



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

19TH MARCH 2019

ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION & COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR J. ROSSER

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Cabinet Members with information about adult community learning in Rhondda Cynon Taf; the range of provision offered, the contribution it makes to the wider Council agenda, the impact it has on learners and the changes that are proposed by Welsh Government for the future.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Consider the contents of the report; and
- 2.2 Provide comment as appropriate on the current provision of adult community learning in Rhondda Cynon Taf and the potential changes to future funding arrangements.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Adult community learning is defined by Welsh Government as '*flexible learning opportunities for adults, delivered in community venues to meet local needs.*' It has a particular focus on improving essential skills and employability and improving well-being. Accordingly it plays a significant role in supporting other Council services and programmes to meet their targets and makes a contribution to the achievement of Council priorities that is far higher than the financial resources invested in it. This report provides an opportunity for Cabinet Members to consider the work undertaken, potential changes to funding arrangements and to request further details on current provision and the future opportunities for adult community learning if required.

- 3.2 Adult community learning programmes are subject to inspections by Estyn and it is anticipated that there will be an inspection in 2019/20.
- 3.3 There are major changes to be introduced to the grant funding provided by Welsh Government from September 2020 onwards that will have an impact on the provision offered and it is important that the Cabinet is aware of this as approval may be required at a later date for any proposed changes to future governance and delivery of adult community learning in the County.

4. BACKGROUND – CURRENT PERFORMANCE AND FUNDING

- 4.1 The Council's Adult Education Service delivers adult community learning programmes in Rhondda Cynon Taf and is the Lead Body for the Adult Community Learning Partnership in the County. The service provides support, in the main to people over the age of 25. However the Inspire 2 Work programme is specifically for people aged 16-24 years old. The service currently has 35 staff and tutors, the majority of whom work on a part-time basis. The service has one lifelong learning centre at Garth Olwg that facilitates a wide range of provision delivered by Council services and other partners including courses, workshops, events and theatre performances. The majority of courses and programmes are delivered at libraries, community centres and other venues across the county. In 2017/18 learning was delivered at 96 venues.
- 4.2 Provision is targeted at those who are most disadvantaged and would benefit from gaining skills and qualifications although there is also a programme of activities designed to enhance the well-being of participants and to support the social integration and independence of older residents or those who have a life-limiting health condition.
- 4.3 The majority of **funding** for adult community learning is external:
- Welsh Government Community Learning Grant - £200,846;
 - Franchise funding from Coleg y Cymoedd for delivery of essential skills and independent living skills - £142,050;
 - Communities for Work + funding - £183,000;
 - ESF funding for Inspire 2 Work - £2,113,970 (of which £549,632 is match-funding). This funding is for 3 years and includes staffing related to HR's Education, Employment and Training team;
 - Grant funding for specific projects e.g. funding from the Health Board for delivery of social prescribing provision. (This varies depending on which project applications are successful).

Council core funding of £223,927 is provided towards management costs, and the running costs of Garth Olwg Lifelong Learning Centre.

Commercial income is generated through room hire and course fees are charged for courses that cannot be funded under the funding agreements indicated above. The target for commercial income generation for Garth Olwg Lifelong Learning Centre is £72,861 while course fee income for the wider service is around £20,000 annually. The course fees are amongst the lowest in Wales – currently £2.50 per hour where charged.

- 4.4 In 2017/18, the number of learners enrolled on courses that were accredited and captured on the service's EBS data system came to 2,860. Enrolments from EBS are uploaded to Welsh Government's LLWR system and reflect the learners whose courses are funded through Welsh Government's Community Learning Grant. Learners whose learning is funded by other sources are recorded on differently. Data submitted to LLWR is verified by Welsh Government and a Learner Outcome report on the performance of the Adult Community Learning Partnership in Rhondda Cynon Taf is produced annually. The most recent verified data available relates to the 2017/18 academic year and this indicates that 96% of learners completed their courses while 93% attained a qualification. These both exceed the national comparators. These results are especially notable when it is realised that 41.7% of these learners come from the most deprived areas of the county while only 7.6% come from the least deprived areas.

In addition to the learners enrolled on accredited courses directly delivered by the Adult Education Service, 2,197 learners accessed their learning at Garth Olwg Lifelong Learning Centre – learning that was delivered by partner organisations and through self-directed learning groups supported by the centre, which is the only learning centre that is directly run by the Adult Education Service.

Furthermore, 4,476 people participated in events during the same 2017/18 period at Garth Olwg Lifelong Learning Centre.

