

Wednesday, 17 April 2024

Adult Learning and Skills Update

Purpose of report:

The purpose of this report is to provide an update and respond to the recommendations set out by the Task Group in June 2023.

Introduction

The Adult Learning and Skills Task Group was set up against a backdrop of labour and skills shortages and the cost-of-living crisis, with the aim of identifying opportunities for adult learning in Surrey to better meet the needs of employers and residents and at the same time meet learner demand for community learning. This report shares the recommendations of the Task Group and the progress of implementation. It will explain how the Council's Surrey Adult Learning service fits into the current landscape and how it finds itself at odds with the agenda of the national government that funds it. National government are clearly prioritising economic and skills outcomes over community, leisure and pleasure and health and wellbeing outcomes with an expectation that adult learning leads to more English, maths and digital skills qualifications.

Responses to Recommendations

RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE ADULT LEARNING AND SKILLS TASK GROUP

Recommendations:

- 1. Develop a stronger relationship with Jobcentre Plus to (a) connect with the adults most in need of upskilling and (b) ensure courses match demand in type and location.***

1.1. July 2023 response: In July 2022, SCC signed a Partnership Agreement with DWP, setting out the principles and commitments that are agreed to deliver sustainable employment outcomes for Surrey residents. Both parties have shared objectives which are focused on driving the recovery of the

Surrey economy, establishing clear pathways to high quality, sustainable work and thereby reducing unemployment and underemployment. This Agreement has already led to closer cooperation between Jobcentre Plus and Surrey Adult Learning (SAL) to help deliver ESOL courses for Ukrainian residents and the action plan for 2023/24 includes better sharing of data to help ensure courses match demand in type and location. SAL has set up a digital dippers course for the over 50s in partnership with the local DWP as a result of the partnership agreement.

1.2. Economy and Growth March 2024: A strengthened partnership between DWP and SCC continues, co-ordinated by the Economy and Growth team but bringing together a range of internal teams, including SAL, with bi-monthly partnership meetings. In terms of connecting with the adults most in need of upskilling, recent work has focused on particular neighbourhoods of Old Dean, Canalside and Stanwell, working with Skillsmax to deliver specialist provision for long term unemployed claimants. There has also been upskilling of DWP work coaches to act as Multiply Numeracy Champions to promote the opportunity for upskilling in numeracy.

1.3. SAL March 2024 - As a result of this partnership SAL has set up the Digital Dippers programme designed by listening closely to client needs articulated by DWP. Initially with a focus on the 50+ age group, the programme is now being extended to younger claimants needing to develop their skills and confidence in six key digital skills areas. Through these courses participants become more active agents in today's world, whether searching for work or managing their day to day lives to begin with, this programme was provided in Surrey Heath (Camberley) and Guildford. It is now also running in Spelthorne (Staines) and Elmbridge (Molesey) with plans to deliver in Woking from April 2024. The national DWP Director General of DWP visited Surrey recently to see how the course could be replicated nationally and to praise the collaboration. We meet termly with the DWP and the economic development team. The number of job seekers at the DWP is low – the majority are hard to reach and hard to help. Despite this, in March 2023 we had 17 learners on the digital dippers programme and by the end of 2023 we had 112. To further increase numbers, we are attending job fairs in partnership with the DWP.

2. *Take the teaching of functional skills to where the data shows qualifications are most lacking and unemployment is greatest. There should be a greater focus on Spelthorne, for example, where the greatest proportion of Surrey's residents have fewer than five GCSE grades 9-4 (27.9 per cent). Ideally this will not necessitate the closure of any current centre but if the budget means all courses must be in the same building, then this may mean those who can afford to travel may have to go farther.*

2.1. July 2023 response: There is a stronger emphasis on national, regional and local adult learning priorities to target adults with no or low qualifications and to reskill or upskill adults who are disadvantaged or vulnerable and live in more deprived areas such as Spelthorne, Canalside and Old Dean. It means a more targeted marketing and communication approach to attract learners with specific needs. Historically, adult learning has relied upon the word of mouth from existing learners which in general means we have tended to attract the same type of learner. As such, Surrey Adult Learning is planning to take the learning to the learners with the most need, ensure that vulnerable learners receive support so that they can access remote learning via the internet and through a digital device. It will in effect mean we widen our participation which will meet an area of improvement set out in our last inspection in May 2023.

