

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Cabinet Member for Children and Family Services

Date of Meeting: 25/06/10
Report of: John Weeks, Strategic Director People
Subject/Title: The Future of Adult Learning in Cheshire East 2010-12

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 The Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) has set out a mandate to encourage all Local Authorities to become Lead Accountable Bodies (LAB) from August 1st 2011, to take responsibility for implementing the Learning Revolution white paper published in February 2009.

This describes the changes to the adult learning landscape by encouraging a more informal approach to delivering adult learning. Since then The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) has been working with Local Government Association, the Local Education Authorities Forum for the Education of Adults (LEAFA), the Association of Colleges (ALC), Ofsted, NIACE and others to develop a Lead Accountable Body (LAB) model which would effectively enable local authorities to discharge this pivotal leadership role.

From August 2011 the Skills Funding Agency (formerly the LSC) plans to channel *the entire* available Informal Adult Learning [IAL] budget to support informal adult learning in a local area through identified LABs. This is in addition to the existing LSC / SFA funding which enables the Lifelong Learning team within Children and Families, to deliver programmes to over 5,000 learners.

More information on the strategy can be found at:

<http://lsc.gov.uk/whatwedo/adultlearner/learningrevolution>

A letter requesting an initial sign up to this position as Lead Accountable Body has been received by Chief Executives at all LAs on March 25th 2010. This will require a response by April 30th 2010. Following this 'in principle' signing LAB status will be confirmed and Local Authorities will be required to lead on planning adult learning in their areas. In addition, this paper seeks a decision to accept Adult Learning funds from the Skills Funding Agency for 2010-11. (see 8.1).

2.0 Recommendations

That the Cabinet Member for Children and Family Services approve

- (1) the acceptance of funds to deliver under Adult Safeguarded Learning and Employer Responsive funding streams from the Skills Funding Agency for 2010-11 (academic year cycle);
- (2) that Cheshire East Council agree to sign to accept the invitation to become the Lead Accountable Body for Skills Funding Agency;
- (3) that Cheshire East Lifelong Learning [placed within Children and Families Integrated Workforce Development team] take the lead on this agenda for the Local Authority;
- (4) that the reformed Learning Communities Partnership support the development of a delivery plan across the area, to include an executive Member and / or a Director / Head of service to drive this agenda forward;
- (5) that Cheshire East Lifelong Learning consult with other Cheshire East services such as Libraries, extended services, leisure and green spaces, health and well being, safer communities etc – they are cited in the Learning Revolution as having a very influential part to play as learning moves closer to those informal settings;
- (6) that the Council's infrastructure, including Management of Information and quality systems, be developed in line with changes which will be needed in order to have a light touch regarding measuring impact of informal learning; and
- (7) that a communications strategy be developed which brands this learning culture to promote the ASPIRE values of the Council and promote the service to all employees.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 Local Authorities are in a key position to be advocates for and facilitators of a local strategic vision for this non-skills learning and build more effectively into our local priorities. The wider benefits of learning are well documented: the new agenda provides an opportunity to look at informal adult learning and link it to well-being for all. This includes:

- developing a culture of learning in families
- responding to demographic changes in the community such as helping older people to keep mentally and physically active
- tackling worklessness
- supporting communities through the after-effects of the recession
- targeting activities to engage people in local democratic processes
- engaging people in new digital technologies
- learning for a green future.

3.2 Informal Adult Learning can often be a stepping stone to gaining new skills and qualifications and complements vocational learning. It has a direct correlation with the Skills Agenda as it forms part of the broader learning and skills continuum towards Skills Agenda priorities.

3.3 Cheshire East Lifelong Learning offers the Council a very strong platform from which to deliver these services as a value for money commissioning model has been in operation for over 7 years and the infrastructure to manage this transition exists.

4.0 Wards Affected

4.1 All Wards

5.0 Local Ward Members

5.1 All Members

6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate change - Health

6.1 Lifelong Learning plays a crucial part in improving the health and well being of our residents and their communities. Funding targets people with learning difficulties and disabilities, older people and those with mental health problems to improve their quality of life by providing relevant learning opportunities, new skills and raising aspirations. Family Learning is proven to have an impact on children's attainment and better parenting.

6.2 The Lifelong Learning team have a sustainability representative on their team who provide creative ideas to encourage the team and the network to reduce, re-use and recycle.

7.0 Financial Implications for Transition Costs (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

7.1 There are no such financial implications.

8.0 Financial Implications 2009/10 and beyond (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

8.1 Funds available to deliver Adult Learning across Cheshire East Council area are summarised as follows:

Whole Year 2010-11		
	Funding	Learner Numbers
Adult Safeguarded Learning	£815,467	5,337

The above funding supports a small staffing team and approximately 30 local providers of Adult Learning including colleges and other local providers. Under

and overspends against this grant funding are carried forward into later years to facilitate commitments previously arranged for learning provision.

