

Committee: Leaders Strategy Group

Date: 13 January 2020

Wards: All

Subject: Merton Adult Learning Strategic Objectives

Lead officer: Anthony Hopkins, Head of Library, Heritage & Adult Education Service

Lead member: Councillor Eleanor Stringer, Cabinet Member for Education & Adult Education

Contact officer: Anthony Hopkins, Head of Library, Heritage & Adult Education Service

Recommendations:

1. That Cabinet agree the strategic objectives for the next 3 years for Merton's Adult Learning Service.
 2. That Cabinet note progress in the evolution of the model of service following the transition in 2016 to a commissioning model of service and the recent 'Good' Ofsted inspection outcomes.
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report outlines the new 3-year strategic objectives for Merton's Adult Learning Service and the evolution of the delivery model following the establishment of a commissioning model in 2016.
- 1.2. The strategic priorities reinforce the Council's commitment to ensuring good quality and sustainable adult learning provision is provided. It is underpinned by Cabinet's commissioning principles for adult learning and the original strategic objectives for the service. The strategic objectives have evolved to reflect the changing demographics and skills needs of Merton residents and responds to the GLA's recently published 'Skills for Londoners' strategy.
- 1.3. From 8 to 11 October 2019 Merton Adult Learning was inspected by Ofsted. Ofsted assessed the service as 'Good' in all six judgment areas with its Overall Effectiveness being viewed as 'Good'. This was the first full inspection of the service as a fully commissioned service and is a significant improvement following the previous two inspections.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. The London Borough of Merton is committed to providing high quality and sustainable adult learning in order to improve the social, economic, health and wellbeing of our residents. We will deliver this through a strategic investment approach: commissioning provision to the best providers in the field and using an evidence based approach to inform commissioning decisions.
- 2.2. We aim to reduce inequalities across the borough by focussing investment on those most socially and / or economically disadvantaged whilst providing a broad range of learning opportunities to develop all of our resident's skills.

2.3. Underpinning this strategy are the commitments of our elected members to adult learning in Merton, the requirements of our funders and auditors such as the Greater London Authority (GLA) and Ofsted and our understanding of the current and future needs of our residents.

2.4. Adult learning in Merton will:

- Use an evidence based approach to commissioning to ensure the fullest return on investment.
- Embrace technological developments and support residents through the delivery of courses that improve learners' digital skills.
- Deliver courses to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents and reduce social isolation.
- Continue to provide popular courses whilst expanding provision for families to encourage intergenerational learning.
- Increase the quality and number of courses in employability and ensure that a thread of employability and life skills is weaved into all courses.
- Provide targeted courses for adults to improve literacy and / or numeracy skills to enable learners to participate more fully socially and / or economically.
- Further develop the range of courses for learners with learning difficulties and / or disabilities to enable them to live as independently as possible to improve their wellbeing and life chances. Ensure that the provision is joined up with the borough's SEND Strategy and supports learners transitioning into adulthood.
- Tailor the learning journey for all learners from beginning to end so that they progress onto new opportunities.
- Deliver excellent teaching and learning across providers and work collaboratively with them to ensure that best practice is shared and embedded in course provision.

2.5. Underpinning our objectives are the following key principles for adult learning:

- Provide a broad range of accredited and non-credited courses to meet market demand and based on evidence and intelligence of future needs.
- Make full use of national, regional and local data to understand, target and track the delivery of our services to different parts of the resident population to ensure the widest reach of adult learning.
- Ensure all courses (apart from some apprenticeship opportunities) are delivered in the borough.
- Be delivered in an inclusive and welcoming environment in high quality venues that are easy for people to access whilst ensuring the safeguarding of all our learners.

- Embed appropriate assessment and selection processes to ensure that course criteria match learner needs and they progress appropriately following course completion.
- Learn from, and contribute to, best practice around the country in the field of adult learning and actively seek to embrace new approaches.
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching provision and develop enhanced systems to manage quality and improve feedback from our learners.
- Clear pathways are established, recorded and monitored to enable progression of learners onto new courses, employment opportunities and / or improved health and wellbeing as appropriate.
- Market our services to the community through a variety of different methods and ensure a strong thread of localism is embedded into our course offer.

2.6. **Measuring Success**

2.7. Robust contract and performance recording mechanisms are in place and are embedded into our quality management processes and our contracts. Our key performance indicators (KPI's) are:

- Number of unique learners per annum (i.e. regardless of number of courses / modules)
- Number of new learners per annum (not registered as learner in previous year)
- Number of completers (% retention rate per annum)
- % overall achievement rate of accredited courses per annum
- % of end of course evaluations where teaching and learning is rated as good or above
- % of learners from deprived Merton wards (as defined by National Indices of Deprivation)
- Value for money: average cost per learner
- % of learners who report a positive progression pathway (i.e. move onto another learning opportunity or enhance their employment) having attended an adult learning course.

2.8. **Ofsted**

2.9. From 8 to 11 October 2019 Merton Adult Learning were inspected by Ofsted. The service was one of the first services to be inspected under the new Education Inspection Framework (EIF).

2.10. Ofsted noted that good progress has been made across the provision and judged the service as 'Good' in all 6 judgment areas. In particular they noted:

2.11. *"Learners gain a range of benefits from their courses. They enjoy the subjects they study. Those facing social isolation build their self-confidence*

and form new friendships while they study. Learners are taught valuable skills that help increase their self-esteem and play a more active role in the community. Learners who are not confident with English improve their speaking and comprehension.