- 4.5 The service is required by Welsh Government to produce an **Annual Service Delivery Plan** for adult community learning for the County indicating what provision is planned for the year ahead, how this is delivered, how this links with partner provision and especially how we ensure that there is progression for learners to continue with their studies or to gain employment. Each plan is assessed by Welsh Government Officers. The plan for the 2018/19 can be seen at **Appendix 1**. It was assessed by Welsh Government as follows:

'The funding in RCT that is provided through the CLG, CfW+ and franchise is used holistically to deliver a wide range of courses that are specifically designed to target the local needs of the population...It is clear from the plan that a great deal of provision is taking place in RCT...'

The Service Delivery Plan for 2019/20 academic year will be submitted to Welsh Government in May 2019.

- 4.6 The service also leads on the development of a **Self-Assessment Report** that is required annually by Estyn on the performance of the Adult Community Learning Partnership in the County.
- 4.7 A key aim of the service is to provide equitable access to learning opportunities and employability support that aligns to local labour market needs. This has resulted in the development of the Rhondda Cynon Taf **Employment Pathway model** - a strategic approach that ensures that services and organisations work together to ensure that people have the opportunity to access the learning and skills required to improve their employability, alongside the mentoring and employment support to gain and sustain paid employment. An outline of the Employment Pathway can be seen at **Appendix 2**. In practice, this has meant that Adult Education funding and funding for employment programmes (such as Communities for Work+ and ESF-funded programmes) have been allocated in such a way that the offer to residents across all parts of the County has been improved and resources maximised. In addition, there is no post code lottery and where there is a need and lack of other suitable provision younger people can access all of the provision.

5. CURRENT PROVISION

- 5.1 The service's **pre- employment programme** is funded by Communities for Work+ and runs as either a 2 or 4 week programme delivering a number of accredited courses through either Agored Cymru or Qualsafe. The programme is built around the specific needs of the learners on each course and individuals can choose from a suite of qualifications including resilience skills, creating the right image, telephone skills, job interview skills, team working to name a few. If successful, learners can then progress onto the more sector specific Employment Routes provision or may decide to focus on developing a particular skill further. Employability courses have also been delivered for Adult Services' Platform 1 and Ignite ESF projects.
- 5.2 The service provides a range of **digital skills** courses, from basic Introduction to Computing to ECDL courses. A 4 week programme delivered for Communities for Work+ to further develop the skills of people who have engaged with Digital Fridays provision has been particularly successful and a clear progression pathway has been developed in partnership with Communities for Work+ and Adult Learning Wales for learners who wish to enhance their digital skills further.
- 5.3 The focus on ensuring that learning meets local needs has also ensured that services work closely with local employers. The **Employment Routes** programme developed by the service has been successful in developing

training programmes with employers who have vacancies and ensuring that learners who successfully complete the training and gain the relevant qualifications are assured of an interview. Over the past 2 years this has resulted in:

| Financial year | Participants engaged on programme | Gained employment over 16 hours | Participants who gained sector specific qualifications | Total of qualifications gained |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2016/17 | 510 | 149 | 381 | 991 |
| 2017 /18 | 474 | 238 | 391 | 693 |
| 2018/19 to date | 350 | 160 | 208 | 416 |

46 businesses have engaged with the service and contributed to the development of the programme. These include both local and national companies.

5.4 **Essential skills** courses are set up for the year but learners can join at any time. They are open to anyone over the age of 16 who has a literacy and/or numeracy skills need. Learners are able to attend more than one class a week. All learners are assessed using the Welsh Government's Essential Skills Toolkit (WEST) or a paper-based assessment. Their needs are identified from the assessment and a relevant Agored Cymru qualification is selected for them to work towards. Individual support is provided by the tutor. Classes have learners of varying levels of need and, consequently a maximum of 10 learners are enrolled on each course. The majority of classes are held at libraries, job centres and community venues. Specific provision is provided for:

- Carers;
- People who need to achieve a Level 2 qualification so that they can enrol on Employment Routes provision (some employers, for example the NHS require employees to have this as a minimum qualification);
- People who work in Vision Products;
- People with mental health conditions.

5.5 The **Independent Learning Skills** programme provides opportunities for people with moderate or severe learning disabilities to achieve a 3 - credit qualification. The courses are held at a variety of venues over two terms and 122 learners are currently engaged on a varied curriculum. The majority of learners arrive at the centres by buses provided by the Adult Services team and carers attend with them. This provision is valued highly by the learners themselves, their families and the Day Centre staff who support the provision. It provides an opportunity for learners to gain confidence, raise their self-esteem and meet new people as well as learn new skills.