2.2. SAL March 2024: This academic year we have provided a sequenced pathway of English and maths qualification courses in Spelthorne (Sunbury), Woking and Surrey Heath (Camberley) responding to demand from Stepping Stones to Functional Skills and from Functional Skills through to GCSE level. Additionally, Functional Skills qualifications are embedded within SAL's apprenticeship provision for those apprentices who do not already have a Level 2 English or maths qualification. SAL is also working in partnership with Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Trust providing English and maths Functional Skills qualification courses for their employees. Furthermore, our staff at Camberley are working with the community link officer for Old Dean and we are attending the job fairs in March and April. It is though taking time to see results with more Old Dean residents attending adult learning courses.

3. *Venues should be accessible by public transport and co-located with other internal services like libraries to be more community based and share costs. Every library across Surrey should also operate as an adult learning facility delivering community learning.*

3.1. July 2023 response: With 52 branches across the county, Surrey Library Service is situated in every major community and the offer is accessible to all. Libraries are informal centres of learning where all ages can build skills and knowledge contributing to well-being, building personal networks, and supporting career and earning potential. Surrey Libraries support and deliver the national Libraries Connected Universal Information and Digital Offer, which aims to ensure local communities have access to quality information and digital services, to learn new skills and to feel safe online. Through the information and digital offer, libraries provide quality information and digital support. Libraries enable individuals and communities to develop learning skills to find answers and to inform life choices. The offer helps children and

adults to engage and feel safe online, it ensures resources and opportunities are accessible, and it embraces creative and innovative technology.

3.2. All Surrey libraries offer access to Good Things Foundation Learn My Way courses via public network terminals for free. There are also a range of resources that are freely available via the internet such as Access to Research and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) provided by University of Surrey. The Library Service actively works to signpost to services that meet the needs of residents and that includes supporting Adult Learning and Skills and promoting their service offer. The Library Service is actively working with Adult Learning to co-locate services where possible, for example, in the new Sunbury Hub that is being planned. We also plan to expand the Adult Learning offer in libraries by providing taster sessions for longer courses and providing spaces where Adult Learning can hold classes to support the development of independent skills in areas of need.

3.3. **March 2024 response:** Adult Learning and Libraries are developing a programme of activity around key national celebrations such as Adult Learners Week, Family Learning Festival and Get Online Week to deliver taster sessions in libraries and showcase the range of courses available at Adult Learning Centres. Events will take place in Libraries across Surrey during October and will enable residents to sample a range of courses from the Adult Learning and Skills service. Activities will also be offered for children and young people with their parents and carers to boost literacy and numeracy through stories, songs and rhymes.

3.4. In addition, libraries have secured a commission to deliver an Independent Skills Programme in 14 libraries (based on need) over an 18-month period in which Adult Learning are a key delivery partner. The Programme aims to deliver a programme of curated, bespoke skills and personal development courses for residents at risk of escalating care and support needs, aimed at empowering them to live independently and with as much choice and control for as long as possible.

3.5. **SAL March 2024** – In the last year, we have improved the links between libraries and SAL. There are links between the Library IT courses to SAL's and many of our Family Learning students are signposted from a library course. This has contributed to an increase in our Family Learning programme from 150 learners in 20/21 to over 1,200 in 23/24.

