

ANNEX 4 – Written submission from Tim Oliver, Leader of the Council, and Denise Turner-Stewart, then Cabinet Member for Education and Learning, dated 20 April 2022

Adult Learning and Skills- Task and Finish Group Enquiry

Written submission - Economic Perspective

1) The benefits of participating in adult learning and skills

There is a very wide range of benefits associated with participating in adult learning and skills for an individual. These go beyond just the benefits in terms of economic productivity but can also lead to improved outcomes in terms of health and wellbeing and social and community outcomes. However, it should also be remembered that not all benefits will be achieved by each individual and that the impact of adult learning on their life and livelihood will be determined by a whole range of other factors that the learning provision is unable to impact on by itself.

Some of the benefits of participating can include:

- Skills acquisition can help individuals access or retain a job or help them with career progression
- An opportunity to retrain and move into careers where there is greater demand in their local area, i.e., to be more adaptable to the needs of the local economy
- Increased earnings
- Raising aspirations (which can have an impact on those around them in their network)
- Productivity gains (from an employer perspective)
- Increased job satisfaction
- Improved physical health – studies have shown adult learning to be linked with smoking cessation, amount of exercise taken, life satisfaction, better nutrition and lower risk of heart disease
- Improved mental health by fostering a sense of identity, purpose, wellbeing and improved life satisfaction. Developing new skills can boost self-esteem and self-confidence
- Adults who engage in learning themselves are more likely to engage in their children's education so there are potential intergenerational benefits too
- Improved social capital, social cohesion and integration
- Greater connection to the local community, potentially leading to greater civic participation and democratic involvement
- Reduction in re-offending rates

It is worth remembering that the benefits achieved through lifelong learning or even one-off adult skills provision is directly in relation to the quality and nature of the learning and how well it is tailored to the needs of the individual receiving it.

2) The current and anticipated economic and social needs of Surrey's residents and communities (in the context of adult learning and skills)

Surrey has a higher-than-average rate for its population to be qualified at NVQ4 and above; 53.4% as compared to 45.1% for the South East and 43.1% for Great Britain. Unsurprisingly then it also has a lower rate of residents with no qualifications – 4.4% as compared to 4.8% for the South East and 6.4% for Great Britain. Earnings by place of residence is significantly higher (over 20%) than the GB average but it also needs to be recognised that the cost of living is significantly higher in Surrey than elsewhere too.

We also know that 60% of those employed in Surrey come from the top three Standard Occupation levels (Managers, Directors and Senior Officers, Professional and Associate Professionals and Technical occupations). Surrey has experienced a mismatch as residential jobs for this skill level rose by 20,000 yet there was only an increase of 3,000 for workplace jobs. This suggests that the county is potentially losing high-skilled local workers due to not having enough Professional Occupation vacancies. This may be due to an organic decline in opportunities in the county but could also be a result of a high level of unfilled vacancies.

There are also concerns around structural changes to the Surrey economy, particularly on the back of the impact of the COVID pandemic and due to EU Exit. There was a much higher prevalence of the transportation and storage sector using the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS); 16% in Surrey compared to 8% nationally. Whilst this could well be due to the slow return of airport activity, even as that returns the higher potential of automation in this sector may lead to some longer-term structural changes.

In terms of areas of growth for the Surrey economy, which will then have a knock-on impact in terms of the needs on residents and the skills they require to adapt to the Surrey economy, we are expecting to see continued growth in digital industries. This will include growth in particular sub-sectors such as computer consultancy and programming, computer games publishing, wired telecommunications and computer facilities management.