At the end of each academic year these learners are presented with certificates by the Mayor in a special awards ceremony.

One of the tutors who delivers this provision has recently (January 2019) received a special recognition award for her inspiring work with these learners, at a ceremony sponsored by the Learning and Work Institute and Welsh Government.

- 5.6 **Inspire 2 Work** is an ESF Priority 3 programme that offers a supported Employment Pathway to young people living in Rhondda Cynon Taf, providing guidance and training to strengthen the position of young people seeking employment in line with Welsh Government's Youth Engagement and Progression Framework guidelines, and Supporting Engagement in Education, Employment and Training Strategy. The project is focussed on young people with low aspirations, no or low qualifications, those who have difficulty in engaging or participating and who lack awareness of the services that are available to meet their support needs.

To date the project has engaged with 413 young people, 71 of whom have entered employment, 202 have gained qualifications (with some currently going through the accreditation process) and 28 have gone on to further training and education. The funding for this project ends in December 2020.

- 5.7 The service works closely with a wide range of organisations to develop provision that supports the Council's **well-being** agenda. Examples of this work include:

- Provision of workshops for the Carer's project such as social media, sugar-craft and sign language;
- Collaboration with the Hapi project on 'All about me' – provision for people diagnosed with the early stages of dementia and their family members;
- Provision of courses prescribed by Cwm Taf Health Board and the Parc Canol surgery for patients with low level depression and anxiety;
- Leisure/hobby-based courses designed to enable people to pursue their interests – of particular relevance to people who are no longer working whether that is due to retirement, ill-health or other reasons;
- Chatty café, Knit and Knatter and Age-friendly dancing cater for people of all ages who have common interests

- 5.8 **Welsh-medium provision** is facilitated and contributes to the achievement of the Council's Strategy and Action Plan for the Promotion and Facilitation of the Welsh Language including a weekly Ti a Fi provision for parents and carers of babies and toddlers and Cymraeg i Blant at Garth Olwg Lifelong Learning Centre. Welsh-medium courses and pathways for learners from Welsh language classes on to other courses delivered in the medium of Welsh are facilitated and jointly planned with key partners.

Garth Olwg Lifelong Learning Centre has a theatre that facilitates Welsh-medium theatre productions provided by the Arts Service as well as productions by Welsh-medium national theatre companies. It is notable that since September 2018, over 1,000 people have attended 11 theatre performances in the medium of Welsh at the small (130-seater) theatre at Garth Olwg Lifelong Learning Centre.

Collaboration with organisations including the Urdd, Menter Iaith, the University of South Wales's Welsh for Adults team and a wide range of schools is evident in the events programme.

- 5.9 Of particular note in respect of **Garth Olwg Lifelong Learning Centre** is that it hosts the activities of 63 community groups and organisations and provides access to a wide range of advice, information and guidance not just learning opportunities to residents.
- 5.10 All learners who engage with the service are provided with an opportunity to feed back their views on the quality of the provision and encouraged to make suggestions for any improvements as well as being offered an opportunity to identify other provision they would like to access and where they would like the provision to be located. This ensures that, to a large extent, the curriculum is co-produced with the community. It is expected that this co-production will be further enhanced as the Council's community hubs strategy is implemented across the county.
- 5.11 The service is a registered centre for accrediting the courses of Agored Cymru and Qualsafe Awarding Bodies.

6. THE IMPACT OF PROVISION ON INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES

- 6.1 At 4.4 above reference is made to the data relating to enrolments and attainments of learners. However, the data does not tell the whole story and the impact of provision is of vital importance in assessing its value for money. Accordingly, **Appendix 3** includes a series of case studies that highlight the impact of adult community learning on individuals and their families. They are drawn from a number of different programmes and are just a small selection of the feedback received from learners.

These case studies highlight the importance of ensuring that individuals have easy access to learning opportunities and illustrate the crucial role played both by tutors and also other staff who work across a range of services and organisations that support them on their learning journey.

7. THE ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

- 7.1 The Welsh Government required each Local Authority area in Wales to have an Adult Community Learning Partnership. The purpose of these partnerships is to ensure that training provider partners work

collaboratively with other organisations to agree an adult community learning curriculum that will meet the needs of communities across their partnership area and exclude any duplication of provision, thereby maximising the use of scarce resources. In some areas partnerships have been combined over several local authority areas.

