
**ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING
3 YEAR DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

Responsible Cabinet Member(s) -Councillor Stephen Harker, Education Portfolio

Responsible Director(s) - Geoff Pennington, Director of Education

Purpose of Report

1. To gain members approval for the 3 year Development Plan for Adult and Community Learning which is attached to this report.

Information and Analysis

2. As part of the Government's aim to reduce bureaucracy, Local Authorities no longer need to produce an annual Adult Learning Plan. The annual plan has been replaced by a 3 year Development Plan which is a statement of intent.
3. The areas covered within the plan are determined by the funding each Authority receives from the Learning and Skills Council and in addition, reference needs to be made to Health and Safety, professional development for staff and any significant change in the way learning is delivered. In the case of Darlington, the Plan also builds on our recent inspection of provision by the Adult Learning Inspectorate.
4. The main changes to note to the current Adult Learning Plan are the transfer from a contracted out service to a direct delivery service in order to improve our inspection score; the addition of Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities funds to support learning in the most disadvantaged wards in Darlington; additional DDA funds to ensure accessible buildings and develop Skills for Life provision in accordance with Government priorities.

Outcome of Consultation

5. The Plan has been written in consultation with the LSC and takes into account the views of partners and other stakeholders.

Legal Implications

6. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

7. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Council Policy Framework

8. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework

Decision Deadline

9. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter

Key Decisions

10. This decision has impact on all adults within the Borough.

Recommendation

11. It is recommended that the Adult and Community Learning Plan as attached to this report is approved.

Reasons

12. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-
 - (a) The LSC requires Plans to be agreed by members; and
 - (b) It will enable the development of the Service to proceed.

Geoff Pennington, Director of Education

Background Papers

3 year Development Plan

Author: Ruth Bernstein : Extension 349634



Libraries and Community Learning Service

Adult and Community Learning

3 year Development Plan

2004

Borough of Darlington Adult and Community Learning Development Plan 2004-2006

Introduction

This plan covers the Service's provision of adult and community learning and family learning. It also refers to provision funded through Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), European Social Fund (ESF) and Neighbourhood Learning in Disadvantaged Communities (NLDC), and to provision of partner organisations in Darlington funded by the LSC, including the local FE college.

Geography

Located in the North East of England, Darlington covers an area of approximately 198 square kilometres (76 square miles). The River Tees and North Yorkshire lie to the South, the former coalfield areas of County Durham to the north and Teesdale to the west. The land to the eastern side of Darlington is made up of the boroughs of Stockton, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Hartlepool, which along with Darlington, make up the Tees Valley Sub-Region.

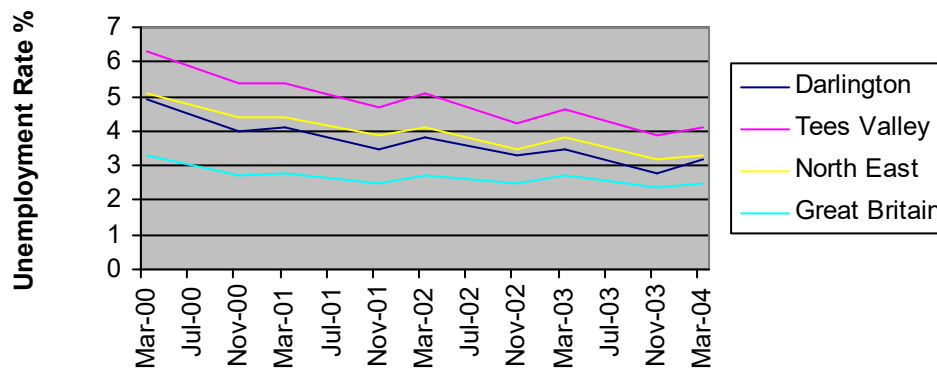
Demography

The Borough of Darlington has a population of 97,838 living in 42,309 households, with over 85,000 people living in the town itself. Although Darlington is the second smallest borough in the Tees Valley in terms of population, over a million people live within twenty miles of the town and almost 1.8 million within thirty miles. There are also over a million people of working age within 30 miles of the town centre. Darlington has an aging population, with fewer people in the 17 to 65 age group than regional and national comparisons.

Employment

Although limited at the higher end of the jobs market, employment opportunities in Darlington are more numerous than in other areas and there are a greater proportion of people in full time work. This high level of employment is largely a result of the expanding service sector in the area, with a range of relatively low paid, employment opportunities available to school leavers. As a consequence, the unemployment rate is

much lower than in surrounding areas and is particularly low among the under 20 age group.



