent training providers).

As well as being the best-performing part of the further education sector, ACE can claim to be the most resilient. During the coronavirus crisis of 2020, many ACE providers quickly switched their provision to online delivery, enabling residents to access learning under lockdown conditions.

The ACE offer

Most ACE providers offer courses at Level 2 (GCSE equivalent) or below, including 'non-accredited' courses that do not lead to a formal qualification. While in recent years provision has tended to focus increasingly on maths, English and digital, other offers include:

- ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) to help refugees or people recruited from overseas, such as health and care workers, to improve their English
- family learning courses to enable parents to better support their children in literacy and numeracy
- employability and preparing for work
- programmes to help learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities develop independence, social skills and employment skills
- training in mentoring and counselling for learners recovering from drug and alcohol misuse
- courses in music, ceramics and other cultural and creative arts.

ACE services work in close partnership with other agencies and council services. Councils have an important role both as providers of learning and as partners with other stakeholders such as local businesses, job centres, the voluntary and community sector, and other education and training providers.

ACE adds real value to these partnerships. For example, ACE services are often based at centres in the heart of disadvantaged communities. Not only do they bring together people of different backgrounds in a friendly, supportive local space, they also provide a place in which different services can address the multiple needs of learners at a neighbourhood level. This provides ACE with an opportunity to add value to other services, such as those relating to health and wellbeing.

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The cross-cutting nature of ACE services and their capacity to add value to other services means they have an especially important role to play in councils' place-shaping ambitions and in responding to entrenched, complex issues such as poverty or long-term unemployment.

Chapter 2: What do ACE services achieve?

The six core ACE outcomes

Much has been written about the wider benefits of adult education and their relevance to different social and economic agendas. While a strong case can also be made for ACE's long-term, indirect impact on issues such as social mobility and reduced costs to other services such as public health, this section focuses on the direct outcomes of adult community education.

These outcomes can be organised into six distinct but overlapping categories, each of which will be explored here in more detail:

- employment, skills and qualifications
- health and wellbeing
- integration and inclusion
- culture and creativity
- attitudes, aptitudes and characteristics
- life transitions.

Outcome 1: Employment, skills and qualifications

Adult community education is critical in creating new opportunities for people – particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds – to prepare for, enter and progress in the workplace.

Many of the adults who engage with council ACE services are unemployed, often on a long-term basis, and may face multiple disadvantages related to poverty and poor mental or physical health. They often have low literacy and numeracy skills and limited basic digital skills. ACE offers these adults a crucial first step back into learning and onto the skills ladder. It offers cross-service, integrated solutions for learners facing multiple disadvantage, and puts learners on course to further education and employment.

Adult learning is not only of benefit in terms of helping people to gain and retain employment, it also helps them to increase their earnings, raise their aspirations and gain more satisfaction from their work. It supports employers in raising productivity,

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increasing profitability and reducing staff turnover, and helps boost the country's employment rates and tax revenue.

Skills and employment challenges differ from one local area to the next – some, for example, may have high unemployment as a result of the decline of traditional industry, while others may need adults to acquire industry-specific skills to match local demand. Responding to these challenges requires a coordinated local effort, which ACE can help to address or overcome.

Demographic change has huge implications for education and skills. In common with other developed countries, the UK has an ageing population. Some 80 per cent of the workforce of 2030 is already part of the working population. Figures pre-COVID show that a third of all workers are now aged over 50, and the number of people over 70 in work has doubled since 2009 to half a million. Longer working lives and fewer young people entering the workforce increases the need for adults to be retrained, upskilled and supported into local jobs. They need opportunities to engage and routes for progression, particularly given the changing nature of work and the growth in automation and artificial intelligence.

The Industrial Strategy Council predicted that seven million additional workers would be under-skilled for their job requirements by 2020 – about 20 per cent of the labour market. The UK's departure from the EU is likely to mean a reduction in the number of EU national workers, increasing our reliance on home-grown talent, including adults who are already in the workforce or unable to access it.

While unemployment as a national average remains relatively low (or was so before the impact of COVID-19), there are large numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training. If this is not effectively addressed at an early stage, there is a risk this this group becomes more marginalised resulting in pockets of acute, long-term unemployment which demand targeted, coherent cross-service support. In addition, there will be more demand for adult skills training as the cohort get older.

According to the **Social Mobility Commission**, adults with the lowest qualifications are the least likely to access adult training – despite being the group that would benefit most. Further, men in routine and manual occupations are the least likely to engage in learning, creating what the commission describes as 'vicious cycles' of low-paid, low-skilled insecure work.

Experience: Unlocking new opportunities

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Islington Council supports more than 1,500 residents every year through a wide variety of courses, including in ESOL and digital skills. Olga, for example, who is originally from Romania, used what she learned on an ESOL course to progress to further learning and improve her career prospects.

Olga said: "I am now studying in Morley College in my first term of professional sewing and tailoring. The course is in English and I am happy that I can now understand and learn something new. I work part-time doing alterations in a dry-cleaners shop and as a cleaner, but now I would like to find a job in the fashion industry."

Another issue that ACE can address is low levels of literacy and numeracy, with England tending to fare poorly in international comparisons such as the OECD's survey of adult skills. Some nine million adults lack functional literacy and numeracy skills (the level expected of nine-year-olds). Around **11.9 million adults are thought to lack digital skills**. This represents a significant barrier to further learning and better job prospects, and is a major issue for employers in hiring staff with the right skills.

Outcome 2: Health and wellbeing

ACE has clear and well-evidenced benefits for the health and wellbeing of people and communities. The challenges in this area include increased incidence of long-term complex health conditions associated with an ageing population, lifestyle factors such as alcoholism and substance abuse, entrenched health inequalities and the growing prevalence of mental health problems in society.

It addresses these issues in several ways. ACE is associated with healthier lifestyle choices and better understanding and management of health conditions. It has been linked to increased life expectancy and prolonged independent living among elderly people, and there is a clear correlation between level of education and diseases such as heart disease, stroke and diabetes, which represent a huge cost to the health service.

Studies also demonstrate a link between participation in adult learning and improved mental health and wellbeing. It fosters a sense of identity, an ability to cope and a sense of purpose in life, as well as greater levels of wellbeing and life satisfaction. It reduces social isolation and increases confidence and self-efficacy among learners. There is evidence too that participation in learning prevents early ageing and slows the onset of dementia.

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Many ACE providers created new online provision to help with isolation and mental wellbeing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This included online courses based around health and wellbeing, mindfulness, crafts, relaxation, chair-based exercises and family learning.

Experience: Supporting mental health

'Working in mind' is an employability initiative developed by Redbridge Institute of Adult Education. It targets priority Jobcentre Plus clients – unemployed adults with mental ill health and older people with poor literacy skills.

Working with partners such as Redbridge Concern for Mental Health and other local mental health charities, the initiative combines traditional employability support, dyslexia screening, wellbeing coaches and access to social prescription provision, such as mindfulness training. Around 50 per cent of the participants progress into work, while others go on to further learning.

Experience: 'This course turned my life around'

Lincolnshire County Council supported 7,511 adults onto 1,235 learning programmes during 2018/19. It targeted specific groups including people with learning difficulties and disabilities, people with no or low qualifications, the unemployed, and residents from the most deprived neighbourhoods – which accounted for 20 per cent of learners.

Ninety-two per cent of learners said their course helped to develop their self-confidence. One learner, Victoria, suffered with low self-esteem, back problems and other illnesses before taking part in a 'Get into catering' course. By the end of the course, Victoria had secured employment in a café in Lincoln. She said: "This course has turned my life around. I am so happy with my new job and the fact that I am now off benefits."

Many learners face digital barriers to accessing the help and support they need. In response, a growing number of ACE services are introducing an NHS-funded digital health module, embedded in their main delivery programmes, which helps people get

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online, set up an email account and make doctor's appointments online. As well as digitally empowering learners, it has the added benefit of taking pressure off local doctor's surgeries.

Outcome 3: Integration and inclusion

Council ACE services have a crucial role to play in boosting social capital and promoting community cohesion and interaction. Adult learning is associated with higher levels of interpersonal and social trust, as well as increased community involvement and civic participation, particularly at a local level. It can also lead to greater understanding of diversity.

ACE services support the integration of new community members, both through ESOL courses and community-based courses that bring different groups together and facilitate the sharing of experiences. They provide a space in which stereotypes can be challenged, conversations begun, and tensions reduced.

The broad range of wider individual benefits to adult learning include increases in confidence and self-esteem, higher aspirations, a sense of purpose, engagement in the community, an active body and mind, and improved 'soft skills' such as collaboration, teamwork and communication. ACE has a special role to play in supporting integration and community engagement, and thus in making places safer and more cohesive.

Experience: 'I can talk to anyone now'

Hussein came to the UK as a refugee from Sudan in 2014. He had no formal schooling, little money and no grasp of English. Hussein lived in a shared house with other refugees from various countries. Their lack of English meant there was no communication between them, leaving them all quite isolated.

To improve his English, Hussein took free English classes, walking an hour and a half each way to attend class. Four months later, he started studying at Manchester's adult education service. The skills he acquired there enabled him to gain employment as a warehouse operative. Hussein said: "I was feeling sad because I couldn't understand when people were talking to me. Now I can talk to and understand anyone and I work with a lot of people from different countries."

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Adult learning has been found to have a positive impact in the following five areas linked to integration and inclusion:

1) **Social capital**: adult learning is associated with higher levels of interpersonal and social connection. It has been shown to promote civic engagement and activity. ACE community venues are among the few surviving public spaces where people from different backgrounds can come together with a common goal in mind.

2) **Social cohesion and integration**: ACE has in general, and in literacy and numeracy provision in particular, a significant positive impact on communities. It can lead to higher levels of respect, tolerance and trust. Literacy and numeracy programmes and ESOL courses are key to ACE service efforts to promote social cohesion and integration. It forms a key part of councils' efforts to integrate refugees.

3) **Community involvement**: adult learning fosters civic participation, through local involvement, and can help overcome loneliness and social isolation. The Government has linked feeling lonely to increased risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, depression, cognitive decline and Alzheimer's. It is estimated that between five and 18 per cent of UK adults feel lonely often or always.

According to a survey by the Workers' Educational Association, 82 per cent of people on adult education courses make new friends, while **97 per cent say it helps to keep their minds active**. Participation also boosts 'civic capability', the ability to make sense of and shape one's own culture and community. Adult learners report increased civic participation, community involvement and wider social networks.

4) **Democratic participation**: adult learning, through civic education programmes, positively improves people's political understanding, feelings of empowerment and level of political participation. It encourages active citizens who are empowered to find solutions to the problems their communities face and engaged in informed dialogue.

5) **Crime and anti-social behaviour**: adult learning can reduce crime and anti-social behaviour by raising aspiration, improving the self-confidence of learners and offering them routes into further learning and work.

The prison population in England and Wales has increased by around 90 per cent since 1990 to about 84,000 prisoners. Recidivism rates are high and represent a significant economic cost: a one per cent reduction in recidivism rates would lead to an estimated annual saving of £130 million. Education is one of the pillars of effective rehabilitation. Almost half of prisoners have a reading level at or below that expected of an 11-year-old. ACE can give people the chance to escape cycles of crime and anti-social behaviour.

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Outcome 4: Culture and creativity

Creative and cultural courses bring together people from different backgrounds around a common interest and can help to enhance community cohesion. Creative learning can be empowering and is often the catalyst for improved confidence and greater community involvement. It can lead to new employment opportunities and further self-organised learning.

While this form of provision has been much reduced in recent years, it can be vital in allowing learners with limited access to the creative arts to express themselves and contribute to their own local cultures. As well as contributing to employment, civic, and health and wellbeing outcomes, cultural and creative courses give people an enhanced sense of purpose and help them become creative producers as well as consumers.

Cultural and creative production can be a source of pride, celebration and empowerment, not only for the learners but also for the communities in which they live. Learners can host exhibitions of their work or volunteer their services for local fundraising or community activities such as arts festivals. Creative learners may set up self-organised learning groups to continue the activity, reducing isolation and providing social support networks; or establish small businesses to sell their work.

For example, the Quaggy Printmakers, a group of learners from Lewisham, were encouraged by their tutors to make the step into self-employment and sell their work. The 20-strong group of screen printers and etchers now sells its work through a website, with social media used to publicise events and exhibitions. A precondition of membership is to have taken a course with the Lewisham service.

Experience: Careers, community, culture

The strategic plan for Westminster Council's adult education service clusters its curriculum into three key areas: careers, community and culture. This approach reflects the needs, starting points, ambitions and potential of learners.

