



ADULT & COMMUNITY LEARNING IN GUILDFORD

**GUILDFORD LOCAL COMMITTEE
20 JANUARY 2005**

KEY ISSUE:

To present to the Guildford Local Committee an annual report on Adult and Community Learning in the area for 2003/04 and to highlight the significant factors affecting the future funding and delivery of the Adult and Community Learning service.

SUMMARY:

This report highlights developments in adult and community learning in 2003/4 in the Guildford area. The service will be facing significant challenges over the next two years, which are likely to impact on the current structure and range of activity. The report gives the context in which these changes are developing. The input of the Local Committee is sought on the current service and on the potential future direction of the service.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Local Committee in Guildford should consider and comment on:

- i) the annual report for 2003/4, and
- ii) the implications of changes to the funding of the service.

1. BACKGROUND TO THE SERVICE IN GUILDFORD

- 1.1 Surrey County Council's Adult and Community Learning (ACL) delivers a programme of recreational learning at 15 Centres and over 200 locations across 9 of the 11 Boroughs/Districts in Surrey. The service is funded by a grant from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and income from course fees and partner Colleges of Further Education, which deliver basic skills and accredited and vocational learning for adults in our Centres. A programme is provided in Tandridge and Reigate & Banstead by East Surrey College under a contract with Surrey County Council.
- 1.2 In 2003/04, 28797 adults enrolled on ACL courses. In the termly ACL Learner Satisfaction Survey, there is a consistent 96% satisfaction rating for ACL course content, teaching quality and overall effectiveness of individuals' learning.
- 1.3 Adults choose to undertake ACL courses for a wide range of reasons, including a step towards more formal study, a desire to develop a new skill or build on their existing experience. Many learners progress from ACL to college courses as they seek to improve their vocational opportunities. For many, the social aspects are paramount. The regular opportunity to meet others helps to prevent social isolation and contributes to individual mental or physical wellbeing.
- 1.4 There is an extensive programme of learning for adults with learning disabilities and difficulties offered at a significantly discounted rate. The Adult and Community Care service often recommend ACL courses as part of clients' Care Plans. ACL contributes therefore to effective provision of other Surrey County Council services. Free short courses of community learning are offered within communities of need aimed at people who would not otherwise engage in learning.

2. ADULT & COMMUNITY LEARNING IN GUILDFORD

- 2.1 The majority of the programme is provided at the Guildford Adult Learning Centre in Sydenham and Harvey Roads. A smaller evening programme is available at George Abbot School on two evenings. Courses are also delivered at 10 village halls and other locations in the Guildford area.
- 2.2 Learner enrolments for the academic year 2002/3 compared to 2003/4 were:

Centre	Learners	Learners	%	Enrolments	Enrolments	%
	2002/3	2003/4	change	2002/3	2003/4	change
Guildford	3720	3869	+4.0	7557	7833	+3.6
Surrey	32331	28797	-10.9	65202	57770	-11.3

- 2.3 These figures show that Guildford Centre has had a much more favourable performance than the county average with an increase in learners and enrolments against the significant decline elsewhere.

- 2.4 Particular subjects that are attracting interest are languages (especially Spanish), pilates, calligraphy, bookbinding, cookery for men, bridge and one-day sculpture courses. Despite much attention being drawn to the need for improving IT skills, there has been a decline in interest both locally and nationally, reflecting perhaps the increased skills in the community and the over-provision of such courses.
- 2.5 Learners often travel some distance to join a course. The figures in para. 2.2 above, do not represent the number of Guildford residents undertaking ACL courses. The analysis of postcodes below gives the number of Guildford residents who undertook courses at an ACL centre in Surrey. In many cases, the postcode is not co-terminus with Guildford area boundaries.

Postcode	Locality	Residents		%
		2002/3	2003/4	change
GU1	Guildford Town East	847	932	+10.04
GU2	Onslow, Stoughton	717	732	+2.09
GU3	Pirbright, Puttenham	248	265	+6.85
GU4	Parts of Burpham & Merrow, Shalford	518	464	-10.42
GU12	Ash	199	180	-9.55
GU23	Send/Ripley	193	181	-6.22
KT24	Effingham, Horsleys	422	345	-18.25
Total		3144	3099	-1.43

3.7% of all Guildford's adult residents undertook an ACL course in 2003/4.

- 2.6 Despite the physical challenges of the Guildford centre site, more support is being provided for learners with disabilities to enable them to access our programmes. There is also an extensive programme of learning for adults with learning disabilities and difficulties. 68 courses with 534 enrolments by 143 learners in 2003/4. These included cooking, art, literacy and numeracy and drama.

3. ADULT & COMMUNITY LEARNING ISSUES IN GUILDFORD

3.1 The future of the Guildford Centre

As reported to the Committee in January 2003 and March 2004, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 will become applicable to ACL buildings from September 2005. In Guildford, the Centre at Sydenham and Harvey Roads has buildings dating from the Victorian age. The site is on a steep slope, which makes movement between the site's buildings extremely difficult for disabled people. Reasonable but limited adjustments can be made. Already, courses are switched to accessible rooms where it is known that a learner will have difficulty with access.

Some improvements have been over the last 2 years to aid access. A toilet for disabled learners will be constructed by Easter 2005 in the Sydenham Road, whilst more handrails will be provided across the site under the

same contract. An extensive programme of Risk Assessment and subsequent improvements during 2004 has reduced potential risks to the health and safety of staff, learners and visitors.

Despite these improvements, the general fabric of the buildings and the poor access for disabled people is likely to remain unsatisfactory. Whilst recognising the loyalty of tutors and learners and the importance of the Harvey Gallery to the cultural life of the town, the Committee indicated in 2003 and 2004 that it shared ACL management's concern as to the future of the site with no practical solution within reasonable cost to both the limited access and long-term maintenance issues.