4. *Form or strengthen partnerships with the community and voluntary sector organisations suggested in the Task Group report to encourage participation in disadvantaged and deprived areas.*

4.1. **July 2023 response:** Surrey Adult Learning is working with all staff in the service to improve their community presence and to do it in a structured planned way. We have been on the ABCD course delivered internally by Customers and Communities to work with internal and external partners to enhance our presence and to do it in a way that is right for Surrey and holistic across all our County Council services. The aim is to deliver a person-centred approach that will include education as well as health and other strategic priorities. We have worked recently with the DWP and Jobcentre plus to develop a digital dippers course for ove-50s in deprived wards and it has been a major success

4.2. **SAL March 2024** – Building on the response from last year, a particular success is the collaborative work by SAL’s Family Learning (FL) team with other teams both externally and within the directorate such as the Team Around the School and the L-SPA. This work has enabled courses to be developed to meet current local needs and the information about our free Family Learning courses to reach the target families. Family Learning in 2020/21 had 150 learners and by the end of 2023/24 academic year we anticipate 1,200 learners. The relationships with schools has dramatically improved and FL has had a direct impact on improved behaviour and attendance of children. In addition, we are working collaboratively with the Cygnet Hospital to provide a pathway from discharging patients into our passport to wellbeing courses.

5. *Continue to work with teams in community engagement, economic development, land and property and health and wellbeing to analyse other ways of targeting the Council’s 21 key neighbourhoods.*

5.1. **July 2023 response:** There is a drive for all to target the 21 key neighbourhoods and for adult learning to play a part in revitalising the lives of many in our most deprived neighbourhoods. Surrey Adult Learning has many communications with internal County Council departments and attends meetings with the economic development directorate on the skills plan and the local skills improvement plan to provide a foundation for learning often through improvements in literacy, numeracy and digital skills to deliver outcomes for learners that improve their employability and progresses them further in their education or training. We are working with land and property to develop a shared service site with libraries in Sunbury and Farnham and any potential sites or accommodation in the North of the county especially around Staines. SAL is part of the Health and Wellbeing Board and is working on an implementation plan to highlight the importance of learning and education for improving health and wellbeing. SAL has a Passport to Wellbeing department with a plethora of active courses including Tai Chi and yoga and there is a

strong presence of learners from the 21 key neighbourhoods although we could do more and will continue to focus on this area for development.

5.2.SAL March 2024 - Rebecca Brooker, Prevention and Communities Lead at Surrey County Council, has agreed to become a new member of the SAL Board to improve how we can influence the key neighbourhoods with our curriculum offer. In addition, we are working with the Hong Kongers now living in Surrey and we provide bespoke English courses. From January 2024, we introduced a new range of courses that included more in-depth knowledge of UK employment skills opportunities, community integration, reducing loneliness and supporting parents to better understand the English education system.

6. *Fund transport for asylum seekers to attend training provision, particularly where it is centralised. This may use the neighbourhood portion of Community Infrastructure Levy receipts.*

6.1.July 2023 response: SAL is already doing this. SAL provides transport assistance to many asylum seekers via a minibus. For others, SAL reimburses their public transport costs. SAL is aware that without it there would be no provision for many asylum seekers. We will explore the use of the Community Infrastructure Levy.

6.2.SAL March 2024 – SAL continues to reimburse public transport costs. Learners are not coming from one hotel anymore. We are not using the community infrastructure levy and we must explore that in more depth. We are enabling learners to attend face to face courses and since September 2024 we have spent nearly a £1,000 on transport assistance.

7. *Where possible courses should be offered both in person, to allow access for those without a computer and to maximise the social aspect, and remotely, to make it easier for people without transport or limited spare time due to caring or work commitments. Liaise with Citizens Online, which has been commissioned by the Council to research digital exclusion in Surrey, and cooperate with its recommendations to minimise it.*

7.1.July 2023 response: SAL had 100% face to face provision in our seven sites in 2018/19 and that shifted to 100% remote learning during the Covid pandemic. In the last year 75% of our courses were face to face and 25% remote learning and we expect that equilibrium to be the same in the next academic year. Learners and tutors are determining the mix that is right for them and many have unexpectedly taken to remote learning when initially there was a trepidation about its value. The quality of teaching and rapport between the learners can be maintained remotely with good, modified and appropriate teaching and learning. We will liaise with Citizens Online

7.2.SAL March 2024 – We have not yet liaised with Citizens Online but we will do so before the end of the academic year. To support the reduction of the digital divide, SAL restructured its digital skills curriculum to a clearer progressive pathway of free courses from the start of the current academic year which has seen learner numbers increase by 20% compared to last year. All our online courses are taught live by a qualified tutor. To help meet resident demand, this term we are providing some remote learning in all our curriculum areas apart from Passport to Wellbeing and our suite of courses for adults with low to moderate mental health issues. We are not providing any equipment, but we are introducing in the next academic year a free course for any learner earning below the living wage of £21,000.