Head of service, Arinola Edeh, said: "It is easy to think we should focus on the economic benefits. People forget about the social, mental health and wellbeing benefits that are also important parts of education. Adult education is about employability, but it is also about bringing communities together and enabling local residents of different ages, ethnicities, cultural backgrounds and socio-economic backgrounds to have a better understanding of each other.

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"Our strategic plan clusters what we do in terms of these three key areas. Alongside the 'careers' element, we do a lot of work bringing communities together, reducing isolation and supporting vulnerable people, which we capture in the 'community' element. The 'culture' strand is all about celebration and bringing people together at the cultural level. So we have a careers, community and culture focus, which enables us to transform lives."

Every year, Westminster supports over 8000 learners to achieve their goals in these three areas.

Outcome 5: Attitudes, aptitudes and characteristics

ACE fosters positive attitudes and aptitudes such as resilience, cooperation, communication and critical thinking, which are key to success – not only in the workplace but also at home, in the community and in wider civic life. Often, gaining these attitudes and aptitudes can make all the difference for learners seeking to enter the workforce, manage transition or be more active in the community.

This includes the competences required to live an independent life and be more self-reliant; skills such as communication, team working and problem-solving (which are essential in finding a job and getting on at work); and the confidence and capacity parents need to better support their children and become more involved in school and community life.

Participation in adult education improves people's social relationships, making them less isolated and more tolerant and trusting, while boosting levels of community engagement. ACE services also promote changes in attitudes to learning, which is crucial in a society in which few adults will have a job for life and most will have to upskill throughout their working lives and/or retrain for a new job role or multiple roles, which will for many become a reality as a result of economic impact of COVID-19.

Experience: Overcoming anxiety

When Laura started her Health and Care Sector Work Academy course, funded by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, she lacked confidence and found it a struggle to interact with new people. Laura had become a mum at a very early age, so missed out on further education and work.

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It took her an hour to get out of the car for her first class but she found the courage and, over the next few weeks, her anxieties receded. Through the course, Laura gained confidence in her skills and abilities, and grew to understand the values and attitudes required to work in the health and care sector.

After achieving her Level 1 'Preparing to Work in Adult Social Care' qualification, Laura received mentoring in CV writing, job applications and attending interviews. She secured a job at a care home and is now completing a Level 3 qualification. Had it not been for the course, she said, "I would still be struggling with my anxiety and depression and still be unemployed." Laura was City College Peterborough's 'Adult Learner of the Year' in 2019.

Outcome 6: Life transitions

This final type of outcome, though sometimes overlooked, is in supporting life transitions, particularly redundancy, parenthood, a return to work and retirement. The skills required in negotiating these life transitions can be enhanced parenting skills, independent living skills and increased capacity to support a child's learning.

Many adults reaching points of transition in their lives will have been out of learning for some time, and some may not have engaged in formal education since school. As noted already, ACE services provide an accessible, safe environment where learners can step back into education and find the space in which to reflect on and shape the next phase of their lives. They also offer the flexibility and adaptability required to respond to changing local need. For example, helping a community to cope with mass redundancies, or ensuring continuity of learning during the COVID-19 lockdown.

It is at such key moments in people's lives that adult education can be most effective and beneficial. As a recent study shows, transitions such as returning to work, becoming a parent, raising a family, living independently or retirement 'often lead to a reappraisal of the decisions and actions that shape an adult's life course', and engagement in learning 'can become more of a priority, especially when seen to play a pivotal role in helping people achieve their ambitions and aspirations'.

Case studies

This section of the handbook sets out a series of short case studies that demonstrate how different ACE services are working to achieve the six outcomes.

London Borough of Redbridge: A culture of excellence

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Rochdale Borough Council: Connecting local services

Manchester City Council: A co-owned, city-wide plan

London Borough of Lewisham: Valuing culture and creativity

Peterborough City Council: Promoting adult education

Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES)

Chapter 3: How ACE services work

Structure

Although all ACE providers are influenced by government policy and the national funding structure, there is no common model or recipe for success. While national policy sets the tone and imposes common constraints on funding, each council area will adopt its own structure, governance and scrutiny arrangements based around local circumstances.

The chief role of councillors is to lead the direction of adult education policy, linking their ambitions for ACE to local challenges and priorities; to provide scrutiny and challenge; and to signpost residents towards the service. Portfolio holders provide leadership in terms of championing adult education across and beyond the council, advocacy at a community and regional level, involvement in service planning, and fostering or strengthening partnerships and connections.

The ACE's head of service is generally responsible for service strategy and its alignment with the council's core objectives, as well as creating and maintaining partnerships, ensuring the service's work is understood and visible, and making sure the service has a seat at the right tables.

A survey of local ACE providers by HOLEX found that there was no common structure among ACE services. Services differ in their model of delivery – whether direct, indirect or a blend of both; in where they sit within council structures and wider partnership arrangements; and in how they shape and adapt their provision to respond to local need.

In general, the organisational structure in which an ACE service sits does not make much difference to the quality of the service. However, making the right connections with other services seems to be easier for officers when they are based in a

directorate with a strong focus on place and/or on education or enterprise.

There is a variety of approaches to governance, with some ACE services convening advisory boards of governors (comprising a combination of councillors, employers and representatives of key community groups); and others held accountable by the council's scrutiny committee. Some councils do both.

However, it is possible to identify some common elements in the way in which ACE services work and to recognise some critical success factors. Although provision has reduced somewhat over the past decade, the best services remain agile and responsive, with exceptional reach into communities (particularly the least advantaged communities); they have strong partnerships within their council and more widely; and they have adopted meaningful governance and scrutiny arrangements through which councillors can add real value to the service.

Delivery models

There are two main models of ACE delivery – direct and indirect (through sub-contracting), although in practice many local areas offer a combination of both.

- **Direct delivery:** providers offer adult education services themselves rather than contracting them out. In some cases, courses are provided through a large college-type facility; in others through smaller, community-based centres where other council services may be co-located. Many councils combine a large institutional hub with smaller community centres, often based in areas of acute need where learners may be reluctant or unable to travel.

For example, Hertfordshire's adult education service has set up learning hubs in some of the county's most deprived areas, with a specific focus on wards where there is currently little or no support service. Each hub is set up with a local organisation from the voluntary sector, with the aim of creating a welcoming environment for people from disadvantaged groups.

- **Sub-contracted delivery**: other councils sub-contract the delivery of ACE courses out to private and/or voluntary and community sector partners. Councils providing courses that are either wholly or largely provided on an indirect basis typically have a smaller team responsible for planning and managing provision. These councils rely on the specialist knowledge and reach of different community services in engaging learners in provision planned to match local need.

Unsurprisingly, ACE services often work in very complex local structures, which may include multiple levels of planning and commissioning and different players interested in shaping service plans. For example, mayoral combined authorities are now

responsible for the adult education budget which funds ACE provision.

According to HOLEX's analysis of ACE service inspection reports, good or outstanding services tend to have strong governance with clear accountabilities, and councillors with excellent knowledge of the service and how it supports local need.

Leadership

Councils are place shapers and conveners. They must address the needs of their communities in an integrated and coherent way, making smart and efficient use of the resources they have. While working within the national-level constraints, councils must plan ACE provision that is sensitive to local need and informed by relevant labour market and other intelligence. To be effective, a council's ACE service must find a way to make national policy support local need.

While job titles vary, every ACE provider will have a head of service or principal who is responsible for assessing local need and developing a working plan which addresses these needs through clear goals that support the council's vision and reflect the national policy framework.

Dr Sue Pember, Director of Policy for HOLEX, says: "It has to build on what the area and the residents need, be integrated into the council's other services, and it must reflect what the government wants. And it must be well monitored, so that if something goes awry, it can be dealt with quickly."

Councils have access to a wide range of data on issues such as pupil performance, public health and the location of areas of greatest need. It can be disaggregated in terms of age group, socio-economic group, equality of access or employment status. It is important that

ACE services use this data to plan provision, ensuring close integration with the council's wider plans and priorities. ACE services are themselves a source of useful data on learner performance and progression, which should be used to identify gaps, challenge practice and improve.

In addition to interpreting data and planning in the context of local and national policy frameworks, the head of service has an important role as a leader or facilitator of partnerships. There is an important role too for councillors in supporting this, both through strengthening existing partnerships and fostering new ones.

One form of partnership particularly relevant to councils that contract out some or all of their ACE provision is the delivery partnership. ACE services often work with community organisations that specialise in a form of provision or that have a special

reach into a particular community, often one considered marginalised or hard to reach. These subcontracting arrangements are generally robustly managed, and learners know they are students of their respective ACE service.

The relatively small scale of ACE service operations means they can move swiftly and with agility, adapting provision to the specific needs of their communities. This makes them an ideal partner – able to work in a smart, collaborative way with organisations from the private, public and voluntary sectors to deliver a wide range of programmes tailored to local need.

ACE services work in close partnership with organisations in sectors where adult education has an important contribution to make, for example health. They are more likely than other providers (such as colleges or private training providers) to partner with, for example, the NHS in working collaboratively on issues such as obesity, suicide prevention, loneliness or social prescribing.

Since the COVID-19 crisis, providers are strengthening their relationships with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Jobcentre Plus to provide an enhanced service for the newly unemployed and people facing redundancy. This covers everything from DWP referrals to online advice and guidance, supporting job applications and skills needs analysis.

The link between councils and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) mean that ACE services are also well positioned to contribute to the regional skills and employment agenda.

Experience: Families learning together
Lewisham Adult Learning has forged a long-term partnership with the Horniman Museum. Family learning and ESOL learners have taken part in projects organised with the museum: for example, ESOL family learning students have helped the museum to review labels and interpretation for its exhibits. The museum offers learners the chance to volunteer through Lewisham's 'Volunteering: a stepping stone into work' programme. Parents on the family learning course have given presentations at community events and have supported the museum in developing new activities for families.

The national funding framework

All services work to the council adult education governance regulatory framework set by the then government in 'New challenges, new chances' in 2011, and the way in which that is expressed in the funding guidance from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

'New challenges, new chances affirmed the focus of ACE services on 'people who are disadvantaged and who are furthest from learning and therefore less likely to participate', highlighting their role in widening participation and supporting progression into work and further learning, and in developing stronger communities with 'more self-sufficient, connected and pro-active citizens'.

In brief: 'New challenges, new chances'
The purpose of government-supported community learning, according to 'New challenges, new chances', is to:

- maximise access to community learning for adults, bringing new opportunities and improving lives, whatever people's circumstances
- promote social renewal by bringing local communities together to experience the joy of learning and the pride that comes with achievement
- maximise the impact of community learning on the social and economic wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.

The objectives of community learning are to:
- focus public funding on people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate, including people in rural areas and those on low incomes with low skills
- collect fee income from people who can afford to pay and use this where possible to extend provision to those who cannot
- widen participation and transform people's destinies by supporting progression relevant to personal circumstances

- develop stronger communities with more self-sufficient, connected and pro-active citizens

- commission, deliver and support learning in ways that contribute directly to these objectives.

The ESFA, an agency of the Department for Education (DfE), provides funding for adult skills and community learning. Its **funding guidance** is based on the purposes and objectives set out in 'New challenges, new chances', which it characterises as to develop the skills, confidence, motivation and resilience of adults in order to progress into learning or employment, improve their health and wellbeing, and develop stronger communities.

Council ACE services are funded through the DfE's adult education budget. Since August 2019, this budget has been apportioned between the ESFA, which distributes the funding to councils, and the six mayoral combined authorities (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, Tees Valley, West Midlands and West of England) along with the Greater London Authority, to which it is devolved by the DfE. AEB devolution will soon also cover the West Yorkshire, North of Tyne and Sheffield City Region.

The mayoral authorities received £630 million in adult education funding in the first wave of skills devolution in 2019. The move was welcomed as a serious attempt to give adult education funding more local discretion and flexibility. This has required more local conversations to agree the right balance of provision. There is a view that it could change the relative stability in funding and policy direction that has been a major part of ACE's success over the past decade.

Overall **funding for adult learning nationally has reduced by 47 per cent between 2009/10 and 2018/19**, which has affected all ACE, and other adult learning providers. According to the 2019 Learning and Work Institute analysis, this has coincided with adult learner numbers falling by 3.8 million in the last decade.

On top of these funding cuts to adult learning, councils have experienced a 40 per cent reduction in government funding since 2010. Despite this, they continue to run successful programmes of adult education provision, with ACE learner numbers declining at a slower rate than in FE colleges – and even increasing for Level 4 (higher technical qualifications, such as higher apprenticeships) and ESOL courses. Learner satisfaction with ACE services remains higher than for any other part of the FE sector.

