



**ADULT & COMMUNITY LEARNING
IN ELMBRIDGE**

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL'S
LOCAL COMMITTEE (ELMBRIDGE AREA)
19 JANUARY 2005**

KEY ISSUE:

To present to the Local Committee in Elmbridge an annual report on Adult and Community Learning in the area for 2003/04 and to highlight to the Committee 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 Elmbridge area. This report summarises what was achieved in the 2003/4 academic year, and plans for 2004/5. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC), which provides funding to support the learning programme, is proposing significant changes to the way adult learning will be planned and funded from August 2006. The implications for Surrey are not yet certain, but it is clear that the priorities for public funding of learning will be changing.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Local Committee in Elmbridge consider and comment on the annual report for 2003/4.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:	LSC Consultation Paper on Reforming the Funding and Planning Arrangements for First Step, Personal and Community Development Learning for Adults (September 2004)

1 BACKGROUND TO THE SERVICE IN ELMBRIDGE

- 1.1 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 from partnerships with 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. The LSC agrees priorities and targets each with the service.
- 1.2 In 2003/04, 29000 adults enrolled on ACL courses. In the ACL Learner Satisfaction Survey, conducted each term, 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. 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. Adult and Community Care 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 ELMBRIDGE

- 2.1 Elmbridge has four Adult Learning Centres from which the course programme is planned for the surrounding area.
 - Cobham, Cedar Road
 - Esher, Esher Green
 - Molesey, Henrietta Parker Centre, Ray Road
 - Weybridge, Churchfield Road

There is an evening-only Centre located at:

- Esher Evening, Esher High School – Tuesday and Wednesday evenings

In addition, ACL courses are offered at a significant number of community venues throughout the Borough.

2.2 Learner enrolments for the academic year 2002/3 compared to 2003/4 were:

Centre	Learners 2002/3	Learners 2003/4	% change	Enrolments 2002/3	Enrolments 2003/4	% change
Cobham	1537	968	-37.0%	3038	2354	-22.5%
Esher Green	1308	1268	-3.0%	2964	2688	-9.3%
Molesey	1158	910	-21.4%	2303	1883	-18.2%
Weybridge	803	1180	+46.9%	2088	2392	+14.5%
Surrey	32331	28797	-10.9%	65202	57770	-11.3%

2002/3 was generally the most successful year that ACL had achieved for some years; comparing 2003/4 with the average for the previous three years, enrolments declined by 4%. There may have been some impact from fee increases from £2.65 to £2.80 per hour, in order to address budget pressures caused by an increase in NI contributions and other costs which are not reflected in the LSC grant. Changing LSC administrative requirements, a new management information system and associated training and a new curriculum management structure and reporting, all of which reduced resources available for local publicity initiatives, may have also affected enrolments.

Despite much attention being drawn to the need for improving IT skills, there has been a decline in interest both locally and nationally. All Surrey's Colleges as well as ACL have experienced a significant reduction in interest in ICT courses, due to the high levels of computer use and ownership by Surrey residents. In a number of Centres, including Cobham, ICT courses were discontinued in September 2003. Across the curriculum, to effectively manage the service's budget, strict viability criteria for learner numbers and course income are used by Centre Managers. Interest in many subjects fluctuates with changes in fashion and culture so that popular courses from previous years will be removed from the programme if no longer viable. For example, all the Alternative Therapy courses scheduled at Cobham failed to enrol sufficient numbers.

There are some factors which have affected enrolments at the Centres in Elmbridge:

Cobham:

- Popular and long-serving tutors have been lost to the service through resignation, retirement, illness and, sadly, death. Whilst some tutors have been replaced for Autumn 2004, it has proved difficult to replace others with a tutor of equally high standard of teaching. This affected courses in Art, Craft and Italian.
- Enrolments for First Aid courses were insufficient to offer the courses. It is possible that as the qualification only needs to be renewed every three years, this market has been exhausted.
- French Polishing numbers were very low in 2003/04. However, in both Autumn 2004 and Spring 2005 these courses are now over-subscribed.

Similarly, Interior Design courses failed in Autumn 2003 whereas in the previous year classes had full numbers.

- Two tutors left to run private classes and took learners from previously full courses.

Molesey:

- The Centre was closed from May to October 2004 for complete refurbishment. Because of this, several classes were transferred to other Centres at the beginning of the academic year.
- The same issues with loss of tutors as at Cobham meant the cancellation of classes including Craft, Life Drawing, Curtain Making and Mixed-Media.
- The decline in ICT enrolments that has affected the whole service was felt more keenly at Molesey as it is the only Centre in Elmbridge with dedicated facilities. Prior to Autumn 2004 there were two ICT rooms, following the refurbishment this has been reduced to one.

Weybridge:

In 2003/4, Weybridge's performance was against the general trend.

- During 2003/04 additional Saturday and weekend courses were introduced which have proved highly successful.
- The number of courses in popular subjects such as Art and Yoga were increased. Additional Alternative Therapy classes were also offered (possibly accounting for the demise of such courses at Cobham).
- Additional teaching slots were added to the Centre's timetable.
- Additional local publicity was produced concentrating on those courses specifically available at the Weybridge Centre.
- The office was relocated downstairs in April 2002 thus improving learner enrolment facilities from September 2003.
- Additional Centre Notice Boards together with carpeting and signage made the reception area more attractive and accessible to potential learners.

It would appear that the gain at Weybridge has been, to some extent, at the expense of learner numbers at both Cobham and Molesey. The improvements at Molesey were planned to significantly increase take-up and improved marketing, including a complete re-design of course programmes and publicity, was intended to recruit more learners. A critical issue for Adult and Community Learning throughout Surrey is to recruit new tutors of high quality in popular subjects such as art, music and languages.