- 27.1% of courses were delivered online in 22/23. Decreased to 25.8% in 23/24.
- 29.5% of learners attended an online course in 22/23. Decreased to 28.7% in 23/24.
- 33.0% of learners aged 24 to 64 attended an online course in 23/24. Only 18.2% of learners aged 65 and over did the same.
- 84.0% of learners aged 65 and over attended a face-to-face course in 23/24. Only 70.2% of learners aged 24-64 did the same.

8. *Market research of the types of courses wanted and better promotion of what is available could help to avoid having to run courses mixed ability due to lack of interest.*

8.1.July 2023 response: SAL has a learner survey at the end of the academic year with over 600 responses setting out their opinions on the strengths and areas for improvement on the course and the level of learner support. We provide a chart of “You Said and We Did” at all our seven sites and on our website. In addition, we asked the corporate research team to ask why previous learners and potential new learners have not accessed our provision. In summary, habits have changed since Covid, and many potential learners do not appreciate the full benefits of further learning. As a consequence, we are marketing our provision in a more targeted way to the 21 key neighbourhoods and highlighting the benefits of learning for economic, social and community purposes.

8.2.SAL March 2024 - The SAL Course Guide 23/24 is available in 23 libraries that are in proximity to our seven centres. SAL is featured in the ‘Improve your skills’ section on the back page of the Cost-of-Living Guide that was distributed to all households in Surrey in November 2023. This was followed up by a Skills update in Surrey Matters in January and February. Over 70% learners enrol into a SAL course from surreycc.gov.uk/adultlearning. A survey to prospective learners in January 2024 showed more evening classes were wanted and 55% would like to spread the cost of courses in instalments. We are working with recruitment to entice more tutors to work on an evening and

on a Saturday. Key themes from the SAL annual learner survey 2023 in the Summer with 832 responses say Tutors are prepared to an excellent standard and lessons are delivered in a way that helps you build on your existing knowledge and skills and to make progress, costs have gone up significantly and it is a challenge to enrol on the website. We have recently changed the website to reflect learner comments and our increases in costs are below inflation.

9. *Where mixed ability classes must be used for the sake of economics, train tutors how to differentiate effectively and incorporate peer and self-assessment to enable their time to be shared more equitably.*

9.1. **July 2023 response:** SAL was recognised in its latest OFSTED inspection to have good quality teaching and learning at the core of its activity for the benefit of learners. SAL observes all our tutors, and we use outside quality leaders to review our self-assessment reports of our curriculum areas, from modern foreign languages to arts and crafts and onto GCSEs in English and maths. It is a vital component for all tutors, and we do it well to differentiate their teaching for each member of the class. We ask fellow learners to support other learners and it helps to generate a collective spirit and a learning community.

9.2. **SAL March 2024 -** SAL is ambitious for all our learners with tutors ensuring all learners acquire the knowledge and skills they need to succeed. We have a differentiated approach to our teaching to meet the needs of individual learners. There is a progression and individual learner plan for all our learners. We are inclusive and support learners with additional needs. We carry thorough assessments for access arrangement.