In spending their allocation, councils and combined authorities are expected to maintain a clear line of sight between government policy and regional and local adult education service plans and cannot go over budget. ACE services have managed to do this with great success, despite a steady reduction in funding.

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Experience: Setting up a community learning trust

Following a recommendation made in 'New challenges, new chances' (2011), New Directions College, the learning and employment service for Reading, set up a community learning trust (Reading Community Learning Network) to support joint curriculum planning and delivery with strategic partners from the public, community and voluntary sectors, to ensure the service's community learning offer meets local priorities.

The network consists of 38 members including Reading libraries, children's centres, voluntary sector agencies and the probation service, each providing targeted or specialist provision. Such partnerships are critical for a service that aims to reach some of Reading's most disadvantaged communities.

Two-thirds of the council's learners come from the most deprived areas. The service aims to reach out to people where they live, engage them in learning and give them routes to further learning and employment. It works with other council teams to add value to their activities.

Reading has found that partnership is key not only in engaging the hardest-to-reach adults, but also in generating new income for the service, enabling it to better meet the needs of learners and ensuring the available resource goes a long way. The service, for example, recently obtained £170,000 from the LEP to develop its catering and hospitality facilities, in response to development of the area's hotel and leisure sector.

The service generates added value through its use of volunteers, free venues and course fees. Around £250,000 is collected annually and used to offset the costs of working with Reading's most vulnerable and disadvantaged learners.

Many councils, finding that demand for ACE services surpasses ESFA funding, have attempted to increase the available funding by adopting a 'Pound Plus' model of income generation. This means that they look to add to their existing budget through, for example, course fees, financial sponsorship, low or no-cost learning spaces, donations of equipment, and other funding sources and grants. This is a highly effective approach that allows ACE services to do more within a shrinking public funding context.

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Experience: Making money go further

Southampton City Council's adult education service has used a 'Pound Plus' model to increase service income and drive up participation within a constrained public funding environment.

Although the majority of the service's provision is sub-contracted out (84 per cent in 2018-19), there are clear expectations concerning Pound Plus set out in the original specification issued to all potential sub-contractors, along with guidance in the annual provider guide.

Sub-contractors are expected to demonstrate Pound Plus improvements including:
- increase in fee income
- increase in commercial sponsorship and support via contributions in kind
- increased use of volunteers
- increased income from external bids
- rationalisation, enhancing and re-focusing of the curriculum offer
- improved efficiency
- greater social impact of learning on the wider community.
  Sub-contractors are expected to use the money saved or created by these policies for the benefit of learners, particularly priority groups and those who might otherwise not be able to engage in learning activity.

Governance and scrutiny

It is important that ACE services are rooted in the needs of their communities, which means that local people should be democratically involved in the governance of these services through councillors and other stakeholders. This is the key role of councillors in respect of their council's ACE service.

Councillors are the equivalent of a further education college board of governors and are responsible, ultimately, for ensuring the service on offer to residents is of high quality and relevant to their needs. Councillors also have a wider role as leaders of their local places and in helping to set the direction of local services.

Different councils take different approaches to governance. More than half (53 per cent) of the services that responded to the HOLEX survey said they were governed and held accountable through the council's scrutiny committee, while 38 per cent had

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an advisory board. Despite this mixed approach, it is clear that all councils attach importance to ensuring that their ACE services are democratically accountable to the people they serve.

Councils' scrutiny and challenge committees play a fundamental role in ensuring ACE funding is well spent, monitoring services and ensuring that learner outcomes are improving. They help councillors understand what the service is for, how service plans are developed and how success is evaluated. They give councillors from different backgrounds the opportunity to make connections and see the wider relevance of ACE. These committees can also bring in other local partners and providers to be scrutinised.

ACE service governance or advisory boards usually comprise a number of councillors, the head of service, and representatives of the private, public and voluntary sectors. Having a breadth of membership adds expertise to the board and creates new opportunities for partnership. These boards do not merely assure the quality of learning in the service – they ensure that the service is meeting local need and engaging in self-evaluation (as well as evaluating sub-contracted providers).

The 2018 'outstanding' Ofsted inspection report on Redbridge Institute of Adult Education, for example, found that:

'Governance is very strong. Governors are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the organisation…They strongly promote the organisation's vision to target the most disadvantaged learners and increase participation from the most deprived neighbourhoods. Governors and senior leaders work effectively together to achieve the positive standing of Redbridge Institute in the community. They are rightly proud of the positive contribution it makes to the local area.'

In some high-performing services – Reading, Redbridge and Peterborough, for example – new governors undergo a process of induction, learning about the service and the people it supports. They are encouraged to attend classes and meet learners, thus deepening their understanding of adult education and adult learners. Some heads of service arrange 'learning walks' for councillors to find out more about their service. All services interviewed for this handbook highlighted the importance of bringing governors/councillors and learners together.

The high level of scrutiny in council ACE services helps ensure service plans are in line with local need and the wider plans of councils, and that the available resource is sensibly and smartly allocated. Effective scrutiny is one of the core considerations brought to bear by Ofsted in their service inspections.

Place shaping

'Place' is an important concept for councils. While national and local strategies and interventions to support communities with significant, complex needs are important in their own right, without sufficient join-up they risk being stand-alone and less effective than they might be. Place-based interventions, bringing together different council services and other core partners, can be a hugely effective way of coordinating policy and provision.

The strong physical presence of ACE services in the communities they serve is an important factor in this – often, service buildings become a "community resource that is about high-quality learning but can also be a point of connection, information-sharing and collaboration among different services" as described in the Redbridge Institute case study.

As leaders of place, councils are not only democratically mandated but are best placed to convene and take a lead, in collaboration with national government, employers, LEPs and other key partners. ACE services, sitting within their council and with unparalleled reach into other services, are uniquely well positioned to contribute to this agenda.

The role of councillors in ACE

Leadership plays an important part in the success of the best ACE services. Lead members with responsibility for ACE policy provide the political vision and accountability for the service, while the head of service will manage its day-to-day activities. Together, they must play the part of local leaders of learning. That means they must keep the learner at the forefront of their minds and strive to offer a service that is accessible, appropriate, inclusive and effective.

The lead member with responsibility for ACE should be:

- working with all stakeholders to set the strategy, plan and scrutinise delivery of the service
- the voice of residents and learners
- ensuring the plan is underpinned by the objectives of the council
- exploring the potential to join-up with other services (section 106 and regeneration, public health etc) and partners (local businesses, representative bodies including local chambers, colleges and jobcentre plus and wider regional connections).

They should be adept in determining, through local data and intelligence, the needs of their learners, and be able to make the most of limited resources to meet those needs.

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Increasingly, they should be opportunistic and entrepreneurial, looking at all available funding sources and ensuring that learners are adequately supported.

Councillors who have scrutiny responsibility for the ACE function should:

- hold the executive to account and provide a scrutiny role, and where relevant seek independent advice
- scrutinise the finances and effectiveness of ACE to deliver outcomes
- be the voice of residents and learners
- provide suggestions on how to improve service delivery.

As well as assuring the democratic accountability of the service and ensuring that the offer meets local need, councillors are also key advocates – spreading the word about their service and helping to ensure greater buy-in and support across and outside of the council.

As essential 'conduits' between the council and local communities, the councillor's role in fostering public engagement – whether engaging people as service users or service supporters – is vital. Councillors can arm themselves with information and signpost people to services, making connections that the individual may not have acknowledged, such as seeing how it could help someone experiencing isolation. There is still a general lack of appreciation of what ACE can achieve. Councils need to consider how to build that knowledge and awareness in their own communities.

In many of the most successful services, there is strong, informed understanding of what ACE does and long-term support for the local service. In others, services face more of a challenge to raise the profile of the service.

As well as holding heads of service to account, councillors have a key role in supporting them and enabling them to do their job better. They can help them to see the big picture, where the ACE service fits within it and where it can add value and facilitate the development of new partnerships and pursue new funding sources. The conversations councillors have, and the connections they make, can be crucial in expanding the scope and ambition of their ACE service.

Summary: The leadership role of councillors

- Councillors are responsible in different ways for ensuring that their local ACE service is of high quality and relevant to the needs of residents. This can be done through the portfolio holder with responsibility for ACE and

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through scrutiny members who hold the service to account.

- Councillors provide challenge and advice, evaluating service progress and guiding its development, through scrutiny committees and advisory boards. Often, they have high-level expertise gained in the private, public or voluntary sectors.

- Councillors are responsible for ensuring money is spent properly and in line with local priorities and national funding guidelines.

- Councillors are key advocates for the service, promoting its work within the council and across the whole community.

- Councillors are forgers of new partnerships, using their perspective across council services to help assure effective join-up and support place-based planning.

- Councillors promote wider understanding of ACE and its outcomes, drawing on their knowledge of the service and their learners, to spread the word and get other councillors on board.

Through good governance and effective scrutiny, smart, place-based planning, sound financial management and strong partnerships, ACE leaders can create a culture of excellence and inclusivity across the service and a climate of innovation and creativity, in which staff feel confident in meeting the needs of their communities within their limited resources.

The best-led, most effective services have in common 'a strong sense of belonging and respect among staff, learners, stakeholders and the community, including employers', as well as an acknowledgement of the broad set of outcomes that ACE can achieve.

Chapter 4: Key issues for councillors

The national context

This is a moment of opportunity for adult community education in England. There is renewed interest in adult education, as reflected in the various commissions or reviews of lifelong learning which took place during 2019, and the Commons Education Select Committee inquiry into adult skills and lifelong learning.

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The Government has committed £3 billion over the lifetime of this Parliament to a new National Skills Fund for adults. This will be in addition to the existing £1.5 billion per year adult education budget. It has also indicated that it will replace European Social Fund money and ensure that £500 million of its successor, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, is used to give disadvantaged people the skills they need to succeed in life.

This reflects a growing appreciation at both national and local level of the value and broad benefits of adult education, particularly its threefold capacity to boost productivity and economic growth, improve people's health and wellbeing and build strong, thriving communities.

It also represents an important opportunity for council ACE services to draw on new sources of funding and expand or revise their provision. The challenge for ACE is that while some high-performing services are adept at working in an entrepreneurial way and turning their expertise into bids for funding, others will face a steep learning curve if they are not to fall behind. This will be one of the main challenges for ACE services in the near future.

The case for adult education

As we have seen, ACE matters to people and places. It reaches into the least-advantaged, most-marginalised communities, supports those who are furthest from work into education, training and employment, and has a broad range of positive effects on citizens and communities.

The case for adult education is getting stronger. Technological developments are changing the world of work and the skills required to thrive in it, the population is getting older, and inequalities remain in educational opportunity, health and wellbeing, civic participation and access to cultural experience. In addition, the COVID-19 crisis means adult learning will need to expand to help adults retrain for work.

Addressing these issues demands a coherent, joined-up educational offer, at every level (including adult education), with links to other services and to further learning and employment, and – perhaps above all – a strong commitment to places and to the people who live in them.

Only councils have the democratic mandate and local insight to lead efforts to foster local economic growth and give people the support, skills and competences they need to get on at work and in life. They have a unique ability to bring together local partners, and the flexibility and agility to target specific problems in a concerted, coherent and creative way.

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ACE can connect with other council services and other agencies to transform people's lives, in a way other education providers cannot. It is only through councils' democratic local leadership and strategic social and economic priorities and duties that this can happen.

Focusing on place is key to bringing partners together and offering a coherent local response to the challenges and issues faced by different communities. This handbook has demonstrated the significant contribution made by ACE services to place making. Their presence at the heart of communities and their reach into other services give them a special role in placed-based policy, connecting and adding value to other services.

Top tips for councillors

The handbook has attempted to set out what makes a good ACE service and has explored some of the key factors associated with success. It has shown how the best services draw on local data to identify service gaps and plan provision that meets the needs of residents and businesses, and the important role played by scrutiny and challenge, governance, partnership and leadership in delivering an effective, high-quality service.

In considering the characteristics of successful leadership, the handbook has also explored the qualities councillors need to effectively contribute to the planning, scrutiny and promotion of a service, highlighting the importance of councillors in:

- understanding the service that they support and scrutinise
- providing challenge and advice
- supporting the development of service strategies and plans
- ensuring resources are used effectively
- advocating for the service
- fostering partnership working
- considering the service's role place making.

The following 'top tips for councillors' summarise what they can do to fulfil this critical role as effectively as possible. There is also a responsibility on officers to ensure that ACE in the local context is understood by portfolio holders, scrutiny committee members and all councillors.