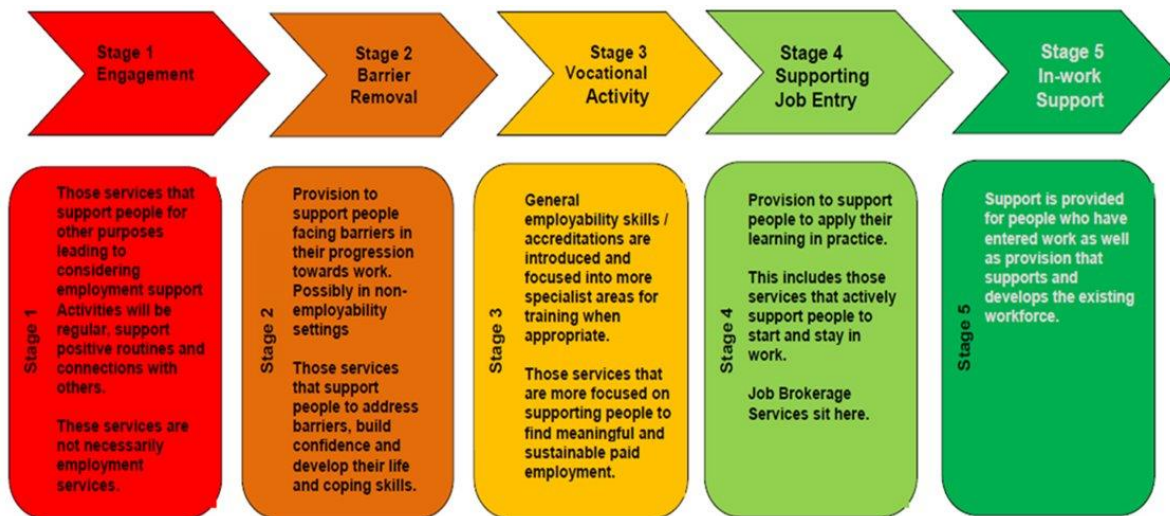
When we look at this in employment terms, 82% of Surrey's working age population are economically active, with only 2.4% claiming Universal Credit, lower than the South East rate of 3.4% and national rate of 4.4%. In the past 12 months, there have been 160,201 unique job postings for jobs based in Surrey with the most sought-after occupations (from an employer perspective) being:

- Nurses
- Care workers
- Sales
- Administrative roles
- Programmers and software developers

Meanwhile, only 21% (26,600) of those economically inactive want to work (i.e., are not in education or retired etc). Therefore, there is clearly a wide gap between the needs of employers in terms of job opportunities and the market available to them locally. However, ultimately we must consider how adult learning provision in Surrey needs to be set up to meet these needs and how that works alongside the existing, and ever evolving, offer available from Further Education Colleges, Higher Education Institutions and Independent Training Providers. When we consider the current skills landscape in Surrey, much of the provision sits at Stages 3 and 4 of the 5-stage employment pipeline model (below), which is primarily focused on supporting those who are able and willing to take up opportunities for training and learning before moving into paid employment. A question to put onto this inquiry is whether that is where adult learning is best placed to support or whether instead it could have a greater role in Stages 1 and particularly stage 2, reducing and removing barriers to education and working on more basic skills such as confidence building, general employability and basic skills such as English and Maths. Whilst Surrey is, overall, an affluent and highly skilled county, there are pockets of deprivation across the region where the fundamentals of supporting people into training and learning need to be addressed before a vocational routeway can even be considered.

Of course it is understandable that any provision is driven by where the demand sits and where the funding is coming from. However, if we are to move to a position of developing a well-rounded, aligned skills system in Surrey that supports people through all stages of the pipeline, we have to consider how we move away from being driven by reactive funding needs to taking a wider perspective of what provision is best suited at each stage to help deliver the pipeline of skilled workers who can move into work and can remain and develop within their jobs. Aligned with this, consideration also needs to be given to two other factors; 1) how any provision interfaces with the world of employment,

matching employer needs where required and 2) how well it is linked into other sources of referrals and support networks so that we can be confident we are accessing and supporting the individuals who need it the most.



3) The skills required of the workforce to deliver relevant environmental commitments

This is a difficult area to be confident regarding specifics, primarily because the latent demand is yet to translate to job numbers as many organisations do not have the right level of awareness or understanding of their green skills requirements and the implications on the economy and environment. It is also widely accepted that most areas of the economy will develop a 'green' element to them, even if they are not widely seen as specifically green roles.