10. *There should be parity in provision across Surrey. Both accredited and community aspects of learning should be accessible to both West and East without the existence of a postcode lottery. In its areas of expertise, i.e. education and social care, the Council should be offering Level 3 training; in addition to apprenticeships in these areas it should consider skills bootcamps, for which grants are available for local authorities. In other areas of learning, where it would not make good financial sense to provide these itself it should seek to commission providers to fill these gaps.*

10.1. **July 2023 response:** Surrey County Council has recently bid for £1.4m of Bootcamp funding, in partnership with Hampshire County Council. This prioritises digital (including cyber) and green skills, particularly retrofit (see also response to recommendation 16). If the bid is successful, Hampshire County Council will lead procurement of suitable training providers to deliver training, and Surrey Adult Learning is encouraged to apply. There is a strategic discussion to be undertaken with East Surrey College on the Adult

Education Budget across the east and west of the county. From 2010, Surrey County Council gave the provision and the funding in the south and the east to East Surrey College. The adult learning strategic needs in the west and the east are different which meant the provision provided was different and the level and balance of community learning and adult skills (or qualification-based literacy and numeracy courses) was different too. It has led to learners in the east wanting local community learning provision when the funding in the east is spent on literacy, numeracy and digital skills. In order to provide more community learning in the east it would need more funding from the DfE which is not forthcoming.

10.2. Economy and Growth March 2024: Surrey County Council was successful in its bid for £1.8m of funding for Skills Bootcamp funding for 2023/24 in partnership with Hampshire County Council. An evaluation of the success of that programme will be available after March 2024. In the meantime, SCC has also been successful in securing £2.3m of funding for Bootcamps for 2024/25, this time as sole bidder. The Economy and Growth team are currently procuring 575 Bootcamp places across four key economic sectors:

- Digital (cyber and gaming)
- Health and social care
- Advanced engineering
- Green economy – retrofit, green electrical and sustainability
- We expect delivery of these courses to start in May 2024, supporting our aims of creating the conditions for businesses to thrive and to maximise opportunities for all.

10.3. SAL March 2024 – the response from last year still applies. We have worked with East Surrey College to ensure learner needs are met but we provide a different curriculum offer to meet different local needs. SAL and the County Council have no direct authority to change East Surrey College's offer that is the role of the ESFA or DfE who provide AEB funding. There may be an opportunity to change this approach with the introduction of the County Deal and the devolution of AEB from 2026/27.

11. Working within a formal partnership of colleges and independent training providers, and the Employer Representative Body, which is researching skills gaps in the county, launch an online database of available training by the end of the 2022/23 academic year. This overview of the offer in Surrey will allow SAL to see what training is missing and will better enable signposting to relevant courses when contacted by a learner or business.

12. The training database should be publicly accessible and well promoted by SAL to make the public aware of the local offer.

13. The database should be kept up to date with available apprenticeships throughout Surrey that SAL and careers hubs can signpost potential learners to. Should the Council take over responsibility for careers hubs as envisaged in the Pathways to Employment proposal to Cabinet in March 2023, it should promote apprenticeships and T-Levels as respectable alternative pathways to employment, in its careers advice in schools, as outlined in the Surrey Skills Plan.

13.1. July 2023 response to 11, 12 and 13: As outlined in both the Surrey Skills Plan and the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), a priority for action is the development of a Surrey Skills portal. This portal would be the online database of training delivered from across Surrey by HE, FE and independent training providers, including SAL, providing residents with a clear view as to what skills training opportunities exist and how they relate into career pathways. The ambition of the portal is also to showcase a live-time view of available apprenticeships and promote a range of pathways available to both young learners and older workers. The portal is currently in development and is hoped to be available for the Autumn term of 2023/24.

13.2. Economy and Growth March 2024: Work has currently paused on the development of the Surrey Skills Portal. However, as part of SCC's approach to integrating Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) responsibilities, the Economy and Growth team are developing a new Business Surrey portal, and the intention is to build a resident-facing portal alongside that to showcase the wealth of training and development opportunities, including apprenticeships, on offer in the county.

13.3. As part of the work on Local Skills Improvement Plan, Surrey Chambers of Commerce have established their '[Opportunities Portal](#)' as a central resource for local employers to find different opportunities to engage with local colleges and other skills providers, such as through offering an industrial placement or work experience.

13.4. SCC took on responsibility for the Surrey Careers Hub from the two LEPs that are operating in Surrey on 1st September 2023 and the team are now working with over 90 schools and colleges across the county. A key focus of the team is the promotion of apprenticeships and technical education (including T-Levels), working to raise their profile and ensure that schools are adhering to Provider Access Legislation which requires them to provide at least six encounters for all their students with approved providers of apprenticeships and technical education.