Top tips for councillors

- Understand adult community education – you can only scrutinise your service if you understand what it is trying to do, the local context and the limitations in terms of service delivery.

- Get to know your service and the learners it supports – there is no better way of doing this than meeting learners. Ask your head of service to organise a 'learning walk' through one of their centres.

- Try to understand the needs of your community – know the data and ask whether your service could do more, or work in a different way. A clear understanding of local need will help you hold the service to account and will make you a better advocate.

- Champion the role of ACE, both within the council and outside of it. Make it your job to have conversations about ACE with local education providers, senior officers, the elected mayor, the LEP chair and local MPs.

- Be vocal about your service's achievements – if people aren't aware of what your service does, it will be left out of, or arrive late, to area planning.

- Make use of all the data available – councils hold detailed data on public health, pupil performance, local need and so on, which can be accessed and aggregated in terms of factors such as age, locality or employment status.

- Be aware that sometimes the need will exceed the resources available to your service. A common-sense approach to providing the offer within the available funding is essential.

- Familiarise yourself with the main national policy guidance for ACE. This is the context for the work – and the basis of your service's funding.

- Speak to other councillors about the ACE service, what it can provide and its potential to change lives: they will be the most effective link into local communities.

- Can you bring in new partners or strengthen existing ones? ACE services are only as strong and as valuable as the partnerships they foster and the connections they make.

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- Celebrate your service and your learners and promote learner achievement within the wider community.

- Share your enthusiasm for the service and your passion for service improvement and raising learner aspiration – enthusiasm can be infectious!

Looking to the future

Adult community education has enjoyed relative stability, compared to other parts of the FE sector. However, the introduction of the adult education budget and the ongoing process of devolution are changing the game and asking new questions both of ACE services and the local leaders responsible for them. The new environment in which ACE services operate requires them to be outward-looking, responsive to local need and place focused.

Councillors have a special role in this process in terms of scrutiny, advocacy and building partnerships. They are best placed to maximise the reach and quality of the local ACE service, and to fully realise its potential in relation to other council services and in the context of local communities.

COVID-19

Prior to COVID-19, the LGA had called for funding for adult learning to be restored to 2010 levels, increased over time and fully devolved through the adult education budget. This was seen as critical, given people's extended working and non-working lives and a rapidly changing labour market.

ACE providers and services demonstrated agility and flexibility in response to the COVID-19 crisis. Throughout the lockdown, centres were busy adapting their activities and ensuring that learners were supported. Online learning was introduced, while many centres remained open for vulnerable learners. ACE providers are keen to continue to provide blended learning where appropriate, while recognising that the needs of learners can be complex, and a virtual learning environment will not suit everyone.

As we move towards COVID-19 recovery, it is anticipated that **adult training will need to increase rapidly to help the unemployed retrain for new occupations or even sectors and increase digital skills, therefore funding will need to match that demand**. Learning providers are asking for clarity of funding and flexible processes to enable them to support those already seeking support.

Further Education White Paper   Page 97

DfE is reviewing the work of post-16 education and training and is intending to produce a new white paper on further and adult education in autumn 2020. The white paper will also respond to the Augar Review 2019 and may include a COVID-19 recovery plan detailing the importance of skills and retaining.

Councils and their Adult Community Education services should be centre stage to any recovery plan and should feature in the implementation plan in two ways. Firstly, by working with local Jobcentre Plus centres, schools and colleges to coordinate the response for 16-24 year olds and secondly, through the ACE services, provide a training and employability offer to get adults back into work.

It is important that the role played by councils is reinforced and that the Government is encouraged to strengthen councils' role in determining and supporting local residents to recover from the impact of the pandemic.

Devolution White Paper

It is clear from this handbook that the case should be made to strengthen ACE services for the benefit of local communities. And while councils have a direct role in ACE, they have limited direct influence on the wider skills and employment system, which remains highly centralised. Many councils want that to change, so that they can have more influence over skills and employment issues for their area.

The Government has prioritised the need to 'level up' prosperity across the country, and we expect more detail in the White Paper on devolution, which is likely to be published around the same time as the FE White Paper. The advent of both White Papers is a unique opportunity to **Re-think Local**.

The LGA has already set out its vision and framework for devolution in this area in LGA's **Work Local' model**. It recommends that councils and combined authorities should have the powers and funding to design, commission, and have oversight of a devolved and integrated employment and skills service that brings together information, advice and guidance, skills, apprenticeships, employment support and wider support for individuals and employers. This approach makes sense given every council area has its own unique challenges and opportunities and its own economic and social needs which cannot be addressed by a one-size-fits-all approach.

This should be used as blueprint for a skills and employment devolution that works for all people and places. The Government should back and fund the trialling of it. This could for a medium sized combined authority, lead to additional fiscal benefits for a local area of £280 million per year, with a benefit to the economy of £420 million. This

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would be associated with an additional 8,500 people leaving benefits, an additional 3,600 people achieving Level 2 skills, and an additional 2,100 people achieving Level 3.

Closing thoughts

We asked our interviewees – heads of service and senior councillors – what they thought were the key points for councillors to consider in thinking about the future of their ACE service. Here are some of their responses:

- 'The obvious one is about funding and how they can support [the service] by leveraging funding from different areas of the council for maximum benefit.'
- 'Their lobbying power is important and making sure they have a voice in key decision making.'

- 'It's that understanding of where the need is greatest within your area in order to ensure that the funding we do have is used to maximum effect.'

- 'I think this role in bringing partners together and collaborating, especially in more difficult challenges, is really key.'

- 'We have to get our residents the basic skills they need – English, maths, digital skills – if we are to address a whole range of social injustices.'

- 'Adult learning contributes to civic pride, and it is important to celebrate what our local residents are doing, through learning, to contribute to their local communities. What I see our learners are juggling with, and what they achieve, and the ambitions they have for their children and their future, it is all about civic pride and wanting to make that contribution, to do well. That is a key point for councillors to understand.'

- 'It's about lobbying, being advocates for the service, and bringing those key players together.'

- 'Know your outcomes, know what you are there for, which outcomes you need to achieve and how to design your curriculum to achieve those.'

- 'Get the support and the advocacy partners in place, so the council understands the purpose of adult learning and can see its utility.'

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- 'You have to be really brilliant at partnerships. Brilliant partnerships can transform a service.'

- 'What councillors need to be thinking about, first and foremost, is what is important to local people. Put the politics to one side and think about the priorities for that area, the challenges. That is the brief they should be expecting from officers, that is what they should be looking at.'

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to all the heads of service and councillors who were interviewed for this handbook, and in particular to Dr Sue Pember CBE, the Head of Policy at HOLEX, and to Gerald Jones who was until recently Head of Adult Learning at the London Borough of Lewisham, and Chair of the Local Education Authorities Forum for the Education of Adults (LEFEA) before taking on a new role at Morley College.

More publications about Employment and skills

Learning for Life: the role of adult community education in developing thriving local communities - A handbook for councillors

Re-thinking youth participation for the present and next generation: education to employment

Kickstart: what good looks like

More publications in this topic

You may also be interested in

Learning for Life: the role of adult community education in developing thriving local communities

Work Local

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REVIEW FINDINGS: The Stronger Families Hub: Our Engagement with Key Stakeholders – Exploring Participation and Feedback to Improve Service and Satisfaction

Committee name	Children, Families and Education Select Committee

Officer reporting	Ryan Dell – Democratic Services

Papers with report	Appendix 1 – Guidance on Policy Reviews Appendix 2 – Updated Scoping Report Appendix 3 – Minutes of previous meetings relating to the review

Ward	All Wards

HEADLINES

Background

As part of the review into the Stronger Families Hub, Members will be advised to start considering findings, conclusions and early draft recommendations on the review for broader discussion and stocktake of the review to-date. These will be with the intention of improving the service of the Stronger Families Hub.

Summary

The Committee has, to date, held five witness sessions. The intention of these sessions was to obtain feedback from a range of stakeholders with a view to improving the service. The first witness session set the scene and outlined the work of the Stronger Families Hub. The second and third heard testimonies from young people and their parents. The fourth discussed the experience of staff of the hub, while the fifth examined partnership working with health representatives. The Committee hopes to run a sixth witness session with education representatives in the near future.

Notwithstanding the final additional witness session, as the bulk of witness testimony is now complete, it is considered timely for Members to start to consider their early collective findings so these can be worked up in more detail, and ultimately incorporated into the final report to Cabinet. Any subsequent findings from the sixth witness session can still be fed into the process.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee consider possible conclusions, findings and early draft recommendations in relation to the review.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

In considering this item, Members should bear in mind the following:

1) **Scoping report – looking at the original parameters of the review**

The updated review scoping report is attached so Members can be reminded of the original Terms of Reference as set out below, and whether the Committee has met these:

1. to understand the Council's current work with the Stronger Families Hub and what it entails.
2. to scrutinise a service that was launched a year ago and review its effectiveness.
3. to review the Stronger Families Hub's digital process (one number, one address) and how this works in practice.
4. to understand and explore the nature of partnership working.
5. to consider the allocation of information to children and families and access to community support functions.
6. to review the support in place for parents and children that were born during lockdown and the impacts of COVID-19.
7. to acknowledge that all families come in all shapes, sizes and circumstances and how better support can be provided to parents.
8. to explore the measures in place for child protection and safeguarding.
9. subject to the Committee's findings, to make any conclusions, propose actions, service and policy recommendations to the decision-making Cabinet.

2) **Policy review guidance**

Members will recall the guidance issued in July 2022 on undertaking policy reviews. This guidance is attached to this report for reference again, and Members are asked to take into account Point 4 on Findings and draft recommendations and in particular whether they:

- Meet the initial aims / objectives of the review (as above)
- Be SMART, Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound
- Not be a short-term fix, but a lasting outcome
- Consider the financial aspect, e.g. cost neutral, provide savings or if at a cost, then affordable – and if possible aligned with the MTFF (budget planning process)
- Are based on a broad evidence base as possible and 'user or resident' insight
- Not create additional bureaucracy, e.g. if it relates to a policy, then to seek to review or amend existing policies (unless there is an absolute imperative for a new policy)
- If publicity or wider engagement or education is recommended, to target such communications as best as possible rather than generally
- Consider 'conclusions' as well as any specific recommendations.

3) **Minutes of previous meetings**

Attached as Appendix 3 are the minutes of previous meetings relating to the review, which may assist in Members' considerations.

4) Possible areas for emerging recommendations

In discussion with the Chairman, Members may wish to consider the following 'areas' to develop and refine possible findings, conclusions and draft recommendations:

1.   Promotion of the Stronger Families Hub
2.   How we can increase awareness of the service
3.   How we can provide a more detailed outline of what the process involves
4.   The capacity / efficiency of the MASH team
5.   Joint working with other Local Authorities.
6.   Emergency bed accommodation
7.   Asylum-Seeking Health support
8.   Children's integrated therapy and focus on Autism Spectrum Disorder.
9.   Further integration between children's services and adult services.

Committee Members may also wish to bring their own findings and thoughts based upon the various witness testimony received.

Democratic Services will then "road-test" any draft recommendations from the Committee, looking at their feasibility with the relevant service area and report back to the Committee to a subsequent meeting, in preparation for shaping the final draft report for the Committee's approval.

RESIDENT BENEFIT

The aim of the review into the Stronger Families Hub is to hear testimonies from stakeholders as to how the service can be improved, in addition to what is currently working well.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL.

Appendix 1 - Guidance on undertaking policy reviews

Over the years, Hillingdon's overview and scrutiny committees have undertaken successful in-depth reviews of Council services and policies. This has resulted in a number of positive changes locally, with some also affecting policy at a national level. Such committees engage Councillors in a wide range of Council activity and build a greater understanding about service provision to residents.

Policy reviews generally seek to:

1. Address a [significant] matter affecting the Borough
2. Seek to improve the delivery and/or efficiency of local services
3. Consider changes to policies or procedures to improve outcomes to residents/users

REVIEW PHASES

The typical phases of a review are as follows and set out further below:

1	Selection of topic
2	Scoping the review / setting out objectives
3	Witness & evidence stage (this is the main activity)
4	Findings and Draft recommendations (possible early report draft)
5	Final report approved by Committee
6	Referred to Cabinet for consideration
7	Monitoring the implementation of recommendations once approved / amended by Cabinet at meetings, i.e. in six months

1. Selection of topic

It is always best to sound out and check the feasibility of potential review topics early on, as there will be lots of ideas coming forward and often knowing what topic will add most value will be difficult to gauge at this stage. It is important not to generalise, e.g. a review into waste services.