However, we can look to some projections around the number of jobs required and to data regarding the provision that is available to match this demand. Surrey is projected to have 15,400 Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Economy (LCREE) jobs by 2030, and this is expected to rise 82% by 2050 to 28,000 jobs. The majority of this growth is anticipated across three sectors including:

- Low-carbon electricity (89% growth)
- Low emission vehicles & infrastructure (144% growth)
- Low-carbon heat (50% growth)
- Low-carbon services sector (181% growth)

Some initial data analysis, completed by Shared Intelligence, has also explored the potential within the construction sector as the sector with the highest absolute growth. Surrey's construction industry has an uneven distribution of employment by higher-paid and higher-skilled sub sectors such as Architects and Civil Engineers which require accredited degrees equivalent to NVQ level 6 and above. Demand in the short to medium term, as environmental targets in the built environment are realised means that there is a need for more skilled construction workers within the county to deliver on retrofit and modern methods of construction. It is therefore unlikely that adult skills provision, in its current shape, will meet these kinds of demands.

On a geographical level, Surrey Heath, Woking and Guildford are anticipated to have the highest number of LCREE jobs within the county, with Surrey Heath projected to experience a 92% increase in LCREE jobs between 2030 and 2050.

When we then consider the provision available to meet this demand, according to an Education and Training Foundation (ETF) survey, less than 1% of college courses available to students in the UK are focused on embedding green skills, climate emergence or carbon literacy. Current and projected

shortages of STEM skills may also act as a barrier to green growth as low carbon sectors will need to compete for STEM graduates with other industries for their workforce.

4) The barriers to participating in adult learning and skills

As with the benefits of adult learning, there are many complex factors at play when it comes to participation in adult learning and skills, few of which are Surrey specific. These factors can include:

- Self-confidence and belief. Moving back into a learning environment, potentially for the first time in a long time, can be a daunting task and will mean exposing yourself to the opportunity for failure, which is an uncomfortable position to be in.
- Lack of basic skills, such as oracy and numeracy to even start participation (or feel participation can be started) at the lowest level
- Time and/or flexibility. A number of potential adult learners are already in-work, potentially even with multiple jobs, so creating time can be difficult. In Surrey, as of February 2022, we know there are 16,380 Universal Credit claimants; whilst many of these will be unemployed, a significant amount are likely to be in work already but with little available time to completely develop new skills
- Caring requirements – As above, life commitments can have a limiting effect on the amount of time an individual can give up to learning new skills
- Financial – Whilst there is a wide range of provision that is free, there are other costs which need to be factored in, such as travel, childcare, opportunity costs of not working etc.
- Travel and transport – Surrey Adult Learning is delivered from a range of sites covering a large span of the county but there are gaps meaning it can be difficult for some learners to attend courses in person, especially if reliant on public transport
- Digital exclusion to access information about the opportunities of adult learning in the first place as well as being able to learn through remote learning opportunities

5) Current policy and provision in Surrey, including that of Surrey Adult Learning (Surrey County Council), employers and the private and third sectors

This will be better outlined by those directly delivering the provision. However, from an Economic Growth perspective, what we can say is that through the work of the Surrey Skills Leadership Forum, SCC is taking forward plans for the development of a Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). The aim of an LSIP is to create an action plan to support the delivery of an employer-led skills system, where provision is matched to the existing and future needs of employers within a common geographic area. This will enable provision to be much more adaptable and flexible to suit the needs of employers and to support economic growth across the county.

As part of the development of a LSIP, commissioned research will take place to assess the existing level of provision within Surrey and how well matched that is to employers needs, both in the short and longer term. This will allow us to explore how the development of the LSIP can ensure that provision, including that of adult learning and skills, is tied directly into the economic needs of the county and is creating a talent pipeline for the future.