14. To reflect the communication skills deficit exacerbated by the pandemic, SAL's Getting into work – refresh course should be expanded to include such skills as using the telephone and emailing.

14.1. **July 2023 response:** Working with the DWP, SAL has developed courses to improve basic digital skills and the national initiative Multiply is targeting local adults with limited numeracy and digital skills. Communication skills, and softer skills more specifically, is a priority area earmarked in the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) for Surrey and North Hampshire May 2023. SAL is including telephoning and emailing.

14.2. **SAL March 2024** - SAL has responded to the need for teaching assistants in school with support from our Board of Governors by introducing a new qualification course in Woking and Surrey Heath (Camberley) this academic year – Preparing to Work in Schools. Planning is underway to offer a second vocational pathway Preparing to Work in Health and Social Care to help meet the local need in this sector from the next academic year. In addition, SAL's Refresh courses have been reviewed and updated to include interview skills, CV writing, Covering Letters, being your own job coach, volunteering and an introduction to starting your own business.

15. In order to evidence SAL's contribution to the Government's economic drive, encourage all learners of working age, including those in 60s, to take advantage of careers advice and digital skills, help to connect ESOL students with appropriate employers, and collect data on the work/study destinations of all learners.

15.1. **July 2023 response:** SAL has an information, advice and guidance or IAG team who liaise and meet with all our adult skills learners and the vast majority of our community learners. We have a matrix kitemark for IAG which we have to gain every February from the DfE and we have accessed it every year since its implementation. The destination of our learners after the completion of a course and the impact of that destination on our economic and social outcomes such as a new job, a pay increase or more self-confidence to reduce loneliness and improve social interaction is a primary purpose of our provision. Collecting data on destination is admittedly an ongoing concern. We use an outside body to help record it.

15.2. **SAL March 2024** – We signpost all learners to the National Career Services (NCS). NCS provides free and impartial careers information advice and guidance to adults to support their decision making for learning and work. We arranged bespoke online NCS guidance sessions for our English and maths learners and our Apprenticeship learners. In the main, most GCSE English and maths learners know how and where they want to progress to once they have achieved their qualification such as new job opportunities or further education and training. We use J2Research to survey learners upon completion of their courses to find out the destinations of our learners. 43.5% of learners progress to a further course and 22.3% of earners progress into or continued in paid employment. The table below provides more information.

Table 6 2022/23 Destinations by subject area

Destination	ENG MAT	ESO L	SL	WSI T	Total
In paid employment for 16 hours or more per week	11.7%	6.3 %	4.8 %	6.4 %	8.8%
In paid employment for less than 16 hours per week	20.6%	8.5 %	2.4 %	0.0 %	13.6 %
Not in paid employment, looking for work and available to start work	10.4%	17.6 %	4.8 %	61.7 %	15.7 %
Not in paid employment, not looking for work and/or not available to start work	11.3%	14.1 %	31.0 %	17.0 %	13.6 %
Other FE* (Full-time)	0.0%	0.2 %	0.0 %	0.0 %	0.1%
Other FE* (Part-time)	43.3%	45.3 %	57.1 %	12.8 %	43.4 %
Other outcome - not listed	2.7%	7.6 %	0.0 %	2.1 %	4.7%
Voluntary work	0.0%	0.4 %	0.0 %	0.0 %	0.2%

Subjects key: ENGMAT: English & maths; ESOL: English for Speakers of Other Languages; SL: Supported Learning; WSIT: Work Skills & IT

And some softer outcomes:

- 89.5% of respondents agreed their course better enabled them to pursue their goals and ambitions.
- 80% agreed that learning with SAL improved their ability to work, socialise and communicate with others.
- 55.5% said they could better protect themselves online and in real life (e.g. from scams and extremist views etc.)
- 90% said their course contributed to them remaining physically and/or mentally well.
- 83% of ESOL learners agreed they could more actively participate in the wider community and in society (e.g. voting, volunteering, politics etc.)