It may also not be known whether a topic is currently under review by the Cabinet or Council officers or part of a planned service transformation in due course. All of this and other factors need to be investigated and in particular, any duplication of review activity should not take place.

Whilst most policy reviews last a number of months, not all policy review ideas will suit this and may benefit from a single meeting review. It really depends on the scope of the review. It very narrow, i.e. a particular service policy, then a single meeting review may suffice. If a review seeks to look at an entire way a service operates then a number of months may be required to ensure you can undertake all your witness sessions and secure the necessary evidence and information before you formulate your findings.

Ideas for review topics can come from a number of sources including:

- Committee Members
- Cabinet Members.
- Council officers
- External partners / organisations
- Residents
- Ombudsman findings

When Councillors or the Committee itself considers a potential review topic, it is recommended running it through the Scrutiny Topic Scorecard (see Annex A). This gives you the opportunity to 'score' topics based upon their impacts under the following criteria:

Resident focused	Influence	Achievable
Correct remit	New	Wider support
Drives improvement	Drives transformation and efficiency	National impact

Another way to consider a potential review topic, is to add this as an information item at an upcoming meeting on your work programme, to probe the matter further with Council officers and ascertain whether it merits a fuller review – again perhaps running it through the Scorecard above.

It is strongly advised that one review topic is undertaken at any one time, given resources.

2. Scoping report

Once a topic is agreed upon by the Committee, then officers will prepare a scoping report setting out the objectives of the review for your consideration. The scoping report will show how the review can be timetabled and structured, i.e. through themed witness sessions, along with details of potential witnesses and other contextual information to get the review started, e.g. lines of enquiry or questioning of witnesses.

The scoping report is a 'live' document owned by the Committee. Should the review's focus change mid-review, then the scoping document and its objectives can be adapted.

3. Witness and evidence stage

Ultimately, the Committee's efforts are at their best when external witnesses and residents participate, adding value to intelligence gathering and findings. In support of this, Committees have undertaken a variety of both formal and informal activity "in meetings" and "outside meetings". It is important to pull together a broad evidence based for any potential findings later on. Additionally, the ability for Councillors to bring their 'local' insight is highly valuable. Activities the Committee can undertake include:

- Surveys / social media
- Promotion of review to seek views
- Invite the relevant Cabinet Member to attend for their views
- Question key council officers
- Hold informal workshops
- Networking events, e.g. with partners
- Have closed meetings, i.e. confidential, such as social care clients

- Commission reports from council officers / externally
- Request data and intelligence on the topic
- Visits to other local authorities
- Undertake site visits within the Borough or council facilities
- Appoint experts or advisors to join the Committee throughout its review
- Selecting the best range of witnesses to get a real user / resident perspectives
- Invite national experts in their field

Whilst information will be provided to Councillors, it may be helpful when preparing for this stage of a review, that Councillors:

- Prepare their draft questions for each witness in advance;
- Read a witness bio or find out more about their organisation;
- Do their own additional research on the topic - you may find something officers don't!
- Use their network of councillors in other local authorities to seek views;
- Tell residents at Surgeries / Ward Walks about your review, get their thoughts.

4. Findings and draft recommendations & 5. Final Report

After hearing from witnesses and receiving evidence, the Committee then will meet to pull together all the information and shape its collective findings, i.e. what needs to be improved or changed as a result.

The Committee will form 'draft' recommendations from this, which consistent with the Protocol on Cabinet and Scrutiny Relations, are usually shared with the Cabinet Member for their feedback and valuable insight.

In developing any recommendation, the Committee should bear in mind the following:

- Meet the initial aims / objectives of the review
- Be SMART, Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound
- Not be a short-term fix, but a lasting outcome
- Consider the financial aspect, e.g. cost neutral, provide savings or if at a cost, then affordable – and if possible aligned with the MTFF (budget planning process)
- Be based on a broad evidence base as possible and 'user or resident' insight
- Not create additional bureaucracy, e.g. if it relates to a policy, then to seek to review or amend existing policies (unless there is an absolute imperative for a new policy)
- If publicity or wider engagement or education is recommended, to target such communications as best as possible rather than generally
- Consider 'conclusions' as well as any specific recommendations.

Around this time, the Democratic Services Officer supporting the Committee will advise further on findings and drafting recommendations. Throughout this process, their role is critical to the Committee, to guide Members and secure the information and any witness activity that Members wish to undertake. They also work with the Chairman to bring the final draft report for the Committee to approve before it is scheduled to Cabinet.

6. Referred to Cabinet & 7. Monitoring of recommendations

The Committee's report will be shared with the Leader and Cabinet Member and scheduled to a Cabinet meeting as soon as possible. There is a legal requirement for any such report to be considered by the Cabinet.

Should Cabinet approve the Committee's recommendations, then they become official policy and officers are charged with implementing them.

A post report review is undertaken in say 6 months or a years' time to see how the Committee's recommendations have been implemented. This is scheduled on your work programme.

Annex A – Scrutiny Topic Scorecard 2022-2026

Topic	*Criteria scores showing 1-5 (5 being the highest, 0 the lowest). Then add up the total score. The higher the better review.*									Score
	Resident focused	Correct remit	Influence	New	Achievable	Wider support	Drives improvement	Delivers transformation and efficiency	National impact	

See criteria descriptions overleaf…

Detailed criteria to assess review scoring *(5 being the highest, 0 the lowest)*
Resident-focused – The topic will have high impact on residents and the community, with public interest and scope for making a positive difference (can be universal or a targeted group of people or an area of the Borough e.g. young people or a particular town centre)
Correct remit – A topic that is clearly covered in the Committee's Terms of Reference and does it cut clearly into the domain of other Committees (unless a cross-cutting brief). If it does, then see if you can narrow the focus of the topic.
Influence - A topic that relates to a service, event or issue in which the Council is in control of, has a significant stake in or influence over the matter, e.g. with partners.
New - A new, fresh topic preferably. One which has not previously been reviewed by a Committee in the last 2-3 years, or which is not currently being reviewed by another Committee or internally by Cabinet Members and Officers, e.g. through service transformation.
Achievable – A topic that is not open ended. One where the Committee's work programme can accommodate the review. Where there is likely to be a good level of expertise and information to draw on to complete. Does the topic need to be narrowed to make it more achievable?
Wider support - A topic that is likely to receive buy-in from the Committee and wider Council, e.g. Cabinet Members, Officers. Or support is welcome from partner organisations to review the matter.
Drives improvement - A topic where performance levels of a service have dropped on a consistent basis, or the contractor is not performing against agreed standards or there are significance (evidenced) complaints or feedback from residents on the matter.
Delivers transformation and efficiency – a topic in support of the Council budgetary objectives, any areas where service re-modelling is under consideration in the medium to longer-term, that with Members' insight can help to deliver future savings, efficiencies and value for money services to residents. A topic where new ways of working could be adopted to benefit service delivery.
National impact – A topic where emerging or recent legislation mean that it would be timely to review the matter to ensure Hillingdon Council is well prepared. Or a topic, that whilst Hillingdon focussed, could potentially be of benefit to other local councils or governmental authorities.

Children, Families and Education Select Committee Review Scoping Report – 2022/23

Draft title: The Stronger Families Hub: Our Engagement with Key Stakeholders – Exploring Participation and Feedback to Improve Service and Satisfaction

1. OBJECTIVES

Aim of review

At its meeting on 20 July 2022, the Children, Families and Education Select Committee agreed as its major review to investigate how the Stronger Families Hub was functioning in practice since it was launched in August 2021. This document serves as an introduction to the topic of the Stronger Families Hub and sets out in general terms the context to the Stronger Families Hub within local government, the objectives, the challenges and offers a framework for any subsequent review.

For the purposes of the review, it is significant to distinguish between the Stronger Families initiative and Stronger Families Hub. Both these areas are distinct in their roles although when developed and rolled out the Stronger Family Hubs will strengthen the early and targeted intervention available for families in the Borough. This review will specifically focus on the service in place for children and young people.

It is intended that the review will support the work of Children's Services in helping to shape it ways of working, identifying areas of weakness and how overall engagement with key stakeholders can be improved.

Terms of Reference

The following Terms of Reference are suggested for the review, subject to any changes agreed by the Committee:

1. to understand the Council's current work with the Stronger Families Hub and what it entails.

2. to scrutinise a service that was launched a year ago and review its effectiveness.
3. to review the Stronger Families Hub's digital process (one number, one address) and how this works in practice.
4. to understand and explore the nature of partnership working.
5. to consider the allocation of information to children and families and access to community support functions.
6. to review the support in place for parents and children that were born during lockdown and the impacts of COVID-19.
7. to acknowledge that all families come in all shapes, sizes and circumstances and how better support can be provided to parents.
8. to explore the measures in place for child protection and safeguarding.
9. subject to the Committee's findings, to make any conclusions, propose actions, service and policy recommendations to the decision-making Cabinet.

2. BACKGROUND

Stronger Families Hub Team

The Team was initially set up with two team managers, an advanced practitioner, 11 full-time and one part-time social worker (typically senior social workers) as well as 10 triage officers. In light of the increased demand since the launch, interim arrangements have been made for additional staffing subject to the findings of the project review.

Context and key information

"Our vision is to empower families to be and feel strong, safe and healthy through the provision of early and targeted support to reach their full potential.

To achieve our vision, we need to respond to need when it arises and work together to ensure we have the right person for the child and family leading the right intervention."

The Stronger Families Hub programme is a 24/7 service available to residents providing a wide range of support services. It can be described as a locality based Early Help and Prevention Service supporting children at the earliest stage by working closely with partners across Hillingdon.

The Stronger Families Hub programme went live on 03 August 2021 and provides a single point of contact for all safeguarding referrals and an online route to refer a child to social care. The areas of support include:

- Children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND)
- Adolescent Development Services
- Portage
- Stronger Families (Locality Key working teams)
- Social Care
- Attendance issues
- Children Missing from Education

The Council's website includes further information regarding the service model which combines a social work led service, adult mental health service and the Hillingdon MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub). It enables schools, post-16 and early years providers to request support in

an educational establishment for children with SEND. It enables health professionals to conform with the statutory requirement of completing a SEND Early Health Notification, once they have identified a child who may have long-term SEND. The Stronger Families Hub allows better information sharing between professionals, which ensures a more co-ordinated and faster response to the needs of children and families in Hillingdon.

Relevant Legislation

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 2004
- The Children and Social Work Act 2017

External issues and risks to Stronger Families Hub

Stronger Families Hub within local government is faced with a number of challenges, including:

- Increasing demand for services combined with decreasing funding/ resources
- Continued effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing recovery; and
- Recent implications from BREXIT, including scarcity of materials, manpower and expertise

Current data, best practice and research

Further data and research will be identified as the review progresses.

Connected work

The Stronger Families Hub in Hillingdon has the potential to impact all children and social care services within the Council. Implications to this impact will be identified as the review progresses.

Executive Responsibilities

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

3. EVIDENCE & ENQUIRY

Lines of Enquiry

Lines of enquiry can be expanded as the review progresses or included in relevant witness session reports. However, lines of enquiry may include:

- establishing the historical background of the Stronger Families Hub to compare how well the service is being delivered now.
- real focus on the end user and how they have found the service in practice.
- exploring what support functions are in place and whether these can be improved.
- the nature of partnership working and how it is combined in practice.

Potential witnesses

Witnesses will be identified by the Committee in consultation with relevant officers.

Surveys, site-visits or other fact-finding events

Such opportunities will be identified as the review progresses. A possible survey of suppliers will be considered to provide useful feedback and evidence for the Committee.

Future information that may be required

Further information may be identified as the review progresses.

4. REVIEW PLANNING & TIMETABLE

Proposed timeframe & milestones for the review:

Meeting Date	Action	Purpose/ theme	Witnesses/ officers attending
03 November 2022	Agree Scoping Report	Information and analysis	Democratic Services/ Select Committee
06 December 2022	Witness Session 1	Setting the scene	Antony Madden, Head of First Response & Out of Hours
18 January 2023 – 10 am	Witness Session 2	The voice of parents	Meeting with parents
18 January 2023 – 5pm	Witness Session 3	The voice of young people	Meeting with young people
06 February 2023 – 1pm in CR 4	Witness Session 4	The voice of providers	Staff: Grace Mackenzie – Triage Officer Priyanka Yadav – Interim MASH Manager Shreena Patel – Social Worker Ritu Gupta – Out of Hours Team Manager Patsy Martin – Key Worker Lea Perez – Key Worker Team Manager
14 March 2023 – 7pm in CR5	Witness Session 5	Partnership working – health representatives	Anthony Madden – Head of Service, First Response, MASH and Out of Hours Social Work Siobhan Appleton – Assistant Director for Safeguarding Adults, Safeguarding Children and Children Looked After Emma Kay – Named Nurse for Safeguarding Children (Hillingdon)/ CNWL Interim Head of Safeguarding Children Sian Thomas – Head of Children's Services, Hillingdon
18 April 2023	Committee session	De-brief and emerging findings	To discuss key findings and identify potential recommendations

TBC	Witness Session 6	Partnership working – education representatives	
TBC	Approval of draft final report	Proposals – agree recommendations and final draft report to Cabinet	

Resource requirements

None.

