

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
31 October 2022

LEARNING & SKILLS ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with an update on the performance of the Learning & Skills Service for academic year 2021/22.
2. To allow Scrutiny members oversight of, and an opportunity to challenge, the performance of this externally funded service.

Summary

3. The pandemic impacted on the Learning and Skills service and delivery, and to a degree still continues to do so, with an impact on both learner numbers and subsequent income. However, staff responded magnificently and continued to deliver throughout, making a very successful transition to online teaching and learning when needed.
4. The service aims to grow provision whilst continuing to respond to employer and community need.
5. The service was inspected by Ofsted in June 2022, retaining its assessment of 'Good' overall.

Recommendation

6. It is recommended that Members note the content of this report.

Tony Murphy
Assistant Director Education and Inclusion

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

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S17 Crime and Disorder	The service supports the Council’s crime and disorder responsibilities, young people engaged in learning are less likely to engage in anti-social behaviour
Health and Wellbeing	The service actively promotes health and wellbeing
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	The service promotes sustainability
Diversity	The service actively supports the diversity agenda
Wards Affected	The service offers provision across all of Darlington
Groups Affected	The service offers learning for 16-18 year olds and adults
Budget and Policy Framework	The service is externally funded. This report does not impact on the budget and policy framework
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Council Plan	The service contributes to the priorities in the Council Plan allowing people to develop their potential, improve their skills and help improve their employment opportunities
Efficiency	Scrutiny of performance is integral to optimising outcomes
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

The Learning & Skills Service

7. The Learning & Skills Service is the external training arm of the Council and is funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) to provide learning and skills provision for the local community. The service has been an Ofsted 'Good' provider since 2004.
8. The service provides a range of training from Pre-entry Level to Level 5, including:
 - 16-18 study programme and diploma courses
 - Adult education, including basic skills such as English, maths and ICT
 - Community Learning, including employability
 - Family Learning
 - Intensive Support
 - Distance Learning
 - English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
 - Apprenticeships
9. Learning & Skills supports some of the most disadvantaged adults, young people and families in Darlington and contributes to the priorities of both the Children and Young People's Plan and the Council Plan. Often the provision delivered provides a stepping-stone to those taking their first steps back into learning and a number of past learners have moved on to higher level learning at Darlington College and other providers.
10. Teaching takes place across three main sites: the Coleridge Centre, Bennet House and the units at Lingfield Way, as well as in a number of school and community settings.
11. Apprenticeship provision includes Health and Social Care, Business Administration, Motor Vehicle, Site Joinery and Leadership and Management.

Learner Numbers

12. In 2021/22 the service supported 1,177 (913) learners (previous year's numbers in brackets) across a wide range of programmes, including:
 - 49 (54) 16-18 year olds on study programme
 - 428 (420) people on Adult Skills courses
 - 667 (388) people on Community Learning
 - 33 (51) Apprenticeship starts

Funding

11. The overall funding generated from the ESFA and TVCA for the Learning & Skills Service in 2021/22 was £1,007,210 (£992,019). This was split as follows:
 - £221,801 (£195,663) 16-18 Study Programme (ESFA)
 - £462,760 (£415,666) - Adult and Community Education (TVCA)
 - £66,776 (£53,802) - Adult and Community Education (ESFA)

- £224,501 (£232,340) - Apprenticeships (ESFA / Employers)
- £6,501 (£12,324) - Adult Learning Loans (ESFA / SLC)
- £24,871 (£82,224)– Other Income

Performance

12. Due to the impact of the pandemic on post 16 providers no achievement rates were published nationally in 2019/20 or 2020/21 therefore are no national benchmarks for comparison. However locally produced performance data shows:

Provision Type	Overall Achievement Rate		
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22 (Provisional)
16-18	69.91%	78.4%	92.3%
Adult Skills	84.31%	73.8%	87.0%
Community Learning	95.05%	98.5%	97.2%
Apprenticeships	87.23%	84.0%	86.4%

13. The achievement rate percentage is calculated by multiplying the number of learners who complete their course by the percentage of those that sat their exams / assessments and passed

Learner Progression

14. Learner progression, or the positive destination rate, measures the percentage of learner who move into education, employment or training after completing a course with Learning & Skills. The pandemic has impacted on some areas more than others, particularly those seeking to go into employment.

Provision Type	Positive Destination Rate		
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22 (Provisional)
16-18	54%	90%	73%
Adult Skills	78%	72.25%	84.5%
Community Learning	79.5%	75.0%	87.5%
Apprenticeships	81%	83%	81%

Learner Satisfaction

15. Learner satisfaction (those rating the service good or above) dropped from 95.75% in 2019/20 to 91% in 2020/21. This was largely due to the fact that a number of learners were unhappy that they were unable to access face to face support due to Covid restrictions. However, it has now risen to 92% in 2021/22.

Employer Satisfaction

16. Employer Satisfaction rose from 92.5% in 2019/20 to 100.0% in 2020/21. However, in 2021/22 95% of employer responses rated the service good or above.

Observation of Learning, Teaching and Assessment

17. Over the last two years with the restrictions on face to face teaching it has been difficult to undertake observations of learning, teaching and assessment. However, of those observations undertaken in 2019/20 (4 - 100%), 2020/21 (13 – 100%) and 2021/22 (10 - 90%) were rated Good or above.

Impact of Covid

18. The service responded very quickly to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic and made a very successful transition to online learning via Google Classroom and Equal, a distance learning platform. Unfortunately, in some instances it proved very difficult to recruit learners onto courses, particularly those people who struggled with IT or who needed face-to-face support on courses like basic English and maths. The pandemic also impacted in some areas on performance, destination outcomes and learner satisfaction despite the best efforts of the staff. With the limiting of restrictions we are now seeing improvements in all areas.

19. The difficulties highlighted above and the lack of access to external delivery settings caused by Covid meant the service could not achieve the growth in learners and funding it had planned for. Funding is generated by the number of learners / qualifications delivered. The easing of restrictions in academic year 2021/22 saw some recovery in learner numbers and subsequent funding.

Ofsted Inspection Outcome

20. The service was inspected in June 2022 and retained its overall grade of 'Good'. The inspectors looked at eight discrete areas;

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Education programmes for young people	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Provision for learners with high needs	Good

21. Only three areas for improvement were identified, all of which are being addressed.

- Ensure that all tutors use information about learners' starting points to effectively plan learning that meets individual needs
- Ensure that all learners benefit from a range of work experience opportunities
- Ensure that tutors receive appropriate training to enable them to continue to develop their teaching skills

22. The report highlighted the fact that the service is meeting the needs of the local community and local businesses, learners were well supported and that the service was well led.

Challenges Ahead

23. The service drew heavily on its reserves during Covid but that has now slowed, and it is hoped that by the end of academic year 2022/23 with increased learner numbers and prudent expenditure there will be a balanced budget.
24. The service was awarded a further three-year funding contract by TVCA for Adult Skills in 2021/22 and continues to respond to the demands of local skills needs. However, there are also potential uncertainties if the TVCA devolved funding model starts to diverge from what the rules and requirements were under the ESFA.
25. The government proposed a review of the further education funding system in their white paper 'Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth' which was published in January 2021. A part of the proposals in the white paper a consultation on a 'New Further Education Funding and Accountability System' was launched on 15 July 2021. At present the service has no indication of the likely impact any funding reforms will have on Learning & Skills or the TVCA devolved funding.