Unemployment in Darlington has consistently remained lower than sub-regional and regional rates, but has followed the same trends very closely. Unemployment among the over 50 age group is a particular concern, especially for an economy with an aging workforce. Unemployment among the over 50's represents 20.8% of the area's unemployment, compared to 16.8% nationally and 16% in the Tees Valley. Unemployment also disproportionately affects certain disadvantaged groups and communities. Another factor reflecting a strong service sector is the high employment rate among females.

Raising Skills Levels (Darlington Economic Strategy)

Raising skill levels across all ages will enable a greater number of people to reach their potential and increase their input into the Darlington economy.

The concept of lifelong learning will be increasingly relevant as retraining and learning new, flexible skills becomes a fact of life for people working in declining traditional industries. The expected drop in the number of young people joining the workforce will also place greater emphasis on developing the skills held by people in the 40+ age bracket as their importance to the labour market increases.

Improving basic level skills among target groups will be a priority as it will help to increase participation in the labour market and reduce unemployment, whilst improving skills at the higher end of the scale will be essential in order to attract higher quality jobs to Darlington that will boost average wage levels.

Adult and Community Learning

The Darlington Borough Adult and Community Learning provision has only been in existence for three years, and was set up when funding for adult and community learning transferred to the Learning and Skills Council. Before this, some community based learning was provided by Darlington College and Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College, and the Worker Education Association (WEA). However, for a Borough with a population of nearly 100,000 the amount of community based provision was limited given the needs of the local communities.

Since its inception in 2001 the Service has delivered learning opportunities to approximately 3000 learners despite an extremely limited budget. During this same period the directly employed staffing of the service has increased from 2 to 9. To date, the adult and community learning has out-sourced delivery.

Adult learning provision consists of:

- Adult and Community Learning (ACL): delivered in community venues such as schools and community centres, the teaching staff not directly employed by the service.
- Family Learning: delivered through primary schools, Sure Start and community centres.

The Service is well-placed to continue to support the needs of the people and communities of Darlington whilst meeting the strategic aims of the Learning and Skills Council. Within the time frame of this plan the Service will continue to develop. In particular, it will:

- Shape the curriculum offer, in liaison with key partners, to meet the needs of the various communities of the Borough
- Continue to develop 'first rung' learning opportunities particularly for the most disadvantaged communities, and further establish progression routes to accredited learning
- Transfer out-sourced teaching and learning to directly provided provision

- Continue to enhance quality assurance arrangements
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning across the service
- Become an exemplar service

Mission of the Service - Relationship with Planning Process

The Darlington Community strategy, inter alia, seeks to:

- Widen participation of adults in structured learning
- Increase the number of schools involved in Family Learning
- Increase the number of adults engaged in Family Learning
- Decrease the number of adults with literacy and numeracy difficulties

The Service was inspected in February 2004 and has developed and agreed its post-inspection action plan. The plan states how the service will improve in the area of quality assurance which was found by ALI to be inadequate. However, the ALI identified many strengths including:

- Clear strategic management
- Good partnership arrangements
- Very good collaborative strategies to widen participation and support disadvantaged learners
- Good specialist resources for ICT
- Outstanding achievement in Family Learning

The vision of Darlington Borough as described in the Corporate Plan, 'Striving for Excellence' is "to make Darlington a place where people want to live, work and are able to enjoy a high quality of life". Education is key to this vision. The Education Department 'mission is, "to ensure that the highest quality opportunities exist in education, learning and training....raising aspirations and standards of achievement for all age groups and promoting creativity".

As part of this mission, the Adult and Community Learning service is

To promote and develop learning and achievement, in particular basic skills, in the community through widening participation and social inclusion

The Service has agreed to the following objectives in line with the Community Strategy, the Corporate vision and the Education Department' objectives, and local and national priorities, including those of the LSC:

- To widen participation in learning
- To raise basic skills levels in the community
- To raise achievement of children and adults through Family Learning
- To improve the quality of teaching and learning

The Service works collaboratively with a range of other partners, including Sure Start, the Darlington Bangladeshi Welfare Association, Firthmoor Community Partnership, Growing Older and Living in Darlington (GOLD). The Service is an active member of the Darlington Learning Partnership, the Early Years Development Partnership, the County Durham and Darlington Council for Racial Equality and the Darlington Council for Voluntary Services.