Equalities impact

None.

Background Papers/ further reading

Stronger Families - Hillingdon Council

MASH - Hillingdon Safeguarding Children Partnership Arrangements (Hillingdon LSCB) (hillingdonsafeguardingpartnership.org.uk)

Early Help: Stronger Families - Hillingdon Safeguarding Children Partnership Arrangements (Hillingdon LSCB) (hillingdonsafeguardingpartnership.org.uk)

Appendices

App A - Stronger-Families-Flyer
App B - Stronger-Families-Webinar-Slides

Minutes

CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE

3 November 2022

Meeting held at Committee Room 6 - Civic Centre, High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW

| 35. | **SCOPING REPORT FOR PROPOSED REVIEW 'THE STRONGER FAMILIES HUB: OUR ENGAGEMENT WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS - EXPLORING PARTICIPATION AND FEEDBACK TO IMPROVE SERVICE AND SATISFACTION'** *(Agenda Item 7)*

The Committee considered the scoping report for the proposed review on 'The Stronger Families Hub: Our engagement with key stakeholders – exploring participation and feedback to improve service and satisfaction.'

Members were keen to hear from a wider range of stakeholders including young people, parents and headteachers. It was agreed that the scoping report would be updated to reflect this and the first witness session would take place on 6 December 2022.

RESOLVED: That the Committee commented on and considered the scoping report to initiate the review. |
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CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE

6 December 2022

**Meeting held at Committee Room 6 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW**

44. **THE STRONGER FAMILIES HUB: OUR ENGAGEMENT WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS - EXPLORING PARTICIPATION AND FEEDBACK TO IMPROVE SERVICE AND SATISFACTION - WITNESS SESSION 1** *(Agenda Item 5)*

The Head of Service for First Response, MASH and out of hours social work - Children & Young People Services introduced the report on The Stronger Families Hub: Our engagement with key stakeholders – exploring participation and feedback to improve service and satisfaction – Witness Session One. A detailed overview of the report was provided and key aspects of the report were highlighted.

The Stronger Families Hub

The Stronger Families Hub was launched in August 2021. The Committee heard that the service provided a single point of contact for children, young people and families in Hillingdon to access a wide range of support services 24/7 and aimed to offer the right help at the right time.

Members were informed that experience gained through the Covid 19 pandemic informed the ways of working and helped shaped a delivery model to meet the demand for out of hours support. The new model aimed to:

- Focus on 'prevention' from the very first point of contact.
- Transition from 'Emergency Duty' to 24/7 Support
- Deliver a robust Early Help Offer
- Reduce the demand on statutory services

It was noted that operating under a clearly defined pathway had helped ensure all advice and support to children and families was targeted, consistent, and the use of pre statutory resources was maximised. The Stronger Families Hub changed the 'front door' approach, as well as the capacity and capability to deliver strong preventative services via an Early Help Assessment and Team around the family approach. Redirected resources embedded the Key Working Service across three localities offering a rich skill set by integrating the workforce. Members were informed that the service had supported and strengthened each locality to encourage lead professionals to confidently manage Stronger Families Plans where appropriate and build community resilience.

A review of the Stronger Families model was undertaken 12 months of operation. The findings of the reviews were outlined to the Committee.

In order to ensure that the service remained dynamic and responsive to children's changing needs, it was reported that a number of initiatives were taking place including

a review of the All Age Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, MASH and Stronger Families Hub establishment.

Performance data

The Committee received detailed performance data throughout the report and presentation. Headline performance data highlighted included:

Contacts in the last 6 months	11,541
Early Help Assessments completed	816
Referrals in the last 6 months	2,074
Statutory assessments completed in the last 6 months	2083

Service user feedback

The Committee was presented with feedback from service users. Since the Stronger Families Hub was launched it had been well received and utilised.

Appendices

The Committee had regard to a number of appendices including:

- A blank Early Help Assessment form.
- A completed Early Help Assessment form that had been completed and referred to the Stronger Families Hub.
- An example of a Stronger Families Plan that detailed information such as child contact details, summary of review discussion and plan going forward.
- Terms of Reference for the Stronger Families multi agency review.
- Feedback from parents on the intervention from Stronger Families.
- Children's Services Analysis Tool (ChAT) data report for October 2022 that included in-depth information such as contacts in the last six month, early help placements and demographics of children across all areas of children's social care.

Committee discussion

The Committee noted the information presented and sought additional information on a few points.

Regarding the Stronger Families Champion in schools, it was explained that this initiative was a response to a recommendation from a subgroup and helped support joint working and contributions to Early Help Assessments and Stronger Families Plans. Discussions with colleagues in schools were being planned to promote the initiative further. In terms of working with the third sector and voluntary organisations, the Committee heard that there were already good working relationships in place with organisations such as Brilliant Parents and feedback was often used to consider how services could be improved.

On the matter of out of hours lines and how serious cases were managed, it was noted that the Stronger Families Hub was a single point of access for professionals and families and included a 24/7 Triage Service that replaced the previous out of hours model (known as the Emergency Duty Team). To support Early Help Key Working services were realigned to create three locality based Stronger Families Key Working Teams and; new

pathways were implemented to help ensure that preventative intervention was fully utilised and statutory social work was retained for children with complex needs and children at risk. There was regular training available depending on which agencies were involved and all partners attended induction days for additional training. The duty to refer was always emphasised.

The Committee heard that going forward there would no longer be the requirement for the commissioned service Anchor to handle social care calls out of hours thus reducing the need for handovers and streamlining this service further. Cases were coordinated by triage and allocated to teams depending on the nature of the call and specialism. The demands of out of hours social work had changed significantly and detailed analysis had been undertaken of the nature of out of hours work in order to reshape the service. Data collated demonstrated that childrens contact outweighed adults at a ratio of 27% adults to 73% CYPS and although the adults ratio was lower, the nature of work was more complex.

Members welcomed the positive feedback from parents and were informed that when there were any complaints officers worked to resolve the issues quickly. It was also noted that as part of the review's witness programme Members would have an opportunity to meet with parents and young people and would be able to explore any suggestions for improvements/complaints then.

Officers were thanked for their work in this area which was clear throughout the report and data provided. Given that there had already been reviews undertaken in April and October 2022, it was questioned what was hoped by the Committee's review. It was explained that the Stronger Families Hub had increased in size since its introduction and there had been large investment in this area. Members were requested to provide scrutiny on the area to consider how the service could be improved, strengthened and whether it was delivering value for money. It was also acknowledged that Councillors engaged first hand in the community, and it was hoped that the review would encourage a positive outlook of the Stronger Families Hub and help breakdown any negative stereotypes. There was now a strong focus on Early Help and safeguarding and the review would raise further awareness of the initiative.

During Member questions it was noted that existing data came from a variety of different sources that was cross referenced.

In terms of how the Stronger Families Hub engaged with children where English was not the first language, it was reported that having a diverse work force helped to develop relationships with service users. There was always the opportunity to use interpreters to ensure that comprehensive assessments took place.

The Committee was aware that sometimes there appeared to be a stigma attached to asking for help. It was confirmed that the Stronger Families Hub was promoted through the safeguarding partnership, council website and communications issued from the Corporate Communications team. There was also work being done within religious settings and schools to increase education and consultation including with young people. An example of this was the DfE Build Back Better Fund initiative in regards to safeguarding woman and children from harmful practices including Female Genital Mutilation. The initiative was based in the Stronger Families Hub and included 4 consultation events with residents.

During Member discussions, it was noted that police referrals often related to domestic violence and neglect. It was highlighted that the Stronger Families Hub was a one point

contact to encourage and simplify the Early Help route. To avoid discouraging people to complete forms the Committee was informed that the forms were made created in a user-friendly way and avoided any technical jargon. Having the single point of contact made the process more efficient as it avoided going back and forth and enabled accurate assessments to be made.

The Committee thanked officers for their work in this area and the detailed report and presentation.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the and commented on the progress made by the Stronger Families initiative at this time and asked questions as part of its review.

Minutes

CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE

02 February 2023

**Meeting held at Committee Room 6 – Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge, UB8 1UW**

64.	**SCOPING REPORT FOR PROPOSED REVIEW 'THE STRONGER FAMILIES HUB: OUR ENGAGEMENT WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS – EXPLORING PARTICIPATION AND FEEDBACK TO IMPROVE SERVICES AND SATISFACTION** *(Agenda Item 7)*
	It was noted that there were two upcoming witness sessions, witness session four: the voice of providers, and witness session five: partnership working. Regarding witness session five, it was noted that work to invite representatives from schools was ongoing. Members raised having witness sessions in the evening and it was noted that the witness sessions with young people and parents (witness sessions two and three) needed to take place outside of the recorded Committee meeting for reasons of safeguarding. However, it was noted It was noted that witness session four was open to all Members, and that witness session five would take place during the next Committee meeting on 14 March.
	RESOLVED: That the Committee commented on and noted the updated scoping report.

Minutes

CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE

14 March 2023

**Meeting held at Committee Room 5 – Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge, UB8 1UW**

72.	**WITNESS SESSION 5 – PARTNERSHIP WORKING** *(Agenda Item 5)*
	The Committee held its fifth witness session into its review of the Stronger Families Hub. This session focused on partnership working with health representatives. Witnesses in attendance were the Head of Service, First Response, MASH and Out of Hours Social Work; the Assistant Director for Safeguarding Adults, Safeguarding Children and Children Looked After; the Named Nurse for Safeguarding Children (Hillingdon)/ CNWL Interim Head of Safeguarding Children), and the Head of Children's Services for Hillingdon.
	The Head of Service, First Response, MASH and Out of Hours Social Work introduced himself and his role with the Stronger Families Hub. It was noted that this session related to partnership working with health representatives and that a future session would be held with education representatives. The partners worked with families who were under pressure, and also dealt with impacts of COVID-19 and the cost of living. Despite the challenges, the partners remained committed to providing support, and there was close collaboration between health partners and the Stronger Families Hub. The main source of referrals had come via the Police, with up to 11 officers on site within the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH*) to enable the quick exchange of information. The second most referrals had come via health partners.
	(*MASH was the Stronger Families Hub's safeguarding element where professionals shared information quickly about police referrals of domestic abuse (Merlins) and referrals where there were concerns about a child's safety or welfare.)
	The Head of Children's Services, CNWL, noted that their portfolio included children aged 0-19, health visiting, school nursing, child development centres, community paediatricians, children integrated therapy, occupational therapy, paediatric occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech and language, children's community nursing team and working with those with life-limiting conditions. Health representatives were a large partner of the Stronger Families Hub. The above noted services had been asked about their experiences with the Stronger Families Hub prior to this witness session, and the feedback was positive, despite some teething problems. Partners highlighted the benefit of the Stronger Families Hub as one forum for a range of issues, and this was linked to the early identification of needs. It was also noted that partners had a strong relationship with the Local Authority.
	The Named Nurse for Safeguarding Children (Hillingdon)/ CNWL Interim Head of Safeguarding Children noted that they worked with all children's services when they had safeguarding concerns and delivered training to staff. They line managed the MASH Health Practitioner within Hillingdon. There was

lots of interaction with MASH and these services used the Stronger Families Hub a lot. The Named Nurse further noted the initial teething problems but that they were pleased with the work of the Stronger Families Hub.

The Assistant Director for Safeguarding Adults, Safeguarding Children and Children Looked After at CNWL NHS North West London worked in close collaboration will all health services including Primary Care, Primary Medical Care, Acute Trusts and Community Trusts. Part of their role was to ensure that health colleagues were discharging their safeguarding responsibilities appropriately. The Stronger Families Hub came under this remit. They noted that there had been issues for the Acute Trust with the online portal when initially launched but commended the Local Authority for its response to this. A sub-group has been established which had discussions around the initial operational issues with the online portal, which had helped to resolve some of these issues and to reduce anxieties. It was noted that there was still some work to do with Primary Medical Care via support for GPs in terms of accessing and using the portal. A positive aspect was the useful guidance document that had come out alongside the launch of the portal. This had been well received by Primary Care.

