

EDTT Scrutiny

14/01/2021

Adult Skills and Learning

Lead director: Mike Dalzell, TCII



City Mayor

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
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- Report version number: 1

1. Purpose of the report

This report provides details of the impact of COVID-19 on the Adult Skills and Learning Service, the service's initial response in the 2019-20 academic year and the impact on the Autumn 2020-21 programme.

The two appendices provide a detailed analysis and commentary.

Appendix 1: The Annual Self-Assessment report provided to Ofsted and the Education and Skills Funding Agency provides a detailed analysis of the services performance in a challenging academic year.

Appendix 2: Report from a two-day Ofsted monitoring visit in October 2020 which provided an external perspective and validation of the approaches taken.

2. Recommendation

1. That the successful transition to online and distance learning is noted and the service staff commended for their commitment and hard work in challenging circumstances.

3. Supporting Information

3.1 Adult Skills and Learning Self-Assessment Report 2019-20 (Appendix 1)

The annual self-Assessment report is a detailed analysis of service performance in 2019-20 including the period from March 2020 – July 2020 when the city was in lockdown and all learning moved to an online and distance learning model.

In the face of impending lockdown due to COVID-19 the Adult Skills and Learning Service rapidly and successfully transitioned the majority of courses to online and distance learning. Significant individual support was provided to staff and learners to help them overcome technical and confidence barriers to participation. Tutor and Learner feedback surveys and follow up interviews were conducted in May to inform planning for future courses and to identify areas for improvement. Quotes from learners and staff are included throughout the report.

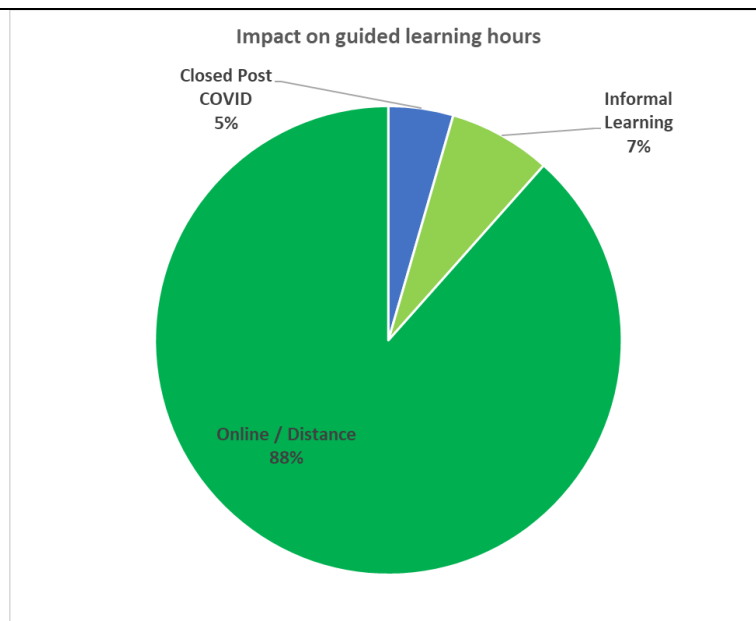
Over the summer the service prepared all its sites and staff for re-opening as COVID secure venues, in line with evolving government guidance.

The report identifies the relatively limited impact of the initial lockdown on formal participation and achievement rates.

Year (All Learners)	Enrolments	Learner Numbers	Retention Rate	Pass Rate	Achievement Rate
2016-17	10289	4572	97.10%	94.80%	92.00%
2017-18	10625	4858	98.90%	96.60%	95.50%
2018-19	11262	4817	97.50%	95.10%	92.70%
2019-20	8589*	3752*	94.40%	88.50%	83.50%

*does not include those participating in the informal learning offer.

The report also notes the sustained hard work of service staff to support learners to participate in formal online and distance learning as well as in informal learning and support activity. This meant that only 5% of planned teaching in the summer term was lost to COVID.



On average 68% of those enrolled on courses pre-lockdown went on to participate in online or distance learning. The report provides examples and case studies of how the service supported those who struggled to get online through the loan of devices, technical support and encouragement.

3.2 Ofsted Monitoring Visit Report (Appendix 2)

Ofsted conducted a 2 day monitoring visit in October 2020. The report provides an external perspective on the service's response to the pandemic.

While the monitoring visit report does not provide graded judgements on the service's performance, it did provide an opportunity for reflection and professional discussion around the challenges. The report notes:

'During the initial pandemic lockdown they were able to maintain most of the existing curriculum through distance learning. They allowed teachers to decide the best way to approach this with their learners. Consequently, teachers used a range of approaches that included live one-to-one tutorials supported by self-paced study materials; live group video lessons that mirrored the previous face-to-face timetable; and pre-recorded videos demonstrating practical skills.'

3.3 Autumn term 2020-21

In terms of participation COVID restrictions and the impact of the sustained lockdown in Leicester have had a greater impact on enrolments after the summer in the 2020-21 academic year.