Range and Nature of Provision

The Service provides adult and community learning through:

- Non-accredited learning at evening classes at a number of locations across the Borough, including schools and community centres; this provision is mainly funded by the Tees Valley LSC, but additional funding is secured through the Basic Skills Agency, and Single Regeneration Budget (SRB). Learning is sub-contracted out to a number of partners.
- Family Learning which is accredited through TROCN; this provision is funded via the LSC, although the Family Learning Co-ordinator's post is funded through SRB. Provision is direct.
- Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy funded through the LSC, and directly provided.

Darlington Borough Council provides adult learning through a number of departments, including Community Services (arts and leisure), Social Services, Economic Development, Training Unit and Libraries. The combining of the Lifelong Learning and Libraries services into Libraries and Community Learning Service has led to increased coherence, including joint working of the new ICT Centre in the main library. On 1 July 2004 the Training Unit will also become part of the combined Service.

Currently, the sub-contractors of LSC funded adult and community learning provision are:

- Darlington College of Technology provides classes on behalf of the Service and is the major progression routes for most of the Service's learners
- Local schools which provide classes under memorandum of agreement with the Service; this provision is linked to the development of extended schools; for example, the new build for Skerne Park School will include an adult learning centre, a nursery and Sure Start facilities

In addition, the Worker Education Association (WEA) and the YMCA deliver provision through SRB funding on behalf of the Service.

Learning is predominantly 'first step' learning, focusing on the most disadvantaged communities in the Borough. For example, Haughton School serves the deprived wards of Red Hall; Longfield serves the wards of Northgate and North Road; Skerne Park and Firthmoor community centres serve their respective wards.

Currently, the Service is not a direct provider of Skills for Life provision but works with its partners, particularly Darlington College and the WEA, to ensure provision is local and accessible. Through Family Learning programmes the Service assesses and develops mechanisms to address skills for life needs. Family Learning tutors have attended national basic skills Family Literacy and Numeracy training provided by the agency, and members of the team are working towards level 4 literacy qualifications, in conjunction with the Certificate of Education.

The Service is a member of the Darlington Skills for Life group and is able to support the expansion of Skills for Life provision at a strategic and operational level.

The Service is engaged in a number of development initiatives such as attempting to secure further funding for adult learning; acquiring appropriate premises for adult learning; providing learner support, such as childcare; advising on national and local initiatives; co-ordinating adult learners' week; and providing information, advice, guidance and a referral service for potential learners.

Evidence of Need

Although ranked within the worst 25% of deprived local authorities nationally, Darlington is the least deprived authority in Tees Valley. This ranking is largely responsible for Darlington 'missing out' on regeneration monies which other Tees valley authorities benefit from, such as Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF).

However, certain wards in Darlington suffer deprivation on a scale comparable with any suffered across the country. Central and Eastbourne South are among the 5% most deprived areas in the country, with a further three wards amongst the worst 10%. Although Darlington has pockets of severe deprivation, over 50% of the population live in wards within the 25% most deprived nationally.

As would be expected, those wards with the severest deprivation also exhibit the lowest levels of educational attainment, both amongst young people and adults. School attainment in Darlington at Key Stage 2 is above the national average, but at 16 it has fallen to be in line with the average. This is compounded by the poorer levels of participation in full time learning by young people at 17+. The progression into higher education from the worst ranked wards is poor. The most disadvantaged wards also rank as the wards with the highest levels of poor literacy and numeracy.

The Service's emphasis on first step learning in the most deprived wards, alongside the Service's high quality Family Learning provision is aimed at improving the skills levels of those adults most in need of improving their educational attainment. In turn, this will impact on the attainment of

children. Furthermore, this cycle will begin to address the issue recognised in Darlington Social Inclusion strategy of raising aspirations amongst and addressing the problem of low educational achievement. To this end, the Service works closely with the schools sector, both in primary and secondary schools and community partnerships, in order to put in place appropriate learning opportunities that will best attract learners and lead to positive attainment which can be built on.

Our analysis indicated that the needs of our deprived communities outstrip our resources. The resources available to address the needs of Skills for Life learners in Darlington are currently insufficient and means of addressing this deficiency has to be found.

Development of ICT and E-learning

The Service is currently developing its E-learning plan. During the coming weeks the Service will be appointing 1.5 FTE staff to co-ordinate ICT learning and activities.

