# Adult Education

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRANSPORT AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Date of meeting: 23/03/2022

Lead director/: Mike Dalzell

## 1. Summary

This report provides an update on the recovery of the Adult Education Service (formerly Adult Skills and Learning) from the impact of COVID-19.

Section 3 explores the impact of the pandemic and the emerging recovery on learners with different protected characteristics.

Section 4 highlights new initiatives which have been developed over the last 12 months.

Section 5 provides details of the rebranding and new website due to launch in early 2022

## 2. Recommended actions/decision

- That the emerging recovery from the COVID disruption to services is noted and staff commended for their hard work in the face of ongoing impact and uncertainty.
- To note the renaming, rebranding and new website of the service.

## 3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

EDTT Scrutiny 23rd March 2022

## 4. Background and options with supporting evidence

This paper is for information only and provides an update on the ongoing impact of COVID -19 on the Adult Education Service.

## 5. Detailed report

### 5.1 Enrolment Numbers

Overall enrolment numbers in 2021/22 have picked up well and at the end of the first term (December 2021) were at 68% of the full year enrolments for the previous year which took the full hit of the pandemic.

Comparing the position in-year is more difficult because of the trend, particularly in 202-21, not to enrol in advance. However, comparing the pre-pandemic position in January 2020 with the current position in January 2022 (5875), shows good recovery to 86% of pre-pandemic levels

Adult Education Enrolment Summary (January)

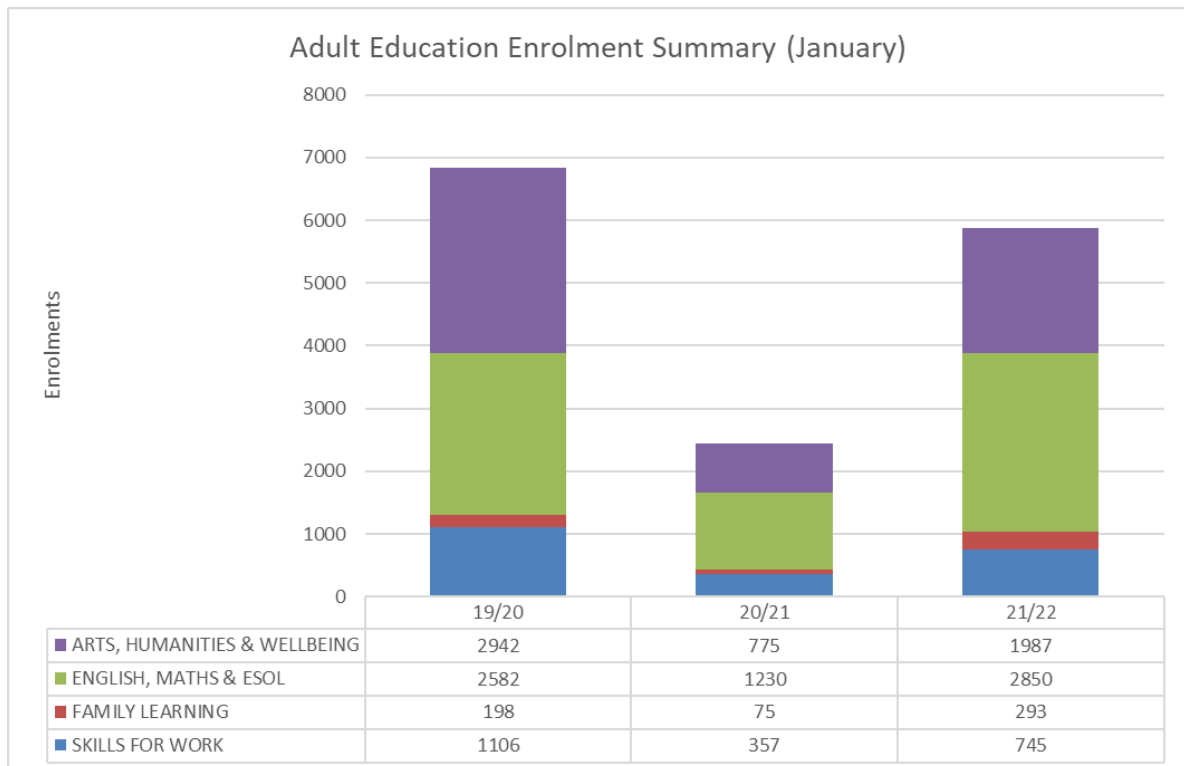| | 19/20 | 20/21 | 21/22 |
|---|---|---|---|
| ARTS, HUMANITIES & WELLBEING | 2942 | 775 | 1987 |
| ENGLISH, MATHS & ESOL | 2582 | 1230 | 2850 |
| FAMILY LEARNING | 198 | 75 | 293 |
| SKILLS FOR WORK | 1106 | 357 | 745 |