Particular subjects that are attracting interest are languages, especially Spanish, physical exercise and the wide range of art and craft courses. More recently, there has been an increase interest in ballroom dancing following the BBC's Strictly Come Dancing series.

- 2.3 Learners often travel some distance to join a course. The figures above do not represent the number of Elmbridge residents undertaking ACL courses. An analysis of learners as shown below gives the number of Elmbridge

residents, who undertook courses at an ACL centre in Surrey. Some 3.0% of Elmbridge adult residents undertook an ACL course in 2003/4, a slight drop of 0.5% over 2002/3 figures.

Ward	Population	Learners*	%
	2001	2003/4	
Claygate	6492	225	3.47%
Cobham and Downside	6158	264	4.29%
Cobham Fairmile	4760	144	3.03%
Esher	6280	293	4.67%
Hersham North	5809	144	2.48%
Hersham South	6104	180	2.95%
Hinchley Wood	3975	104	2.62%
Long Ditton	5830	56	0.96%
Molesey East	6097	198	3.25%
Molesey North	5985	145	2.42%
Molesey South	6483	111	1.71%
Oatlands Park	5663	250	4.41%
Oxshott and Stoke D'abernon	6100	220	3.61%
St George's Hill	5884	226	3.84%
Thames Ditton	5863	107	1.83%
Walton Ambleside	4106	86	2.09%
Walton Central	5862	155	2.64%
Walton North	6650	95	1.43%
Walton South	6216	207	3.33%
Weston Green	3703	128	3.46%
Weybridge North	4078	126	3.09%
Weybridge South	3838	146	3.8%
Total	121936	3610	3.0%

- Three Elmbridge wards were in the ten wards with the highest ratio of learners to population – Cobham and Downside, Esher and Oatlands Park.
- None of the Elmbridge wards were in the ten wards with the lowest ratio of learners to population.
- Together with Mole Valley, Elmbridge had the highest ratio of learners to population in Surrey.

3 ADULT & COMMUNITY LEARNING ISSUES IN ELMBRIDGE

3.1 Self reliance

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 North Walton Ward work is continuing with the new residents group for Field Common. Lower Esher Green has been designated a Learning Community and data is being collated. The Widening Participation Co-ordinator for Mid Surrey is working with the Surrey Lifelong Learning Partnership to establish a community project possibly using the newly refurbished Centre at Molesey as the venue.

Using the additional funding provided by the LSC, significant development is taking place to enhance the delivery of family learning opportunities. Schools have found that offering some Wider Family Learning such as Family ICT or arts and crafts has been a good lead into the more literacy and numeracy based programmes. Keeping up with the children programmes where adults are taught about how to support their children with their homework have also proved to be popular.

In Elmbridge 34 adults attended Wider Family Learning courses and 52 adults attended Family Literacy and Numeracy based programmes.

3.2 Access to learning

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 now applies to education establishments and services. By September 2005, we need to ensure that buildings offer no barriers to participation in our programme. Many of ACL's dedicated buildings have significant access deficiencies, which, despite additional funding from the LSC and the County Council, may not be overcome by September 2005.

However, in Elmbridge we were particularly fortunate to obtain a Capital Challenge Grant from the LSC and have recently re-opened the Molesey Centre after a complete refurbishment of the building. The works have included a lift to the first floor, double-glazed windows, carpeting and window blinds throughout and a re-sited Centre office offering open access to all learners. At the Esher Green Centre, with the exception of two small classrooms in the main building and the Art Studio outside, all classrooms are on the ground floor and fully accessible. The Pottery Studio has its own access suitable for disabled learners and new adjustable pottery wheels have been installed. Following a DDA grant from the Learning & Skills Council, an outside lift to the Art Studio will be installed during the Easter holidays. The Weybridge Centre will close early in the spring term to facilitate the installation of a lift to the first floor, making the Centre completely accessible to all. All classrooms at the Cobham Centre are on the ground floor and fully accessible.

At the non-SCC sites that are used for courses in Elmbridge, a new assessment process is being introduced that will ensure that each site is compliant with Disability Access and Health and Safety requirements.

3.3 Joint Curriculum Planning with Colleges in Elmbridge

Since the creation of the Learning & Skills Council in 2001, the previous competitive model has been replaced with a commitment to more joint

planning by learning providers which ensures more effective use of tutors, space and equipment and offers structured progression routes. ACL has contributed to this development. Although curriculum planners for each college and ACL have worked together since 2001, there has not been overall agreement on curriculum planning that will ensure that the most attractive programme for adult learners is available, regardless of supplier.

Following successful meetings in Waverley and Spelthorne, the LSC will lead a group of senior managers from Elmbridge Colleges and ACL that will provide the overall context for the curriculum development and planning. The first meeting of this group will take place in January 2005. The group will assess adult learning needs, agree the most appropriate agency to provide particular types of learning and map out progression options.

This will remove the tension that can exist where colleges and ACL feel that others were competing in areas in which there was an insufficient market.

4. FUTURE FUNDING OF ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING

- 4.1 The 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 levels of public subsidy in 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
 - 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 development’**. 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.
- 4.4 Different funding methodologies will apply to the two types of learning. Not enough is yet known 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 planning decisions will therefore be critical. The LSC has made a commitment to avoiding turbulence by phasing the introduction of the new funding arrangements over 3 years from August 2006.

- 4.5 There is insufficient information at present to make an assessment of the likely impact for Surrey, but our assumption is that the LSC's priorities and the methodology for the distribution of funding will, more likely than not, reduce funding for ACL in Surrey.
- 4.6 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.
- 4.7 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.