7.2 Significant funding reductions in recent years have resulted in partnerships being weakened in some parts of Wales. Despite the challenges, the Adult Community Learning Partnership in Rhondda Cynon Taf remains active and includes the following partners on its Steering Group:

- Rhondda Cynon Taf Adult Education Service;
- Communities for Work+;
- Coleg y Cymoedd;
- Adult Learning Wales;
- University of South Wales/Welsh for Adults Centre.

In addition, a wide variety of additional organisations are represented on its operational group including the Department of Work and Pensions and Dare Valley training.

7.3 Partners jointly plan projects and initiatives and contribute to the delivery of Rhondda Cynon Taf's Employment Pathway. The sharing of resources and joint-funding of provision has ensured that residents in Rhondda Cynon Taf have good access to learning opportunities and clear pathways for progression. Peer monitoring of provision as well as the lesson observations undertaken by each organisation internally ensures that standards are maintained while inspections of quality and accreditation processes and the range and quality of provision are undertaken by the relevant Awarding Bodies and periodically by Estyn, as appropriate.

Despite maintaining a varied curriculum and achieving good standards, reductions in external funding since 2014 means that there are gaps in provision that need some consideration:

- Provision of in-work support for people who have newly entered the workplace and who might need some on-going support after a long period of unemployment or economic inactivity;
- Access to Level 3 and above courses on a part-time basis for people in work who want to further develop their skills so that they can move out of in-work poverty through promotion to higher level jobs.

7.4 In addition, the many changes introduced across the partnership in recent years means that a review of its structure, its relationship to other partnerships and its reporting procedures is now required. However, it is not intended to make any significant changes in the short term as the sector is currently awaiting confirmation from Welsh Government

regarding the outcome of their recent review of the structure of adult community learning in Wales and the funding model to be applied from September 2020.

- 7.5 From a Council perspective it is intended to ensure accountability of all Employment and Skills programmes by ensuring that they will report to a Council Scrutiny Committee from June 2019. This level of scrutiny is important especially in view of a potential Estyn inspection of adult community learning some time during the coming financial year.

8. THE FUTURE OF ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING

- 8.1 In June 2018 the Welsh Government initiated a consultation on the delivery of adult community learning in Wales. With a view to ensuring that:

- Provision is consistent across Wales in terms of offer and quality for learners;
- Provision that delivers the Welsh Government's priorities must be available to all learners in Wales regardless of location or circumstance;
- The funding methodology must enable funding to be focussed on those in greatest need of our help and support providers to deliver a curriculum that helps people back into learning and targets the eradication of poverty;
- The system must facilitate more strategic and sustainable planning of provision to ensure that long-term positive impacts can be achieved from Welsh Government investment.

- 8.2 The consultation was completed by September 2019 and responses have been analysed with the final decision currently awaiting sign-off by the new Minister responsible for adult education.

- 8.3 The options under consideration in respect of delivery models are:

- Model 1 – Local Authorities and/or Further Education colleges to deliver adult learning (effectively what is currently in place in Rhondda Cynon Taf);
- Model 2 – Adult Learning Partnerships to lead on the delivery of adult learning;
- Model 3 – a National Community College to coordinate and plan adult learning across Wales.

- 8.4 The funding options under consideration are:

- Option 1 - Allocate the grant according to population (19+);
- Option 2 - Allocate the grant to include funding to reflect income deprivation;

- Option 3 - Allocate the grant to include funding to reflect educational deprivation (Adults 25+ with no qualifications);
- Option 4 - Transfer the funding for community learning to the Revenue Support Grant.

8.5 Under funding option 1 the grant allocated to Rhondda Cynon Taf would increase from £200,846 to £326,504. Funding option 2 would see the grant increase to £356,600, while funding option 3 would see an increase to £379,806. Funding option 4 relates to how the grant would be paid as opposed to how the level of funding would be assessed.

8.6 As can be seen from the above, Rhondda Cynon Taf will benefit by an increase in the community learning grant under each of the funding options that are being proposed.

8.7 The risk to Rhondda Cynon Taf lies in the decision regarding model of delivery. Delivery option 3 could undermine current arrangements which are working well to support learners into work and onto further learning in the county. Consequently, the Welsh Government's decision on the preferred model will be crucial for the Council and the Adult Community Learning Partnership in the County and is expected imminently.

8.8 The current funding arrangements will be maintained up to September 2020 with no changes expected to reporting arrangements to Welsh Government. In September 2020 the new model of delivery and new funding option will be introduced.