Despite some discussion with Guildford Borough Council planning officers and other interested educational agencies about possible long-term alternative accommodation, there are as yet no proposals for consideration by the Local Committee. As explained in Section 4 of this report, proposals for future ACL funding add significant uncertainty. It will not be possible to specify future requirements for property and facilities for Adult and Community Learning in Surrey until the level of support that the LSC will provide from 2006/7 is known and the implications investigated. The Local Committee will have a key role in consultation on future proposals.

3.2 Self-Reliance Programme

ACL offers some learning within self-reliance areas and other areas of need throughout Surrey specifically to engage adults who would not otherwise be able, or willing, to attend a course. Widening Participation and Family Learning activities respond directly to the needs of communities and individuals and offers limited free learning outside main ACL centres in community venues and schools. A key feature of activities is that they are intended as a 'first step' into learning and participants are offered information about progression to other learning and encouraged to move into main ACL courses or to college provision.

In the Guildford area, activity continues to be centred on North Guildford. Courses provided include:

- Introduction to IT for 7 older learners for 10 weeks at St Clare's Church
- Patchwork quilting for 4 learners for 10 weeks
- Car Maintenance Workshop during Adult Learners Week in May 2004 – attracted only 3 learners despite wide distribution of publicity and personal contacts within the community.
- In partnership with Tech IT Up, an IT course was provided at the Weavers Arms in October 2004. Interest led to a longer course at St Francis Westborough School.

Activity is now focusing on the Guildford Children Centre. So far, two women's 5 a-side football courses have been run for 7 learners. The success of this activity is leading to the group setting themselves up as a separate club. For 2005, an introduction to IT course is being considered.

The extent of activity is dependent on the limited resources available from LSC for tutors, space and development. ACL is funded for one Widening Participation Officer working across Guildford, Waverley and Woking.

Development is also taking place to enhance the delivery of family learning opportunities which contribute to the raising of achievement by children and widening participation by adults in learning, particularly literacy and numeracy. The programme of activity has been undertaken in schools involving children with their parents and carers. 12 schools in Guildford offered these programmes in 2003/4.

3.3 Joint Curriculum Planning with Colleges in Guildford and Waverley

Since the creation of the Learning & Skills Council in 2001, the previous more competitive model between providers has been replaced with a desire for joint planning to make effective use of tutors, space and equipment and to offer structured progression routes for learners. Although curriculum planners for each college and ACL have worked together since 2001, there has not been overall agreement on curriculum planning to ensure that the most attractive programme for adult learners is available.

The LSC has led a group of senior managers from Farnham, Godalming and Guildford Colleges and Surrey's ACL during 2004 that has developed an overall context for curriculum planning. A wide range of subjects has been considered and agreement reached as to which is the most appropriate agency to provide particular types of learning, and the appropriate progression options. This removes the tension that existed when colleges and ACL felt that there was competition in subject areas in which there was an insufficient market.

4. Future Funding of Adult and Community Learning

- 4.1 The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has recently issued a consultation paper on reforming the funding and planning arrangements for first step learning and personal and community development learning for adults – this is part of taking forward the National Skills Strategy “Investing in Skills” (July 2003), which is the key driver for decisions about public subsidy for further and adult education. The Strategy made two key commitments:
- A new guarantee of free learning to enable adults to gain a first level 2 qualification, which is equivalent to 5 GCSEs.
 - To ‘safeguard’ adult learning for culture, leisure, community and personal fulfilment, in particular for ‘pensioners’
- 4.2 The principles of the strategy include more help for people who are most disadvantaged, and the expectation that those who already have qualifications should pay more for their learning.
- 4.3 The proposals for the future funding of Adult and Community Learning distinguish between non-accredited provision designed to be ‘**first steps**’ learning, and that intended as learning for ‘**personal and community**’

development¹. This framework for categorising learning is based on the *provider's* motivation for offering courses, rather than on the *learner's* motivation for taking part. Different funding methodologies will apply to the two types of learning.

- 4.4 Not enough is yet known nationally about the current volumes of the different kinds of provision, so it is hard to predict what its impact will be in Surrey, either on funding or on current programmes. While there is a national "safeguard" for the funding provided for non-accredited learning for adults, there is no commitment to fund all the personal or community development provision currently provided, or to allocate the available funding to current providers. Local service planning decisions will therefore be critical.
- 4.5 The local LSC will decide precisely how much "first steps" learning is needed and will be purchased. Funding for recreational learning will be based on a formula, which is weighted for social disadvantage. The LSC has made a commitment to avoiding turbulence by phasing the introduction of the new funding arrangements over the 3 years from August 2006.
- 4.6 There is insufficient information at present to make an assessment of the likely impact for Surrey. Our assumption is that the LSC's priorities and the methodology for the distribution of funding is more likely than not to reduce funding for ACL in Surrey.
- 4.7 The key dates for implementing the new funding model should mean that in late Spring 2005 'shadow' allocations for 2006/7 are announced to enable LEAs to make an assessment of impact.
- 4.8 We expect that, by Autumn 2005, the impact for Surrey will be understood and proposals for the future planning of the service developed for discussion with stakeholders, including Local Committees, partners, learners and the wider community.

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER: Ian Milton, Area Manager (Adult & Community Learning), South West Surrey

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 01483 517407

EMAIL ADDRESS: ianm@surreycc.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

LSC Consultation Paper on Reforming the Funding and Planning Arrangements for First Step, Personal and Community Development Learning for Adults (September 2004)
Annex E to the above – Consultation Questions - Surrey County Council's response (December 2004)