- 2.12. *Tutors create a positive work-ethic among learners. It helps learners to develop the behaviours they need to go on to study at a higher level or increase their prospects of employment.*
- 2.13. *Learners receive a range of advice and guidance that enable them to make the right career and study choices. Specialist careers advisors know what learners who have been out of work for some time need to help them seek employment. Tutors help learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their families find the right next step for them.*
- 2.14. *Learners appreciate the high-quality accommodation at the community venues in which lessons take place. They make productive use of the resources at the various community settings. Learners feel safe and know whom to approach should they have any concerns.*
- 2.15. *Tutors are experienced, knowledgeable and well qualified in their subjects. They have high expectations for their learners.*
- 2.16. *Leaders and managers ensure that learners benefit from high-quality courses. They pay close attention to planning a curriculum that meets the social, economic and health priorities of the borough. For example, learners with LDD benefit from courses such as cookery, information and communication technologies and gardening.*
- 2.17. *Leaders and managers work well with local partners to shape and deliver the curriculum offer. They work with subcontractors who offer courses that meet their curricular ambitions.*
- 2.18. *Effective governance has resulted in leaders working well together to improve the quality of the curriculum.*
- 2.19. *Leaders and managers place a suitable priority on safeguarding. Leaders are thorough in checking the safeguarding arrangements at subcontractors before working with them. Staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. When they need to act to safeguard learners and promote their welfare they do so promptly and effectively."*
- 2.20. Improvement actions have been incorporated into this year's Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. The London Borough of Merton undertook an extensive consultation process before deciding upon its commissioning model. All options of delivery were considered and the new model has achieved financial sustainability and a more developed curriculum to better meet the needs of Merton residents. The curriculum will be further enhanced through the delivery of these new strategic objectives.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. Extensive consultation was undertaken prior to the transfer of adult learning services to the new commissioning model. Various methods are undertaken by the Adult Learning Service to ascertain satisfaction and demand for provision from learners and residents.
- 4.2. Consultation continues to be undertaken with all learners through end of course evaluations. For the 2018/19 academic year 98% of learners rate the quality of teaching and learning across the provision as good or better.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. Our Self-Assessment Report, Quality Improvement Action Plans and contracts with our commissioned providers provide further detail around our improvement plans. Our 3-year high level development plan will consist of:

Year One (2019/20)	Year Two (2020/21)	Year Three (2021/22)
Manage the transfer of funding from the ESFA to the GLA	Fully embed the recommendations of the Mayor's Skills for Londoners Strategy	Work towards Outstanding Ofsted status
Develop new provision to better meet the social, economic and health needs of Merton residents and particularly for those in low paid employment	Further develop new course provision for priority groups	Recommission main contract provision
Deliver more community based provision in priority parts of the borough	Bring in other sources of funding and develop new partnerships	
Good Ofsted status	Expand family learning provision in priority wards	
Continue to collaborate via regional networks to improve the quality and efficiency of services	Better align MAL strategies and plans with the work of other regional and national agencies such as Ofsted, GLA and SLP.	
Embed new practices relating to Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework (EIF) including making any necessary adjustments	Complete review of apprenticeship model and implement proposals	
Implement the work of the South London Skills & Education Plan for in work progression		

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. Merton Adult Learning relies solely on external grants to provide its provision. From the 2019/20 academic year the majority of the grants are now administered by the GLA and their allocation for Merton this year is

£1,360,577. A smaller grant for out of London learners is administered by the ESFA of £36,710.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The main statutory basis for the adult learning service is section 15B of the Education Act 1996. This section empowers local authorities to secure the provision for their area of full-time or part-time education suitable to the requirements of persons who have attained the age of 19, including provision for persons from other areas. It includes power to secure the provision of training, including vocational, social, physical and recreational training, and of organised leisure time occupation which is provided in connection with the provision of education or training. The authority may do anything which appears to them to be necessary or expedient for the purposes of or in connection with the exercise of their functions under this section. In exercising their functions, the authority must in particular have regard to the needs of persons with learning difficulties or disabilities.
- 7.2. The authority does not therefore have a statutory duty to maintain an adult education service but must in considering whether to provide a service and what service to provide take account in particular of the needs of people with learning difficulties or disabilities. The council must also have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty under section 149 Equality Act 2010. The council must, when exercising its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a 'protected characteristic' under the Act and those who do not share a protected characteristic. A 'protected characteristic' is defined in the Act as age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. A significant proportion of Adult Learning's investment is on those most socially and / or economically disadvantaged whilst providing a broad range of learning opportunities to develop all resident's skills. Focussed programmes are developed that identify priority needs and use a wide range of sources to inform commissioning principles.
- 8.2. Following the change to a commissioning model the number of learners attending courses from priority wards in the east of the borough has increased. The curriculum is better tailored towards these groups and more courses are delivered there too. The KPI for learners from deprived wards measures this and in the 2018/19 academic year 30% of learners were from these wards.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. No implications identified for the purpose of this report.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1. No implications identified for the purpose of this report.

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- Ofsted Inspection Report of Merton Adult Learning – 8 to 11 October 2019

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1. None included.

This page is intentionally left blank