9.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

- 9.1 In March 2009 a white paper, the Learning Revolution was published. This provides a new vision for informal adult learning and local authorities are being asked to take the lead in implementing this vision in their areas by becoming a Lead Accountable Body (LAB).
- 9.2 There is a clear expectation on Local Authorities that they will accept the invitation to become a LAB. The role of the LAB is to pull together all the partners in the area and develop a local plan for all types of informal adult learning. The LAB will manage all of the funds for informal adult learning coming into the area.
- 9.3 The white paper does not give any more detail as to the specific accountability of a Local Accountable Body or whether (and how) a local authority could withdraw from this arrangement.

10.0 Risk Management

- 10.1 The change to the LAB status brings a change in the risk faced by the Council. In many respects the risks are lessened by the Council being able to directly influence and control the direction of Adult Learning and the way it is funded and resourced, compared with another third party taking on the LAB responsibilities.
- 10.2 With direct LAB status the Council will be able to exert additional control on its providers to ensure that grant conditions are met helping to minimise any risks to the compliance with grant conditions. In addition providers are only paid in a phased way with only small amounts of up front funding, with later phases of funding being paid after results have been demonstrated, again helping to mitigate any additional risks that flow from having LAB status.
- 10.3 Being able to direct the grant funding will also allow the Council to operate the arrangements with more flexibility over the full range of training provision.

11.0 Background and Options

- 11.1 At present the Lifelong Learning service is funded by the LSC with a stream of funding called Adult Safeguarded Learning which is part of the current Government's £210m safeguarded allocation. Within this stream there are specific strands:
 - Personal Community Development Learning (PCDL) – this is what the new thinking is around Informal Adult Learning. It is just about a shift in term not what the provision is. There will be an expectation to still provide value for money so we will still be expected to collect fees from those who can most afford to pay.

- Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities – this is used for targeted provision that is commissioned through local voluntary and community organisations. It is used to fund learners who are experiencing difficulties, those in areas of deprivation, lone parents, unemployed, those on long-term benefits, or, to build capacity within organisations to better support their clients and communities.
- Wider Family Learning and Family Language Literacy and Numeracy. Both these strands are targeted at engaging parents/carers in their children's education and development as well as enabling parents/carers to gain valuable qualifications equivalent in skill level to GCSE in Maths and English.
- Family Learning Impact Funding. This funding which is aimed at a number of different themes, namely Early Years Foundation, Family Numeracy, Financial Capability, Schools Information for Parents, Wider Family Learning. It aims to evidence the impact on the individual following interventions in this stream.
- Adult Safeguarded Learning providers are also able to access First Step funding. Although not part of the safeguard it will be available to us for 2010-11 and possibly in the future. This funding stream is aimed at an initial point of entry into learning followed by progression to more formal learning.

11.2 Informal Adult Learning can often be a stepping stone to gaining new skills and qualifications and complements vocational learning. It has a direct correlation with the Skills Agenda as it forms part of the broader learning and skills continuum towards Skills Agenda priorities.

11.3 The Cheshire East Lifelong Learning Team, based within Children and Families Integrated Workforce Development Team at Emperor Court currently deliver informal, non formal and formal learning to people who live, work and train throughout the Borough. Becoming a LAB would ensure that further monies which at present go directly to FE Colleges are added to our existing funds giving us greater ability to influence and deliver more adult learning where it's needed.

11.4 The Lifelong Learning team have a well respected delivery model based on inclusivity, breadth of choice and value for money. This existing model which the Lifelong Learning team have operated under Cheshire County Council and now as Cheshire East Borough Council, over a number of years offers us the opportunity to deliver more learning to our residents. We are well prepared:

- We have adopted the term 'Lifelong Learning' to promote the image of learning as a way of life

- We deliver learning by commissioning delivery through our vast network of external partners, as well as delivering Skills for Life and most Family learning in-house, across all the funding streams named in 11.1, consistently meeting ambitious targets of learner numbers
- We already work closely with our partnership manager at the SFA to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum of formal and non formal learning meets the needs of our population both in terms of learning for pleasure, learning to develop skills, and learning to increase skills for work.
- We are already reframing a Cheshire East Learning Partnership, which will support the delivery of the funding plan for adult learning. Working with a range of stakeholders, providers and other council services across all directorates we already ensure that people within the Borough have universal access to broad and balanced range of learning and that the needs of the most vulnerable can be met in the most appropriate and effective way
- Cheshire East Lifelong Learning is able to deliver on behalf of Cheshire East Borough Council the responsibilities sought as a Lead Accountable Body. The provider base is strong, inclusive and well lead to deliver high quality learning.

12.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writers:

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