If we move this question onto future policy and provision in Surrey, there will be opportunities for skills provision to be shaped quite differently under potential devolution opportunities. This will allow SCC to have greater control over use of funding and commissioning of services to meet the requirements of its specific economy. There are also wholesale changes proposed for the skills landscape, including the introduction of a Lifelong Learning Loan allowance, which could help to remove one of the significant barriers faced by potential adult learners; financing their own skills provision. We are also awaiting details of the significant investment the Government is making in adult numeracy programme, Multiply, which will enable providers to deliver a new range of courses

that are specifically focused on making numeracy feel relevant to learners (i.e., that it is applied in real life settings).

As outlined above, we feel in order to enable Surrey residents to engage with adult learning, there must be an adequate balance between delivering courses with qualifications and provision that is aimed at the earlier stages of pre-employment support.

Written submission – CFL Perspective

We welcome the enquiry into how adult learning and skills in Surrey is meeting local strategic and operational education, economic, health and wellbeing, community and skills needs. That in itself sets out the complexity of the adult learning provision and the many diverse needs it is expected to meet. The age range is 19 plus with many different types of learners wanting different outcomes such as

- learners of working age with low or no qualifications wanting to gain a GCSE in English and/or maths to improve their employment prospects;
- learners wanting to learn English (ESOL) as a second language;
- supported learners requiring learning assistants who attend a class two hours a week for 10 weeks to develop their cognitive skills and self-confidence;
- learners on a family learning programme who want to improve their parental skills to assist their children's behaviour and achievements;
- learners of any age wanting classes that improve their leisure and pleasure activities and their sense of belonging and achievement within a group such as pottery, painting, sewing, pilates and a modern foreign language.

The funding for adult learning comes from the Adult Education Budget (AEB) allocated and managed by the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA); an arms-length organisation under the Department for Education. Surrey Adult Learning within the Children, Family and Lifelong Learning directorate receives £2.75m AEB per annum. The four FE Colleges across Surrey also receive AEB funding.

AEB has two primary funding elements. The first is termed adult skills which is for accredited learning that aims to successfully provide a qualification from an awarding body and is funded through a formula. The second is called community learning which is for non-accredited provision that is funded according to the cost of teaching and learning. Surrey Adult Learning (SAL) agrees the AEB split of the two with the ESFA; for SAL it is 75:25 in favour of community learning and is different for every local authority and FE College throughout the country. For many it is nearer 50:50 or in favour of adult skills.

We have considered the factors for consideration in light of the questions asked for the adult learning enquiry.

1. The benefits of participating in adult learning and skills

The benefits include

- A friendly bespoke local environment to learn and teach.
- Tutors and support staff that can be learner centric and change the teaching and learning to meet specific classroom needs
- Learning in a relatively small group that encourages group dynamics and facilitates peer review and collaboration. Many learners return year on year.
- High achievement rates that are above the national average when compared to other types of provision such as apprenticeships and level 3 and above courses.

- The outcomes are met and learners and tutors understand the reasons for starting on a course. Outcomes include learning progression from one level or stage to another; better employment prospects for finding a new job or sustaining an existing role; stronger social confidence within local communities; less isolation and loneliness (a prominent factor during the covid pandemic); parents assisting children with their education and training and learners re-skilling and upskilling to meet local employer needs.
- SAL has a good OFSTED grade which encourages learners to learn.
- Reduces isolation and promotes health and wellbeing
- Online adult learning means learning is not disrupted when learners travel

1. The current and anticipated economic and social needs of Surrey's residents and communities (in the context of adult learning and skills)