Significant Changes in the Range and Nature of Provision

Over the period of the plan the Service intends to:

Develop Skills for Life provision; the Service intends to develop provision to meet the Skills for Life agenda; the service has put forward an ESF project in order to secure funds to provide Skills for Life provision for the Borough, in the absence of LSC funding to support this development by the Service. However, the bid has been unsuccessful therefore the service will need to bid for other funds in order to deliver this provision.

Move towards direct provision for all learning; the Service intends that all provision which it supports will be provided directly, and that sub-contracting arrangements will be phased out.

Develop performing arts provision; the service will develop its learning programmes in performing arts, and to this end has recently appointed a tutor for performing arts.

Neighbourhood Learning in Disadvantaged Communities; the service has been allocated funds to deliver neighbourhood learning. Funding will be used to further develop venues and learning opportunities in the 11 community partnership areas in Darlington. These areas represent the most deprived wards in Darlington. Particular emphasis will be focussed on the new Skerne Park development.

Major Capital Funds; a successful bid for major capital funding will result in the first purpose built adult learning centre in Darlington. The centre, which is part of an extended school development, will concentrate on delivering family Learning, a story sack library and adult and community provision. The centre is due to open in September 2005.

DDA; additional DDA funds will support access to new venues situated in deprived communities and will add value to NLDC funds.

Approaches to Quality Improvement

The recent inspection of the Service by ALI identified weaknesses in teaching and learning in some curriculum areas; weaknesses in quality assurance, and weaknesses in the Service's teaching observations. Overwhelmingly, the weaknesses are associated with contracted out provision. This situation is replicated within many Adult and Community Learning services across the country, where contracted-out provision is the source of poor performance.

Conversely, the Service's Family Learning provision is grade at 1 (Outstanding); the Service was the first Service nationally to gain a top grade for Family Learning.

The Service intends to transfer contracted-out provision to direct provision. In this way the Service will be able to exercise full control over the provision, including the appointment and training of staff, curriculum development, coherence and continuity, uniformity of practice whilst respecting the need for flexibility, and the ability to ensure commonality of learner entitlement and experience.

To address the issue of quality control the Service is linking with Stockton Adult and Community Learning Service for them to provide external validation of provision, including teaching observations.

Health and Safety

The local authority conducts health and safety audits on all premises used by the Service. All staff, including part time tutors, receive health and safety training.

Most of the Adult and Community Learning provided by the Lifelong Learning service is delivered in local authority buildings and are therefore subject to regular health and safety risk assessments. For programmes delivered in other venues a copy of the providers health and safety policy is required.

Darlington Borough Council has a health and safety statement and a corporate system and guidance for the conduct and recording of risk assessments. Policies covering smoking at work, alcohol drugs and substance misuse and stress at work have been produced and circulated by the Borough Council.

Learners are made aware of health and safety issues at the beginning of each course and staff supervise learners at all times. The service is currently developing both tutor and learner handbooks which include a section on health and safety.

Risk assessments are carried out by the local authority health and safety unit and copies of their reports which include areas for improvement are received by the lifelong learning service and the nominated health and safety officer at the building assessed.

Equality and Diversity

The recent ALI inspection commented on the Service's very good collaborative strategies to widen participation and support disadvantaged learners. The Service will continue to train and support its staff to implement equality and diversity priorities. The Service will continue to target the most disadvantaged groups and ensure that all premises used are accessible. All marketing and promotional materials, as well as information and learning materials will reflect learners' needs.

Accommodation

The Service does not operate from its own premises. The Service is currently developing a checklist against which it will measure the suitability/appropriateness of premises for adult learning. The Service will ensure that all premises from which it operates will conform to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

During the life of this plan the Service will open its first purpose-built centre on Skerne Park. The adult learning centre attached to the school will open in September 2005.

Human Resource Continuous Professional Development

The main change for the Service over the period of this plan will be the direct delivery of all learning, and therefore the employment of all tutors. This development will be an extension of the practice already current in the provision of Family Learning.

Darlington Borough Council has IiP status and is committed to the professional development of all staff. A competency based appraisal system has recently been introduced and all staff are now appraised under this system. Tutors will also be included in the appraisal cycle.

As part of our drive to improve the quality of the service all tutors will have access to training and development opportunities. It is expected that 90% of teaching staff will be fully qualified during the life of this plan.

Management Information System

The MIS is currently being updated in line with ALI recommendations and additions, such as postcode analysis, software is being added. Staff have, and will continue to have, training in order to be able to use the system as a management tool.