Members questioned how feedback was received from or on behalf of non-verbal children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND). Witnesses noted that training was ongoing with key workers as well as social workers which included training on communication tools, such as parent-child observations for non-vernal children. Continuous improvement was reviewed on a four-weekly basis through one-to-one supervision, while there was also peer supervision and group supervision. There were also workshops taking place with partners. There was a reliance on universal services for information sharing, but once information was shared, the process was more streamlined that it was prior to the establishment of the Stronger Families Hub due to its one number, one email, one online portal that children, parents, carers and professionals can access.

Partners further noted that training was assertive in knowing that children with SEND were at higher risk of safeguarding concerns. This was linked to the Early Health notification.

Members questioned how feedback was received from young people after any case of safeguarding breach. Partners noted that there was a focus on getting better at obtaining feedback and that the Care Quality Commission (CQC) asked for evidence of this feedback. Reference was made to the Teddy Bear's picnic but it was noted that improvements were needed and so partners gave a partial assurance to the Committee on partners getting feedback from young people.

Members further highlighted other voluntary groups such as scouts and girl-guides, and sports teams as avenues for feedback or for direction to the Stronger Families Hub. Partners further noted Young Health Watch, the Children in Care Council, and the Child's Voice Panel as other avenues for feedback. Feedback was also received during the statutory SEND process. It was, however, noted that sometimes feedback was sought from the easier-to-reach groups as opposed to all groups. A possible future group for children with epilepsy was referenced as a potential new route for engagement as part of the plan for 2023.

Partners noted that for children with disabilities, when a referral was made, partners had close relationships to identify which professionals know that individual child well, for example a Speech Therapist or Occupational Therapist, who could identify their communication needs and identify which tools to use to get the child's voice heard.

Reference was made to Speech and Language therapists within the Youth Offending Service – these were key in the communication process and were often linked to undiagnosed cases of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Members asked about the challenges faced and what areas of improvement could be identified. Partners noted that quality assurance of referrals being made was one area to look at, as well as mental health services. On quality assurance, partners further noted that this was tracked, and there was practitioner-to-practitioner tracking where possible. This had led to less escalation to managers. Partners noted other partner organisations such as Border Force and noted an increase in quality in Early Help Assessments. Partners noted that the form on the online portal had been amended to be more concise, and now consisted of drop-down boxes. Further noted was the importance of ensuring that staff were supported in quality assurance.

Members referred to the next agenda item and asked if there was a capacity issue. Partners noted that some staff were on lean contracts and there were some vacancy issues around Paediatric Occupational Therapy, although this reflected a national issue. It was acknowledged that funds were tight but that an Asylum-Seeking Health Visitor would be beneficial as well as a Paediatric Occupational Therapist. It was noted that there was a struggle with the increase in the number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), and that the number of referrals to the Child Development Centre for concerns regarding Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) were increasing. Creative and innovative ideas were often pursued as a way around capacity issues.

Members commended the more joined-up nature of the service with partners, and asked about any issues with data sharing between agencies and how these were overcome. Partners noted that GDPR should not be a barrier to keeping children safe. It was noted that the Stronger Families Hub was a consent-based service, and it was recommended through a review that parents and carers be better informed that consent meant to more than one agency. This was known as universal consent.

There was also a named nurse for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), who was trained in information-sharing. Data was provided through the Safeguarding Children Partnership for CAMHS. It was noted here that a CAMHS post within MASH would be beneficial.

Members asked the partners about their work with other Local Authorities and how this differed from its work with Hillingdon. Partners noted that most of their work was with Hillingdon and that the service being 24-hours was impressive, as not having to use emergency teams outside of core hours kept the quality of service high. Also, having the one front door was beneficial. Partners noted that there was not enough experience of other Boroughs to give an accurate comparison. Partners again referenced the earlier point

about quality assurance as an area for improvement. It was noted that the voice of the child runs through all sub-groups, and this was something that Hillingdon did well.

Members asked about the percentage of children with additional needs being identified through ASQ checks, how many were missed, and where any were missed, what was done to bridge this gap, in particular between children with and without SEND. It was noted here that further information could be shared outside of the meeting.

Partners noted the importance of early identification, and that they worked with a designated officer for SEND. The multi-agency approach of the EHCP was noted, and there was good signposting to, for example, resources available in alternative languages. Partners noted that the multi-agency work around SEND was strong.

Members asked partners for their input into possible recommendations for the major review. Partners noted that there were concerns around new arrivals in hotels, and so an Asylum-Seeking Health Visitor would be beneficial in terms of early identification of needs. Partners also had concerns over the number of vacancies within their services. Investment into children's integrated therapy services was recommended, as was more focus on children with ASD. ASD navigators or pathways was suggested as a new approach to ASD. Stronger integration was needed between children's services and adult services, as well as the transition when young people more from children's services to adult services. The new Transition nurse was highlighted as a recent benefit. More focus on mental health provision and on neurodiversity support was recommended.

Members sought clarification on, and partners confirmed that, communication within the partners' services was good, but communication with other agencies was what required improvement. It was further noted here that quality assurance was a high priority for the Stronger Families Hub sub-group.

RESOLVED: That the Committee asked questions of the witnesses and noted the updated scoping report.

CABINET FORWARD PLAN

Committee name	Children, Families and Education Select Committee

Officer reporting	Ryan Dell, Democratic Services

Papers with report	Appendix A – Latest Forward Plan

Ward	As shown on the Forward Plan

HEADLINES

To monitor the Cabinet's latest Forward Plan which sets out key decisions and other decisions to be taken by the Cabinet collectively and Cabinet Members individually over the coming year. The report sets out the actions available to the Committee.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Children, Families and Education Select Committee notes the Cabinet Forward Plan.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Cabinet Forward Plan is published monthly, usually around the first or second week of each month. It is a rolling document giving the required public notice of future key decisions to be taken. Should a later edition of the Forward Plan be published after this agenda has been circulated, Democratic Services will update the Committee on any new items or changes at the meeting.

As part of its Terms of Reference, each Select Committee should consider the Forward Plan and, if it deems necessary, comment as appropriate to the decision-maker on the items listed which relate to services within its remit. For reference, the Forward Plan helpfully details which Select Committee's remit covers the relevant future decision item listed.

The Select Committee's monitoring role of the Forward Plan can be undertaken in a variety of ways, including both pre-decision and post-decision scrutiny of the items listed. The provision of advance information on future items listed (potentially also draft reports) to the Committee in advance will often depend upon a variety of factors including timing or feasibility, and ultimately any such request would rest with the relevant Cabinet Member to decide. However, the 2019 Protocol on Overview & Scrutiny and Cabinet Relations (part of the Hillingdon Constitution) does provide guidance to Cabinet Members to:

- Actively support the provision of relevant Council information and other requests from the Committee as part of their work programme;
- Where feasible, provide opportunities for committees to provide their input on forthcoming executive reports as set out in the Forward Plan to enable wider pre-decision scrutiny (in addition to those statutorily required to come before committees, *i.e. policy framework documents – see para. below*).

As mentioned above, there is both a constitutional and statutory requirement for Select Committees to provide comments on the Cabinet's draft budget and policy framework proposals after publication. These are automatically scheduled in advance to multi-year work programmes.

Therefore, in general, the Committee may consider the following actions on specific items listed on the Forward Plan:

	Committee action	When	How
1	**To provide specific comments to be included in a future Cabinet or Cabinet Member report on matters within its remit.**	As part of its pre-decision scrutiny role, this would be where the Committee wishes to provide its influence and views on a particular matter within the formal report to the Cabinet or Cabinet Member before the decision is made. This would usually be where the Committee has previously considered a draft report or the topic in detail, or where it considers it has sufficient information already to provide relevant comments to the decision-maker.	These would go within the standard section in every Cabinet or Cabinet Member report called "Select Committee comments". The Cabinet or Cabinet Member would then consider these as part of any decision they make.
2	**To request further information on future reports listed under its remit.**	As part of its pre-decision scrutiny role, this would be where the Committee wishes to discover more about a matter within its remit that is listed on the Forward Plan. Whilst such advance information can be requested from officers, the Committee should note that information may or may not be available in advance due to various factors, including timescales or the status of the drafting of the report itself and the formulation of final recommendation(s). Ultimately, the provision of any information in advance would be a matter for the Cabinet Member to decide.	This would be considered at a subsequent Select Committee meeting. Alternatively, information could be circulated outside the meeting if reporting timescales require this. Upon the provision of any information, the Select Committee may then decide to provide specific comments (as per 1 above).
3	**To request the Cabinet Member considers providing a draft of the report, if feasible, for the Select Committee to consider prior to it being considered formally for decision.**	As part of its pre-decision scrutiny role, this would be where the Committee wishes to provide an early steer or help shape a future report to Cabinet, e.g., on a policy matter. Whilst not the default position, Select Committees do occasionally receive draft versions of Cabinet reports prior to their formal consideration. The provision of such draft reports in advance may depend upon different factors, e.g., the timings required for that decision. Ultimately any request to see a draft report early would need the approval of the relevant Cabinet Member.	Democratic Services would contact the relevant Cabinet Member and Officer upon any such request. If agreed, the draft report would be considered at a subsequent Select Committee meeting to provide views and feedback to officers before they finalise it for the Cabinet or Cabinet Member. An opportunity to provide specific comments (as per 1 above) is also possible.
4	**To identify a forthcoming report that may merit a post-decision review at a later Select Committee meeting.**	As part of its post-decision scrutiny and broader reviewing role, this would be where the Select Committee may wish to monitor the implementation of a certain Cabinet or Cabinet Member decision listed/taken at a later stage, i.e., to review its effectiveness after a period of 6 months. The Committee should note that this is different to the use of the post-decision scrutiny 'call-in' power which seeks to ask the Cabinet or Cabinet Member to formally re-consider a decision up to 5 working days after the decision notice has been issued. This is undertaken via the new Scrutiny Call-in App members of the relevant Select Committee.	The Committee would add the matter to its multi-year work programme after a suitable time has elapsed upon the decision expected to be made by the Cabinet or Cabinet Member. Relevant service areas may be best to advise on the most appropriate time to review the matter once the decision is made.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- [Protocol on Overview & Scrutiny and Cabinet relations adopted by Council 12 September 2019](#)
- [Scrutiny Call-in App](#)

Upcoming Decisions

Ref	Upcoming Decisions	Further details	Ward(s)	Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Directorate / Lead Officer	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
				SI = Standard Item each month Council Directorates: AS = Adult Services & Health P = Place C = Central Services R = Resources CS= Children's Services						

Cabinet meeting - Thursday 20 April 2023 (report deadline 30 March 2023)

Ref	Upcoming Decisions	Further details	Ward(s)	Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Directorate / Lead Officer	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
046	Standards and quality of education in Hillingdon during 2021/22	The Annual Report to Cabinet regarding children and young people's educational performance across Hillingdon schools.	All		Cllr Susan O'Brien - Children, Families & Education	Children, Families & Education	CS - Rani Dady / Michael Hawkins	Select Committee		Public
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	C - Democratic Services			Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	Various		All	TBC	C - Democratic Services	Various		Public

Cabinet Member Decisions expected - April 2023

Ref	Upcoming Decisions	Further details	Ward(s)	Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Directorate / Lead Officer	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
063	SEND Strategy	Following consultation, the Cabinet Member will consider approval of the Council's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy - a collaborative document outlining the vision and priorities for service delivery to children, young people and young adults in Hillingdon over the next few years.	Various		Cllr Susan O'Brien - Children, Families & Education	Children, Families & Education	CS - Julie Kelly	Children, Families & Education Select Committee	Def	Public
SI	Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member	Cabinet Members make a number of decisions each month on standard items - details of these standard items are listed at the end of the Forward Plan.	Various		All	TBC	C - Democratic Services	Various		Public

Cabinet meeting - Thursday 25 May 2023 (report deadline 5 May)

Ref	Upcoming Decisions	Further details	Ward(s)	Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Directorate / Lead Officer	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	C - Democratic Services			Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	C - Democratic Services	TBC		Public

Cabinet Member Decisions expected - May 2023

Ref	Upcoming Decisions	Further details	Ward(s)	Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Directorate / Lead Officer	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
SI	Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member	Cabinet Members make a number of decisions each month on standard items - details of these standard items are listed at the end of the Forward Plan.	Various		All	TBC	C - Democratic Services	Various		Public