- SAL has historically accessed learners from marketing and communicating with individuals across Surrey who want to participate in adult learning. Many are continuous learners who progress year on year and originally started from a neighbour's or relative's recommendation. The largest age group is 60-69 and the smallest is 19-24. More learners are studying a modern foreign language and arts and crafts than any other subject area. The outcomes are dominated by community learning and health and wellbeing strategic priorities and less so for skills needs. It could be argued that the skills needs are being met by the local FE Colleges and training providers. Jobcentre plus and the DWP believe needs of their claimants for more training are being met by their own training programme (Refresh) and by local Colleges and national providers. To back this up, the local LEPs and the Chamber of Commerce believe level 3 and below shortages are almost non-existent. SAL are working with the SCC Health and Wellbeing Board (Helen Johnson) and the Communities team (Jane Last) to target our provision on disadvantaged areas such as Spelthorne and Sheerwater in a coordinated person- centred approach.
- SAL benefits from having seven centres across the west and north of Surrey that solely deliver adult learning. They have existed for generations and are part of the fabric of their local community. Before the covid pandemic 11,000 learners were learning at one of the sites and in 2021/22 the forecast is 7,500 learners will access SAL provision which compares very favourably with other national and regional local authorities and will put SAL comfortably in the top of quartile of local authorities for participation. On the other hand, all 11,000 pre covid learners were taught face to face and we anticipate our delivery of learning in 2021/22 and for the future to be two thirds face to face and a third remote learning. This has come about from a combination of learner and tutor demand.
- Nationally, the DfE skills for jobs white paper, the Post 16 Skills Bill and the levelling up bill concentrate on how any adult learning can support the skills needs of any locality first and foremost. OFSTED rigorously analyse how any adult learning is supporting local skills needs. There is a clear tension to a holistic approach that gives equity to economic, social, and environmental needs when deciding on adult provision.

2. The skills required of the workforce to deliver relevant environmental commitments

- The skills relate to the basic qualifications and the need to ensure all can have the opportunity to access a job. This means ensuring everybody has an English and maths GCSE so that literacy and numeracy is at a level to access a sustainable job. In the future it will require essential digital skills qualifications (EDSQ).
- There are no specific courses or qualifications in adult learning that target the green agenda or meet environmental employer needs.
- We are working with the economic development team to consider changes to our curriculum for the next academic year and beyond.

- SAL has introduced a reuse and recycle policy that repairs and uses our existing equipment.

3. The groups who currently participate in adult learning and skills and the groups who stand to benefit the most from participating in adult learning and skills

- The primary groups who participate in adult learning are females over the age of 50 and the largest age group is 60-69
- 90% of our learners are on community learning curriculum courses that are non-accredited
- The outcomes for most learners meet a health and wellbeing and community vision set of priorities such as improved social confidence, more interactive with their local community after meeting other learners on the course, less isolation and more interactive discussions with fellow learners, many develop new long-standing friendships and learn a new skill or activity.
- The ethnic minority participation levels match the overall Surrey population
- All adult learning providers would like to attract more learners aged 19-40 of working age from disadvantaged areas who are seeking to improve their pay or reskill or upskill to stay employable in the future.
- The participation strategy for adult learning is to attract more learners through local employers and communities and to take the learning to the employer and community as well as the learner attending one of the SAL seven sites. In SAL, we generate leads for adult learning from one primary source which is the individual or resident and we are historically very good at it. In other local authorities the need from employers, jobcentre plus and communities seeks out local authority provision and that is not currently the case in Surrey.

4. The barriers to participating in adult learning and skills

The primary barriers are:

- Potential learners do not believe there will be any economic or social benefit from learning particularly younger working age individuals. Employers are not willing to give time off and learners do not see any immediate earning increases. Despite extensive marketing and communication, the adult population is unsure of adult learning and treats it with a level of trepidation particularly if they have had a poor experience at school. We overcome this through a far more relaxed atmosphere that is providing learning for mature adults not children.
- Learners and employers are not routinely anticipating future skills need only the needs of the immediate present.
- The covid pandemic has made adult learners and tutors more apprehensive of face to face classrooms that will take time to alleviate.
- Finding new tutors for English and maths GCSEs is a national, regional and local struggle.
- There are no barriers concerning cost although many learners want easy access to parking, better public transport to our seven sites and have a high expectation of the quality and up to date status of our equipment and technology. We are introducing new white boards in the classroom and better equipment for the arts and crafts curriculum areas
- SAL has an annual staff and learner survey and recently conducted a community survey through the Surrey County Council business intelligence team and these barriers were reinforced.