- After completing their course, 80% were more able to learn, work or study independently and make independent decisions.
- 66% said they were able to use what they'd learnt to support other adults or their children's learning.
- 64% said they developed new interests or hobbies.

16. SAL uses available DfE and DWP funding to deliver retrofit courses in partnership with The Retrofit Academy by the end of 2023, including Level 2 (GCSE 4/C+) to entice learners in and prepare the groundwork for study.

16.1. **July 2023 response:** Surrey County Council (Economy and Growth team) currently has an Infrastructure Partnership with The Retrofit Academy. As part of this, SCC are currently (July 2023) seeking training providers to deliver retrofit training from Levels 2 to 5. Surrey Adult Learning could form a key element in ensuring retrofit training is made available to a wide range of Surrey residents. Retrofit training is a key element of the Bootcamp funding applied for (see Recommendation 10).

16.2. **Economy and Growth March 2024:** SCC has taken its ambitions with green skills further and successfully bid for funding to support more than 500 local tradespeople with free or part-funded Green Skills training. Courses include Level 2 'Understanding domestic retrofit' and Level 3 'Domestic retrofit advice' through to more advanced air source heat pump installation courses. The Economy and Growth team has also developed a '[Green Careers](#)' microsite to showcase green jobs and skills development opportunities in Surrey.

17. SAL introduces free courses for residents in carbon literacy and sustainable living.

17.1. **July 2023 response:** New, free short courses are available on the Innovation South Virtual Campus (<https://em3.isvc.co.uk/>), developed as part of the Strategic Development Fund (DfE) in 2022-23. These cover Carbon Literacy, Climate Change, Sustainable Resource Management, Retrofit, Tree Planting and Water Conservation. Surrey Adult Learning will support learners to access these courses.

17.2. **Economy and Growth March 2024:** As per July 2023 response, the Innovation South Virtual Campus offers a range of online courses with a significant focus on sustainability and carbon literacy.

18. Ensure the drive for skills for jobs outlined in Surrey Skills Plan is not at the expense of community learning. Expand community learning into all areas of Surrey where it is lacking. Continue to work with Surrey Chambers of Commerce to prepare an accountability statement for the LSIP, while at

the same time exploring ways of maintaining affordable community learning.

18.1. July 2023 response: In order to expand community learning beyond the north and the west, it will require more funding from the DfE through the Adult Education Budget which has not increased in value for over ten years, or it would need to be at the expense of other activity including adult skills which is a priority for meeting the local skills needs and therefore unlikely - or hard to achieve. It is a constant dilemma across Surrey that requires a more strategic discussion with East Surrey College. SAL meets regularly with the East Surrey College Principal and is collaborating on how we can transform our provision to make it more equitable. The Accountability Framework was prepared in association with the Chamber of Commerce who prepared the LSIP. The balance between adult skills with a stronger economic outcome and community learning is constantly analysed

18.2. SAL March 2024 – In Summer of 2023 we prepared an Accountability Agreement approved by our Board of Governors to show how we were contributing to the LSIP. Our community learner numbers in 2023/24 have maintained their levels from the previous year at 7,000 and our Adult Skills programme has almost doubled in 2023/24 from the previous year from 600 learners to 1,100 learners. The drive from the DfE is to oversee a doubling again of Adult Skills learners to over 2,000 learners within the next three years and for that to produce more learners with English, maths and digital skills qualifications.

19. Consider setting up a skills swap service as a way of counteracting social isolation at no cost to the participants. For example, someone may be willing to teach functional skills and could trade the credit earned from this to join yoga classes.

19.1. July 2023 response: This recommendation is accepted and welcomed; SAL is exploring this for Ukrainians to teach English at a foundation level to new learners. Recruitment of high-level tutors in all areas of our provision is a constant strain. We are working with the County Council recruitment team to expand our advertising for potential recruits and improve our diversity. We have had a discussion with East Surrey College to share tutors and improve training of existing tutors to consider other curriculum areas

19.2. SAL March 2024 – SAL has explored enticing learners to become tutors especially Ukrainian learners but to no avail. We have tried to offer incentives such as free learning, but it has not yet delivered any extra learners or tutors.