The loss of normal engagement activity, and in particular Family Learning, in the summer term has had a knock-on impact on enrolments in the Autumn.

Some classroom-based learning resumed at the beginning of the autumn term on a socially distanced basis. However, the numbers in classes were severely restricted and most classes resumed on a blended model of learning, with some in the classroom and some online or distance learning, to allow the maximum number of learners to participate.

Some venues used for teaching were not available and classes were relocated where possible. For example Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre classes were relocated to the Peepul Centre.

Family Learning provision has now been largely suspended until schools are able to accommodate it. The Family Learning staff have been redeployed to support the Skills for Work team with the response to rising unemployment.

Consequently enrolments are down significantly on the same period last year. However, the patterns are very mixed. Where existing learners have progressed numbers, numbers are more buoyant. Learners are also more likely to have enrolled on substantial qualification and employment related courses.

Autumn Term	2019-20	2020-21	Change	% of previous year
Courses running	464	259	-205	56%
Enrolments*	4245	1794	-2451	42%

*does not include those participating in the informal learning offer.

The ability to use the Adult Education College, on a socially distanced basis, for exams, assessments and individual tutorials has been a significant aid to learning this term. Tutors completed professional development over the summer holiday period to support their IT online teaching skills.

During this period some staff have been redeployed to support the Council's COVID response.

3.4 Equalities impact

Participation in online learning was more challenging for older learners, especially those without family or friends to help them get started. Women were more likely to be impacted by home schooling of young children through the initial lockdown period and were often last in line for access to devices and the internet. This led to some students completing coursework late at night or early in the morning.

Wherever possible the service has provided individual technical and digital skills support to get learners online and in some cases has been able to loan tablets and laptops to support learning.

3.5 Financial impact

There is currently significant uncertainty about the financial impact of underachieving outcomes on the £1.6M Adult Skills element of the budget in the academic year 2020-21. For Summer term of 2020-21 the Education and Skills Funding Agency honoured funding agreements in full where at least 68% of expected outcomes were achieved. However, no such commitment has been forthcoming this academic year. It is expected that further clarification will be

available following the 'mid-year performance review' in February 2021. The service is currently predicting to achieve around 75% on this element of the funding and therefore, unless a similar position is taken in relation to the disruption this academic year, there is potential for clawback of up to £400K.

In addition the service has seen increased operating costs and a significant loss of income from course fees, lettings and café business which is likely to amount to around £600K this financial year.

3.6 Future plans

While the city remains in Tier 3 restrictions, or a national lockdown, courses will continue to be delivered through online/distance learning. The priority is to support learners to achieve and to support people affected by unemployment or redundancy through the digital inclusion and employability programme. This includes contributing to the development of a new, Youth Employment Hub in the city centre and preparing for an expansion of Level 3 qualifications from April 2021, when funding for adults is due to be extended.

When the levels of restrictions reduce to tier 2 or 1, return to classroom-based delivery will be possible for some courses on a socially distanced basis.

Great progress has been made in the delivery of online and blended learning and this will continue to be a feature of our courses moving forward. However, almost all learners are very clear that while they appreciate the online/distance offer made available during the pandemic, they are keen to return to some classroom-based learning once it is safe to do so.

4. Financial, legal and other implications

4.1 Financial implications

The report provides some detail on the potential financial impacts of the pandemic. The position will continue to be monitored as the financial and academic years progress and the approach of the ESFA becomes clearer. - Colin Sharpe, Deputy Director of Finance, 0116 454 4081

4.2 Legal implications

4.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

Please contact climatechangeimplications@leicester.gov.uk for implications

There are limited climate implications from this report, however continuing work to offer

courses online where appropriate could help to reduce the need for travel by attendees, reducing carbon emissions from transport use. The effort to get learners online could also play a positive role in helping them to engage with a wider range of online services in the city, further reducing transport use in the future.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

4.4 Equalities Implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

As we move into recovery, the Public Sector Equality Duty remains in force. Any decisions we make in relation to the recovery/ re-opening of services should be considered in the same way as we would a policy or service change from an equalities perspective.

We need to consider any changes and how they impact on protected characteristics, as identified in this report and finding ways in which to mitigate it which in this case will also including looking at any wider risks. It may be worth running through each protected characteristic and considering the impacts of decisions/ changes to the service provision at this time and any mitigations that have already been identified or may be identified as a result of a systematic approach, it would be beneficial to record/ evidence these by using the Equality Impact Assessment tool prior to making a final decision.

Further advice can be sought from the Corporate Equalities Team.

Sukhi Biring, Equalities Officer, 454 4175

4.5 Other Implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

5. Summary of appendices:

Appendix 1: LASALS Self-Assessment Report 2019-20

Appendix 2: Ofsted Monitoring Interim Visit Report October 2020