



**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL'S
LOCAL COMMITTEE
IN EPSOM & EWELL
ADULT & COMMUNITY LEARNING
REPORT**

24th JANUARY 2005

KEY ISSUE

To present to the Local Committee in Epsom & Ewell 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 Epsom & Ewell area. It summarises what was achieved in 2003/4 academic year, and plans for 2004/5. The Learning and Skills Council, 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 Epsom & Ewell should consider and comment on the annual report for 2003/4.

1. BACKGROUND TO THE SERVICE IN EPSOM & EWELL

- 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 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, 29,000 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 well-being.
- 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 EPSOM & EWELL

- 2.1 Epsom & Ewell has its own dedicated building in Church Street, offering day, evening and weekend provision. Courses are also held in the Ebbisham Centre, Stoneleigh Library and a number of community venues.

Ruxley Evening Centre, located at Epsom & Ewell High School in West Ewell offers courses on Monday and Tuesday evenings.

- 2.2 Learners and enrolments for the academic year 2003/4 compared to 2002/3 were:

Centre	Learners 2002/3	Learners 2003/4	% change	Enrolments 2002/3	Enrolments 2003/4	% change
Epsom & Ewell	1963	1673	-14.7%	3856	3153	-18.2%
Surrey	32,331	28,797	-10.9%	65,202	57,770	-11.3%

2002/3 was generally the most successful year that ACL has achieved for some years; comparing 2003/4 with the average for the previous three years, enrolments declined by 4%. While there may have been some impact from fee increases from £2.65 to £2.80 per hour, which was necessary in order to address budget pressures caused by 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.

There are some factors that have affected enrolments at the Epsom Centre in particular:

- Popular and long-serving tutors have been lost to the service through resignation and retirement. Whilst some have been replaced for Autumn 2004, it has proved difficult to replace others with a tutor of an equally high standard of teaching. This has affected courses in a number of Art disciplines.
- Enrolments for Badminton were very low in 2003/04, however in Autumn 2004 these courses are now fully subscribed.
- Both RYA Day Skipper and Alexander Technique courses both previously popular did not enrol sufficient numbers in Autumn 2003.
- A previously extremely popular offer of several Tai Chi courses at The Wells, for residents and other elderly residents in the community, developed and run by ACL was taken over by Day Care Services.

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 increased interest in ballroom dancing following the BBC's Strictly Come Dancing series. 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 over-provision. In addition several IT courses at the Epsom Learning Centre were lost because of a new configuration of software.

- 2.3 Learners often travel some distance to join a course. The figures above do not represent the number of Epsom & Ewell residents undertaking ACL courses. An analysis of learners as shown below gives the number of Epsom & Ewell residents, who undertook courses at an ACL centre in Surrey. Some 3.0% of Epsom & Ewell 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	
Auriol	3687	62	1.68
College	5372	162	3.02
Court	5049	38	0.75
Cuddington	5791	25	0.43
Ewell	4851	85	1.75
Ewell Court	5127	86	1.68
Nonsuch	5194	73	1.41
Ruxley	5198	67	1.29
Stamford	5758	126	2.19
Stoneleigh	4700	101	2.15
Town	5347	116	2.17
West Ewell	5648	76	1.35
Woodcote	5337	153	2.87
Total	67,059	1170	1.7%

*Using data from Surrey ACL (Cascade MIS). Using only correct, plottable postcodes. Any learners with missing, incorrect or incomplete postcodes have been removed from the figures.

- Two Epsom Wards are in the ten selected areas of deprivation in Surrey – Court and Ruxley
- Two Epsom Wards are in the ten Wards with the lowest ratio of learners to population – Court and Cuddington

3. ADULT & COMMUNITY LEARNING ISSUES IN EPSOM & EWELL

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 offer 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.

The Widening Participation Coordinator is working with the Community Coordinator in Preston to help deliver workshops for mums and their children. Workshops are delivered in consultation with the learners, following a report about learning needs in Preston. In Court and Ruxley wards, travellers' children are supported and this is an opportunity for ACL to engage parents in learning.

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 Epsom & Ewell, nine adults attended Wider Family Learning courses.

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.

At the Epsom Centre, additional work has been carried out to refurbish the toilets to enable access for learners with mobility difficulties and new signage that includes Braille has been installed throughout the Centre to aid learners with visual impairment. Work to install a lift in the Centre is expected to go ahead during the coming year following the recent approval of a further capital grant from the LSC.

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

3.3 Joint Curriculum Planning with NESCOL in Epsom & Ewell

Since the creation of the Learning & Skills Council in 2001, the previous competitive model has been replaced with a commitment for more joint planning by learning providers that can make effective use of tutors, space and equipment and offer structured progression routes. ACL has been part of these trends. Curriculum planners for NESCOL and ACL have worked together since 2001 to effect overall agreement on curriculum planning that will ensure that the most attractive programme for adult learners is available, regardless of supplier.

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.
- 4.5 There is insufficient information at present to make an assessment of the likely impact for Surrey, with no information about future allocations to particular providers. Our assumption is that the LSC's priorities and the methodology for the distribution of funding is likely to 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 will be announced to enable LEAs to make an assessment of impact.
- 4.7 We expect that, by the autumn, 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.

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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)