Figure 1: Overall enrolments to January compared

However, there is a notable change in the patterns of participation that can, based on anecdotal evidence, be attributed to changing needs, interests and priorities brought about by the pandemic.

- ESOL, English and Maths enrolments are higher than pre-pandemic levels. These areas worked relatively well online through lockdown and so learners progressing through the levels have been retained.
- Work related qualification courses in Childcare have also recovered well now that it is easier to secure work placements.
- Insufficient learners were recruited to run the Access to HE programme in 2021-22. Anecdotally, the uncertainty of COVID led to a reluctance to make the life changing and significant financial commitment to attending University as an adult. However, the pandemic has led a lot of people rethink their work ambitions and consider re-training once things have settled down and interest is picking up for 2022-23.
- Practical skills courses requiring specialist facilities, such as pottery and jewellery making, which worked less well online during lockdown, have seen increased take-up. However, other arts and wellbeing courses such as drawing and painting and languages have been slower to pick up. This could be because people have maintained and developed these interests at home during lockdown, and there is a diminished market for them or it could be that they are felt to be non-essential social interaction which is still being avoided.
- Where participation in 2020-21 was adversely impacted by the loss of community venues as test centres and the loss of space in schools for Family

Learning, there is a slower return to normal but it is now beginning to improve.

- 10% of enrolments are fully online in 2021-22 and all courses now use the online learning platform, which offers more flexibility and support for learners whose regular attendance is impacted by work or caring responsibilities and ensure learners are prepared for any COVID related disruption.
- Overall people are still enrolling much closer to the start of courses due to the experience of events and activities being cancelled at the last minute. This caused considerable administrative challenges in September.
- Referrals from DWP are significantly lower than anticipated due to the reduction in the claimant count and a buoyant labour market.
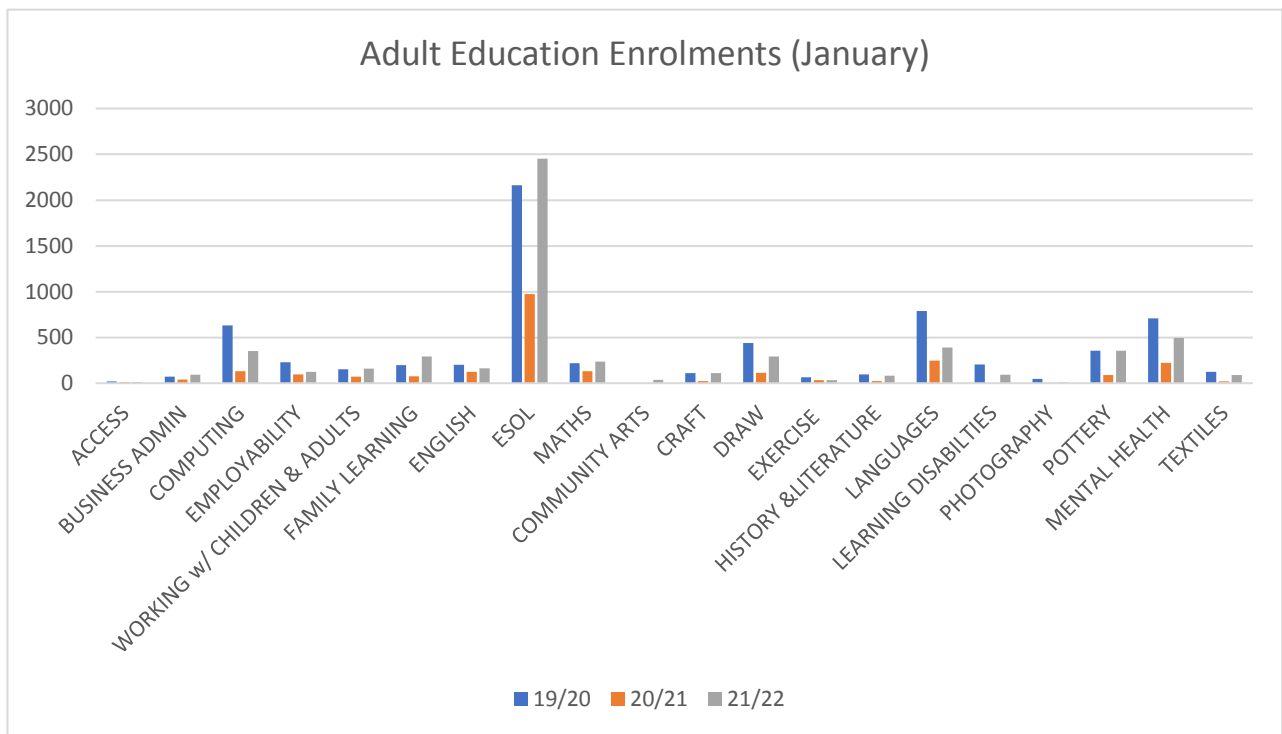