- To overcome them Surrey Adult Learning must work in collaboration with all local education and training suppliers to offer a curriculum that meets all need. The Surrey Skills Leadership Forum is a worthwhile new introduction to the network structure of the county so that demand for learning can be stimulated from all sources and met by local supply. There is a constant tension between collaboration and competition amongst post 16 providers although all recognise that collaboration has to be stronger across the post 16 sector

5. Current policy and provision in Surrey, including that of Surrey Adult Learning (Surrey County Council), employers and the private and third sectors.

The national and local policy is driven by the skills for jobs white paper, the post 16 Skills Bill progressing through the Houses of Parliament and the Levelling Up white paper. They stress the imperative for learning to help achieve sustainable employment for all including individuals with no or low qualifications or with outdated skills and experience.

We have in other sections set out learner participation and achievement, compared it to other local authorities and past years.

The strategic vision of Surrey Adult Learning is to change people's lives through inclusive, inspirational adult learning.

- Individuals will be inspired to learn
- Employers will value learning and engage in shaping adult education
- Communities will encourage the benefits of learning
- We will deliver world class learning

The mission is to promote learning pathways that enable all learners to achieve their career aspirations and fulfil their potential with values that project passion and high achievement, high standards and quality, inclusivity and fairness and flexibility and responsiveness. The goal is to meet local economic, skills and community strategic priorities whilst maximising fee income. There are six priorities

- i. Learners – promote a learner first culture in our decision making.
- ii. Staff – develop a workforce that delivers excellence.
- iii. Stakeholders – innovate the curriculum and delivery through partnerships and collaboration.
- iv. Provision – maintain a digitally enhanced environment for teaching and learning.
- v. Finance – become financially resilient to provide long term financial stability
- vi. Reputation – deliver excellence in performance and be responsive, agile and flexible.

Our objectives are to ensure the value of adult education is recognised and celebrated by all; residents access learning as a pathway to achieve their ambitions and employers influence adult education and skills provision to find the skills they need. The expected outcomes are supporting communities to participate in society and combat isolation; supporting learners to gain skills for the future with a curriculum offer that enables learners to meet employer skills gaps and support communities to enrich lives and explore creative learning opportunities.

It will deliver more jobs and pay; progression into further learning and improved social confidence from adult learning; more employer engagement in influencing the curriculum offer; more learners influencing the extent of remote and distant learning and then equip adults with the skills to collaborate, compete and connect in ways that drive their lives and their local community or society.

6. Good practice regarding adult learning and skills.

This is hard to ascertain. SAL has a good OFSTED grade and so do the four local FE Colleges. SAL's adult skills provision for GCSE qualifications and functional skills for English and maths have achievement rates substantially above the national average and in the top quartile of all national providers. Many LA adult providers are more integrated into strategic skills bodies such as LEP skills subgroups or Local Skills Improvement Partnerships which should more clearly and cogently set out the local skills needs.

HOLEX is a national local authority body that represents adult learning in discussion with the DfE and the ESFA on policy changes that especially relate to any proposed funding changes. SAL are part of a local authority network that is lead by the DfE on the impact of any policy changes on adult learning.

7. Further information.

Surrey Adult Learning has 850 courses with learners attending during the day, evening and at weekends be that face to face or remote learning. All courses have at least 5 learners and in total there are 350 tutors teaching. The provision has to be clear of its intent, implementation, and impact or why a course is running, how it is being taught and where the learner progresses to next or how the learners intends to use their new-found knowledge.

The national policy and strategic direction are pushing adult learning into how it is providing more economic benefit to its locality as well as community and health and wellbeing benefits. The recovery from the covid pandemic and the employer demand for skills is the primary focus. This is clearly a tension for Surrey Adult Learning and suggest a transformation of our provision over and above what is already provided by our competitors at the 4 FE Colleges and throughout the charity community.

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