20. Consider a community credit scheme, such as the one run by Volunteer Centre Dorset, whereby adults with learning disabilities volunteer in the

community and learn new skills, aided by a mentor. Both earn credits which can be exchanged for goods or services from businesses signed up to the scheme. For example, volunteers referred by the Department for Work and Pensions, learning life skills at a furniture reuse charity in Redhill, could be incorporated into such a scheme. Recruiting volunteers to mentor may give them the self-belief they lacked and motivate them to become a tutor with SAL or to go into teacher training.

20.1. July 2023 response: SAL will explore the community credit scheme and analyse in more depth the Volunteer Scheme in Dorset. SAL has approximately 15 volunteers who help mainly to support learners and the outcomes are excellent in terms of the progress learners achieve with their assistance and the joy of learning is clear for all to see.

20.2. SAL March 2024: Since Covid we have experienced a significant reduction in the number of volunteers assisting the SAL teaching programme. We have asked other LA providers and they have experienced substantial reductions too. The same 15 volunteers mentioned last year are assisting our teaching and learning in our supported learning programme. We do offer a new Preparation for work (LD) course to learners with learning disabilities to gain a customer service skills qualification, work experience and to develop literacy and numeracy skills. In addition, we have a Pottery Enterprise course to develop basic clay work skills for sale, work within a team and to improve confidence and social skills and lastly a mini enterprise course to plan and set up a mini enterprise for learners with learning difficulties.

Conclusions

21. There has been significant progress made in response to the vast majority of the previous recommendations, as set out above.

22. Operationally, the SAL curriculum offer has developed and changed to meet the needs of Surrey and to reflect a stronger influence of the economic and skills agenda in the locality such as more adult skills accredited qualification based learning and a stronger digital skills programme. At the same time, the community learning or tailored learning programme has maintained its participation levels and seen stronger community engagement and involvement in the curriculum offer. The provision has more learners from deprived wards and from disadvantaged backgrounds. The high quality of teaching and learning is evidenced through the learner surveys, our good Ofsted grade in May 2022 and our own self-assessment. We are striving to achieve outstanding. However, there is clearly room to improve further and in particular to further embed and integrate the adult learning offer into our communities such as Spelthorne and Old Dean. Learner demand since Covid has changed in that learners and tutors are more open to remote learning although 80% of the provision is still face to face.

23. Strategically, SAL in partnership with the economic development team, has effective relationships with DWP who are providing adults to attend our digital dippers courses for all ages and are working with SAL to organise job fairs throughout Surrey. SAL has developed its relationship with local schools who signpost parents to our Family Learning programme and have helped us to initiate new teaching courses. There are differences in the overall community learning offer across the county, as SAL is responsible for the north and west and East Surrey College is responsible for the east. Surrey County Council has no funding influence to change the East Surrey College curriculum offer, however, we do meet regularly to review the offer across the county. Community Learning from next year will be called Tailored Learning and the expectation is that more Adult Learning will have outcomes that have more direct employment links or lead to further education and training. It will not mean the demise of outcomes that improve social confidence, increase community involvement or provide better links to improving health and wellbeing but it does imply without specifically stating it that they are secondary priorities. Finally, we are working with libraries in particular to develop more multi service hub sites in our local communities in Sunbury and Farnham that will have an impact in two to three years time.

24. The last two recommendations on Skills Swap and the Community Credit Scheme have seen the weakest improvement or development. We will give these increased focus and priority in the next six months.

Recommendations

To note the responses to the 20 recommendations set out above.

To analyse every year the strategic and operational changes in adult learning across Surrey to ensure they meet the strategic educational, economic, skills, community and health and wellbeing priorities of Surrey County Council.

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Background papers

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-update-28-february-2024/esfa-update-further-education-28-february-2024#informationesfa-adult-skills-fundtailored-learning>