Figure 2: 2021-22 Enrolments to January by Curriculum Area

## 5.2 Equalities impact

The impact on the pandemic of participation by different groups is being carefully monitored and strategies to rebuild participation where it has been negatively impacted are being deployed.

### Gender

Historically men tend to be underrepresented in Adult Education and during lockdown there was a further increase in the participation gap between men and women. During the pandemic 20% of enrolments were by men compared to 25% in 2018/19.

In 2021/22 23% of current enrolments are from men.

| Male Participation | 2018-19 | 2020 -21 | 2021-22 (1 Dec) |
|---|---|---|---|
| ACCESS TO HE | N/A | 33% | N/A |
| BUSINESS ADMIN & ACCOUNTS | 10% | 17% | 30% |
| COMMUNITY ARTS | 29% | 4% | N/A |
| COMPUTING & DIGITAL SKILLS | 33% | 28% | 29% |
| COOKING, BAKING & CAKE | 37% | N/A | N/A |
| DANCE, MUSIC & EXERCISE | 23% | 26% | 23% |
| DRAWING, PAINTING & PRINTING | 26% | 24% | 20% |
| ENGLISH | 24% | 17% | 16% |
| ESOL | 17% | 15% | 21% |
| FAMILY LEARNING | 10% | 9% | 3% |
| HISTORY & LITERATURE | 35% | 36% | 30% |
| JEWELLERY & CRAFT | 2% | 0% | 3% |
| LANGUAGES | 35% | 38% | 40% |
| LEARNING TO LEARN ONLINE | N/A | 31% | N/A |
| LEICESTER TO WORK | 35% | 38% | 46% |
| LEARNING DISABILITIES | 51% | N/A | 30% |
| MATHS | 17% | 11% | 15% |
| PHOTOGRAPHY & FILM | 43% | N/A | 60% |
| POTTERY & CREATIVE GLASS | 14% | 8% | 13% |
| MENTAL HEALTH | 54% | 46% | 45% |
| TEXTILES & SEWING | 3% | 10% | 3% |
| WORKING WITH CHILDREN & ADULTS | 19% | 3% | 9% |
| **Total** | **25%** | **20%** | **23%** |