Ref	Upcoming Decisions	Further details	Ward(s)	Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Directorate / Lead Officer	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
					SI = Standard Item each month Council Directorates: AS = Adult Services & Health P = Place C = Central Services R = Resources CS= Children's Services					
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 22 June 2023 (report deadline 5 June)										
SI	**Public Preview of matters to be considered in private**	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	C - Democratic Services			Public
SI	**Reports from Select Committees**	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		TBC	TBC	C - Democratic Services	TBC		Public
Cabinet Member Decisions expected - June 2023										
SI	**Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member**	Cabinet Members make a number of non-key decisions each month on standard items - details of these are listed at the end of the Forward Plan.	Various		All		C - Democratic Services	Various		Public
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 27 July 2023 (report deadline 10 July)										
SI	**Public Preview of matters to be considered in private**	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	C - Democratic Services			Public
SI	**Reports from Select Committees**	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	All	C - Democratic Services	TBC		Public
Cabinet Member Decisions expected - July 2023										
SI	**Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member**	Cabinet Members make a number of non-key decisions each month on standard items - details of these are listed at the end of the Forward Plan.	Various		All		C - Democratic Services	Various		Public
AUGUST 2023 - NO CABINET MEETING										
SI	**Interim or urgent executive decision-making by the Leader of the Council**	As there is no Cabinet meeting in August, the Leader of the Council may take interim or urgent key decisions, and if so required, on behalf of the full Cabinet. These will be reported to Cabinet at a later date for ratification and public record.	Various		Cllr Ian Edwards - Leader of the Council	TBC	C - Democratic Services	Various		Public / Private - TBD
SI	**Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member**	Cabinet Members make a number of non-key decisions each month on standard items - details of these are listed at the end of the Forward Plan.	Various		All	TBC	C - Democratic Services	Various		Public

Upcoming Decisions

		Further details	Ward(s)	Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Directorate / Lead Officer	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
					SI = Standard Item each month Council Directorates: AS = Adult Services & Health P = Place C = Central Services R = Resources CS= Children's Services					
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 14 September 2023 (report deadline 25 August)										
SI	**Public Preview of matters to be considered in private**	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	C - Democratic Services			Public
SI	**Reports from Select Committees**	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	C - Democratic Services	TBC		Public
Cabinet Member Decisions expected - September 2023										
SI	**Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member**	Cabinet Members make a number of non-key decisions each month on standard items - details of these are listed at the end of the Forward Plan.	Various		All	TBC	C - Democratic Services	Various		Public
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 12 October 2023 (report deadline 25 September)										
SI	**The Annual Report Of Adult and Child Safeguarding Arrangements**	This report provides the Cabinet with a summary of the activity undertaken by the Safeguarding Children Partnership Board and the Safeguarding Adults Board to address the identified local priorities. The Cabinet will consider this report and approve the activity and the local priorities for the two boards.	All		Cllr Susan O'Brien - Children, Families & Education / Cllr Jane Palmer - Health & Social Care	Health & Social Care / Children, Families & Education	CS / AS - Alex Coman / Sandra Taylor	Select Committees		Public
SI	**Public Preview of matters to be considered in private**	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	C - Democratic Services			Public
Cabinet Member Decisions expected - October 2023										
SI	**Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member**	Cabinet Members make a number of non-key decisions each month on standard items - details of these are listed at the end of the Forward Plan.	Various		All	TBC	C - Democratic Services	Various		Public
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 9 November 2023 (report deadline 23 October)										
SI	**Public Preview of matters to be considered in private**	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	C - Democratic Services			Public
SI	**Reports from Select Committees**	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	C - Democratic Services	TBC		Public

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Ref	Upcoming Decisions	Further details	Ward(s)	Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Directorate / Lead Officer	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
				SI = Standard Item each month Council Directorates: AS = Adult Services & Health P = Place C = Central Services R = Resources CS= Children's Services						
Cabinet Member Decisions expected - November 2023										
SI	**Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member**	Cabinet Members make a number of non-key decisions each month on standard items - details of these are listed at the end of the Forward Plan.	Various		All	TBC	C - Democratic Services	Various		Public
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 14 December 2023 (report deadline 27 November)										
110a	**The Council's Budget - Medium Term Financial Forecast 2024/25 - 2028/29 (BUDGET FRAMEWORK)**	This report will set out the Medium Term Financial Forecast (MTFF), which includes the draft General Fund reserve budget and capital programme for 2023/24 for consultation, along with indicative projections for the following four years. This will also include the HRA rents for consideration.	All	**Proposed Full Council adoption - February 2024**	Cllr Martin Goddard - Finance	All	R - Andy Evans	Public consultation through the Select Committee process and statutory consultation with businesses & ratepayers		Public
SI	**Public Preview of matters to be considered in private**	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	C - Democratic Services			Public
SI	**Reports from Select Committees**	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	C - Democratic Services	TBC		Public
Cabinet Member Decisions expected - December 2023										
SI	**Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member**	Cabinet Members make a number of non-key decisions each month on standard items - details of these are listed at the end of the Forward Plan.	Various		All	TBC	C - Democratic Services	Various		Public
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 4 January 2024 (report deadline 11 December 2023)										
SI	**Public Preview of matters to be considered in private**	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	C - Democratic Services			Public
SI	**Reports from Select Committees**	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	C - Democratic Services	TBC		Public
Cabinet Member Decisions expected - January 2024										
SI	**Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member**	Cabinet Members make a number of non-key decisions each month on standard items - details of these are listed at the end of the Forward Plan.	Various		All	TBC	C - Democratic Services	Various		Public

Ref	Upcoming Decisions	Further details	Ward(s)	Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Directorate / Lead Officer	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
					SI = Standard Item each month		Council Directorates: AS = Adult Services & Health P = Place C = Central Services R = Resources CS= Children's Services			
CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS: Standard Items (SI) that may be considered each month										
SI	**Urgent Cabinet-level decisions & interim decision-making (including emergency decisions)**	The Leader of the Council has the necessary authority to make decisions that would otherwise be reserved to the Cabinet, in the absence of a Cabinet meeting or in urgent circumstances. Any such decisions will be published in the usual way and reported to a subsequent Cabinet meeting for ratification. The Leader may also take emergency decisions without notice, in particular in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, which will be ratified at a later Cabinet meeting.	Various		Cllr Ian Edwards - Leader of the Council	TBC	C - Democratic Services	TBC		Public / Private
SI	**School Governing Bodies, Instruments of Government and Governors / Authorising Academy Appointments**	To approve appointments, nominate appointments and make reappointments of local authority governors and to approve any changes to school governing body constitutions. To also authorise any Member to be a Governor or Director of an Academy.	N/A		Cllr Susan O'Brien - Children, Families & Education	Children, Families & Education	CS - Julie Kelly / CS - Democratic Services			Public
SI	**Release of Capital Funds**	The release of all capital monies requires formal Member approval, unless otherwise determined either by the Cabinet or the Leader. Batches of monthly reports (as well as occasional individual reports) to determine the release of capital for any schemes already agreed in the capital budget and previously approved by Cabinet or Cabinet Members	TBC		Cllr Martin Goddard - Finance (in conjunction with relevant Cabinet Member)	All - TBC by decision made	various	Corporate Finance		Public but some Private (1,2,3)
SI	**Petitions about matters under the control of the Cabinet**	Cabinet Members will consider a number of petitions received by local residents and organisations and decide on future action. These will be arranged as Petition Hearings.	TBC		All	TBC	C - Democratic Services			Public
SI	**To approve compensation payments**	To approve compensation payments in relation to any complaint to the Council in excess of £1000.	n/a		All	TBC	various			Private (1,2,3)
SI	**Acceptance of Tenders**	To accept quotations, tenders, contract extensions and contract variations valued between £50k and £500k in their Portfolio Area where funding is previously included in Council budgets.	n/a		Cllr Ian Edwards - Leader of the Council OR Cllr Martin Goddard - Finance / in conjunction with relevant Cabinet Member	TBC	various			Private (3)

Ref	Upcoming Decisions	Further details	Ward(s)	Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Directorate / Lead Officer	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
				SI = Standard Item each month Council Directorates: AS = Adult Services & Health P = Place C = Central Services R = Resources CS= Children's Services						
SI	All Delegated Decisions by Cabinet to Cabinet Members, including tender and property decisions	Where previously delegated by Cabinet, to make any necessary decisions, accept tenders, bids and authorise property decisions / transactions in accordance with the Procurement and Contract Standing Orders.	TBC		All	TBC	various			Public / Private (1,2,3)
SI	School Redundancy Payments	To consider requests for School Redundancy Payments and decide whether to approve them on behalf of the Local Authority	TBC		Cllr Susan O'Brien - Children, Families & Education	Children, Families & Education	CS - Julie Kelly			Private (1,2,3)
SI	Appeals in relation to business rates (NNDR)	To determine appeals in relation to business rates following a decision by the Council.	TBC		Cllr Martin Goddard - Finance	Finance & Corporate Services	R - Iain Watters			Private (1,2,3)
SI	Response to key consultations that may impact upon the Borough	A standard item to capture any emerging consultations from Government, the GLA or other public bodies and institutions that will impact upon the Borough. Where the deadline to respond cannot be met by the date of the Cabinet meeting, the Constitution allows the Cabinet Member to sign-off the response.	TBC		All	TBC	various			Public

Published March 2023 - The Cabinet's Forward Plan is an official document by the London Borough of Hillingdon, UK

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CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME

Committee name	Children, Families and Education Select Committee

Officer reporting	Ryan Dell, Democratic Services

Papers with report	Appendix A – Work Programme

Ward	All

HEADLINES

To enable the Committee to note future meeting dates and to forward plan its work for the current municipal year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Children, Families and Education Select Committee considers the report and agrees any amendments.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. The Committee's meetings will start at 7pm and the witnesses attending each of the meetings may include representatives from external organisations, some of whom travel from outside of the Borough. Forthcoming meeting dates are as follows:

Meeting Date	Room
28 June 2023	TBC
19 July 2023	TBC
19 September 2023	TBC
17 October 2023	TBC
15 November 2023	TBC
09 January 2024	TBC
01 February 2024	TBC
14 March 2024	TBC
18 April 2024	TBC

Implications on related Council policies

The role of the Select Committees is to make recommendations on service changes and improvements to the Cabinet, who are responsible for the Council's policy and direction.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

Select Committees directly engage residents in shaping policy and recommendations and the Committees seek to improve the way the Council provides services to residents.

Financial Implications

None at this stage.

Legal Implications

None at this stage.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL.

MULTI-YEAR WORK PROGRAMME 2022 - 2026

2023/24   *Draft*

Children, Families & Education Select Committee	September 21	November 3	December 6	January 4	February 2	March 14	April 18	May No meeting	June 28	July 19	August No meeting
Review A: TBC											
Topic selection / scoping stage											
Witness / evidence / consultation stage		Scoping Report	Witness Session		Review update	Witness Session					
Findings, conclusions and recommendations											
Final review report agreement											
Target Cabinet reporting							Findings				
Regular service & performance monitoring											
Children's Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report	X										
Twice Yearly School Places Planning Report	X									X	
Quarterly Performance Monitoring *(pushed back from March, date TBC)*											
Annual Education Standards report (prior to Cabinet)						X					
Mid-year budget / budget planning report	X			X							
Reports/minutes from the Corporate Parenting Panel	X			X		X			*X*		
Cabinet Forward Plan Monthly Monitoring	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		*X*	*X*	
One-off information items											
Scrutiny Introduction (Democratic Services)											
Overview of Corporate Parenting Responsibilities		X									
Policy Review Discussion & Guidance											
Consultation on the Hillingdon 0-19 years core offer to children, young people & their families									X		
Council Strategy 2022-2026 consultation											
Consultation on the Hillingdon's Youth Offer & Delivery Model				X					X		
Consultation on changes to school admissions arrangement				X							
SEND Strategy		X									
Ofsted report - PART II				X							
Learn Hillingdon Self Assessment Review 2020/21					X						
Ukrainian Children - how funding from Central Government has been delivered to schools						X					
SEND Sufficiency Strategy									X		
Corporate Parenting Panel Membership to agree + subs											
Corporate Parenting Panel - update to Terms of Reference					X						
School Organisation Plan - provisional									X		
Past review delivery											
Adult & Community Learning Review 2021/22							X				
Internal use only											
Date deadline confirmed to report authors											
Report deadline	9 Sep	24 Oct	24 Nov	20 Dec	23 Jan	2 Mar	4 Apr		*16 Jun*	*7 Jul*	
Agenda published	13 Sep	26 Oct	28 Nov	22 Dec	25 Jan	6 Mar	6 Apr		*20 Jun*	*11 Jul*	

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