9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no equality and diversity implications to this report. The provision delivered by the service is accessible to all, delivered at venues that have been checked for adherence to required disability standards, and provision is assessed to ensure that it meets the needs of local communities. Courses and programmes developed are designed for the benefit of people with a range of protected characteristics.

10. CONSULTATION

10.1 Consultation is an on-going process within adult community learning as every learner is provided with an evaluation form after the completion of each course and the completed forms are used to identify any changes that are required to the provision and/or to develop new programmes. Learners are also able to contribute to classroom discussions that take place during the internal inspections/observations of the learning environment.

10.2 In addition, feedback is provided by partner organisations and internal Council services on the needs of local areas.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There is no funding implication to this report – it is for information purposes only.

12. LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 12.1 There is no statutory requirement as such for Local Authorities to deliver adult community learning. However, section 22 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 requires Local Authorities to ensure that there are sufficient facilities within their area for part-time adult learning provision.

13. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 13.1 This report is for information purposes only, so that Cabinet Members are aware of the range of provision offered to local residents and have an understanding of the funding sources and partnerships that support delivery.

- 13.2 Adult community learning supports the Council's corporate priorities – helping to make individuals more independent and supporting the local economy through up-skilling individuals and supporting them into work while working with local employers to tailor the training to business needs.

- 13.3 Adult community learning's Service Delivery Plan is planned annually but with an eye on the **longer-term** achievement of goals. It has had to change and adapt to meet different funding criteria and reduced resources but has succeeded in developing clear pathways for progression of learners through developing **integrated** programmes with other partners and Council services, in particular Communities for Work+ and the ESF projects. The **collaborative** approach adopted by the Adult Community Learning Partnership, led by the Council, to curriculum planning and sharing of resources has succeeded in maintaining an extensive programme of courses and support for residents in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The **involvement** of learners in providing feedback on course quality and their contribution to identifying new areas of interest is an important element in the success of the service. A key feature of the service and its partnerships has been the ability to address barriers to learning and thereby **prevent** socially isolation and loss of self-esteem.

- 13.4 This service contributes to the following well-being goals:

- **A prosperous Wales** – learners are supported to develop their skills and gain qualifications so that they can gain employment or make other contributions to their community;

- **A resilient Wales** – adult community learning provides programmes that supports people to develop their resilience so that they are better able to adapt to change and to flourish in a changing environment;
- **A healthier Wales** – there is extensive research to support the fact that engagement with learning supports health and well-being and there are ample case studies collected by the service to support this view. Courses and taster sessions that provide information that supports people to look after their health and well-being are included in the delivery plan;
- **A more equal Wales** – the service provides provision for people from the age of 16 + of all levels of ability. Courses are provided to people of all educational backgrounds and access is available to all. The development of collaborative funding has ensured that people can access provision regardless of where they live in the county or their level of disability;
- **A Wales of cohesive communities** – delivery at community venues (96 in 2017/18) ensures that the service makes a contribution to community cohesion by paying for the use of some community centres for delivery of programmes, while emphasis on tolerance and understanding is a core aspect of the tutorial process.
- **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language** – provision is available through the medium of Welsh as well as English in respect of courses, activities and performances. There is also an emphasis on Welsh culture as well as the arts and heritage in programmes;
- **A globally responsible Wales** – the service works with other partners to ensure that resources are used efficiently with respect to the environment. The delivery of digital skills provision ensures that learners are able to use digital platforms for a range of activities, thereby reducing the impact on the global environment.

14. CONCLUSION

- 14.1 The Adult Education Service believes that high-quality learning, in whatever form it takes, makes a difference to the individual who participates in it, the community that supports it and the country that funds it.
- 14.2 This report has provided Cabinet Members with information about the Council's Adult Education Service and the work it undertakes with partners for the benefit of residents. It has outlined the current funding and organisational arrangements, and illustrated the impact of the learning through case studies of individuals who have engaged with the service.

- 14.3 There will be changes from September 2020 to the model of delivery of adult community learning and to the funding package for the county. It is anticipated that there will be an increase in the Community Learning Grant for Rhondda Cynon Taf whatever option is approved by the Minister for Education. However, whether this funding will come directly to the Council's Adult Education Service as is currently the case is, as yet unclear.
- 14.4 There is a risk to overall funding levels as a result of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union due to the withdrawal of ESF funding for employment programmes that are currently delivered.
- 14.5 Cabinet will be provided with an update on the future delivery and funding model of the service when the information becomes available.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee – to be confirmed

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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Background papers:

None.

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