## Age

Contrary to expectations, the average age of participants (48) increased by three years during lockdown and this is testament to the hard work of the service staff in supporting older learners to access online learning. Another factor may have been that during school closures, home schooling parents were less likely to have the energy and/or inclination to participate themselves in online learning. For many working age adults, disruption to their working life will also have had an impact.  This trend has continued into 2021-22.
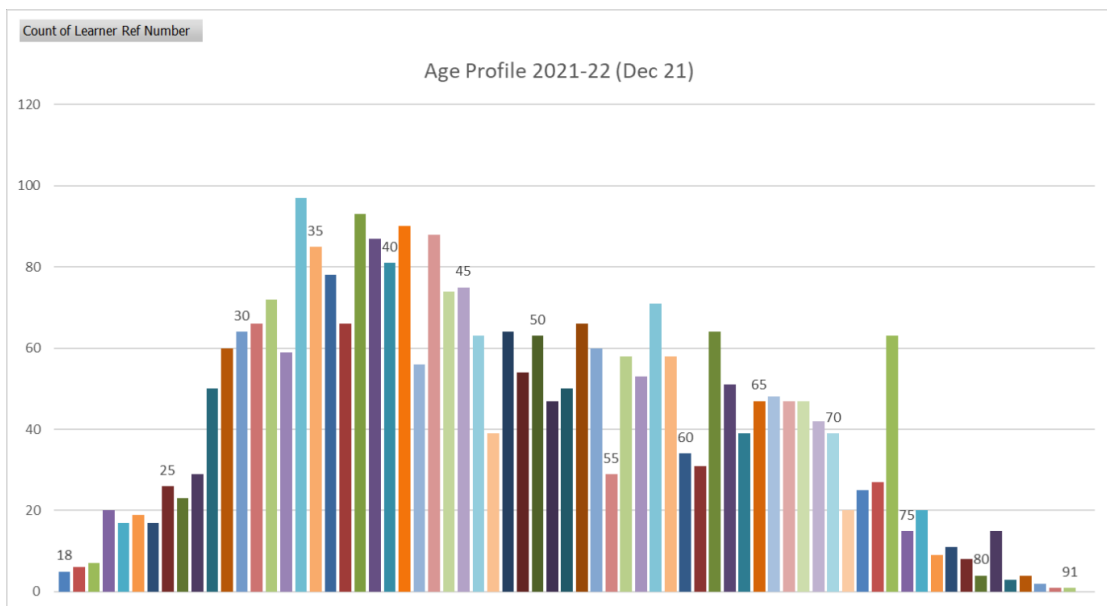


Figure 4: Age profile 2021-22

## Disability

 Learners with disabilities were adversely impacted by the pandemic with a fall of 5% in the proportion of learners declaring a disability. However, while participation in formal learning dropped during lockdown, more than 100 learners on our REMIT programme for those with complex and enduring mental health problems, participated in a wide range of online, informal learning and social contact through our Facebook group and this is not reflected in the graph below. In 2021/22 the impact of increased confidence following the vaccine rollout has led to a bounce back to just above pre-pandemic levels.
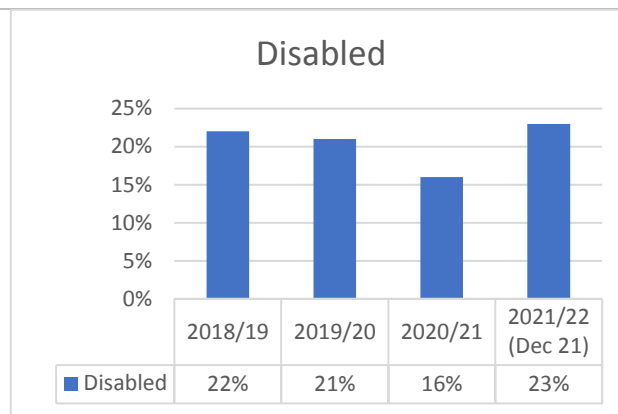
Figure 5: Proportion of learners declaring a disability

## Ethnicity

The strength of ESOL provision through the pandemic is reflected in the increased proportion of BAME participants in 2020/21.

| | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 31- English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British | 39% | 37% | 26% | 41% |
| 32- Irish | 0% | 0% | 1% | 1% |
| 33- Gypsy or Irish Traveller | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| 34- Any Other White Background | 8% | 9% | 11% | 7% |
| 35- White & Black Caribbean | 1% | 1% | 0% | 1% |
| 36- White & Black African | 1% | 1% | 1% | 0% |
| 37- White & Asian | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% |
| 38- Any Other Mixed / Multiple Ethnic Background | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% |
| 39- Indian | 24% | 22% | 24% | 21% |
| 40- Pakistani | 2% | 3% | 3% | 3% |
| 41- Bangladeshi | 2% | 2% | 4% | 3% |
| 42- Chinese | 2% | 2% | 1% | 1% |
| 43- Any Other Asian Background | 3% | 3% | 6% | 4% |
| 44- African | 6% | 8% | 11% | 7% |
| 45- Caribbean | 2% | 2% | 1% | 1% |
| 46- Any Other Black / African / Caribbean Background | 0% | 0% | 1% | 1% |
| 47- Arab | 3% | 4% | 6% | 4% |
| 98- Any Other Ethnic Group | 2% | 3% | 3% | 2% |
| 99- Not Provided | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% |

## 5.3 New Developments

- **Kickstart –** Working closely with the Organisational Development Team, the Adult Education Service are providing training and wrap around support for the Kickstart employees of the council.
- **Youth Employment Hub –** The service is working with Connexions and the Economic Development Team on the Youth Employment Hub project.

- **Leicester Textiles Academy –** The Adult Education team are supporting the development and launch of this initiative and providing ESOL and employability courses as part of the programme.
- **ESOL for Integration Project –** Additional funding was secured to expand the ESOL for Integration project which provides opportunities for informal ESOL learning and supported engagement with social and community activities directly for Adult Education ESOL learners and through a range of voluntary sector providers. Some of this funding is being used to support Afghan Families recently housed in the city and will be used for incoming Ukrainian refugees.
- **Leicester Connected –** The Adult Education Service is providing the technical infrastructure, training and 1:1 support for the Leicester Connected project which is loaning digital devices to digitally excluded residents.

## 5.4 Learner Feedback

Feedback from learners continues to be extremely positive. In end of course feedback in 2020-21, 92% rated the course Good or Excellent and only 2% rated their experience as poor or very poor. In the vast majority of cases, the issues related to the challenges and frustrations of online learning. However, 82% of respondents, across all curriculum areas, reported that participation had improved their Digital Skills and 77% that they had learned to stay safe online.

In 2021-22, the service continued to offer online options and 10% of enrolments are fully online.  While the majority of learners are very pleased to be back in the classroom, all courses are now linked to the online learning platform, most course documentation is conducted online and the embedding of Digital Skills remains a priority.

*'All my life I hated Maths. I never understood it at 15 or 50! … the subject of maths was always my downfall UNTIL NOW!... Rehana has such a simple way of teaching difficult stuff…It's changed me. Now I love Maths. You've made me a better student, confident and finally, now I understand.'*  Shamim

## 5.5 New Website and Rebranding of the Service.

In 2022 the service is being relaunched as Leicester Adult Education with a new website and branding. This change has been made in response to ongoing customer feedback about the limitations of the current web presence, the lack of an online enrolment facility and lack of brand cut through as LASALS.

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## 6. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

6.1 Financial implications

The total loss of income for the service resulting from covid-19 is estimated to be around £1m for 20/21 & 21/22. This arises from a combination of reductions in course fees, room hire, café sales and grants. Around a quarter of these losses are being covered by Covid grants, with reductions in staffing costs and reserves covering the remainder.
Stuart McAvoy – Acting Head of Finance

6.2 Legal implications

There are no legal implications in this report.

It is recommended that ongoing legal advice should be sought as and when necessary.

*Meera Patel, Solicitor (Commercial) Ext. 37 4069*

6.3 Equalities implications

There are no direct equality implications arising from the report as it is to provide an update. The report highlights the impact on the pandemic on participation levels of learners from different groups. Developments that reduce some of the barriers to learning that can prevent or discourage adults from continuing with their education – for example, lack of information, that improve access and participation by under-represented groups, should lead to positive impacts for people from across all protected characteristics.

6.4 Climate Emergency implications

There are no significant climate emergency implications directly associated with this report.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

<ins>6.5 Other implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report.  Please indicate which ones apply?)</ins>

**7. Background information and other papers:**

**8. Summary of appendices:**

**9. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)? No**

**10. Is this a "key decision"? No**