

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

31ST JULY 2014

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING

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ADULT EDUCATION FUNDING UPDATE

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To update Members on adult education funding and the potential impact on provision of accredited courses and informal learning across Rhondda Cynon Taf.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

2.1 Note the content of the report.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Adult Education Service is dependent on a range of funding sources including:

- Community Learning Grant (DfES)
- Franchise Agreement with Coleg y Cymoedd
- Family Learning Grant from Welsh Government
- Core council funding of £204,000 for Gartholwg Lifelong Learning Centre and management costs of Community Learning
- ESF funding for the Bridges into Work Programme (end date December 2014)
- Commercial income generation from room hire and fees

3.2 The Community Learning Grant has been reduced as follows:

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16 <i>indicative</i>
Community Learning Grant	£274,016	£280,867	£283,000	£212,402	£159,567

In addition the Franchise Agreement with Coleg y Cymoedd has also been reduced over the past 4 years:

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Franchise agreement	£421,644	£370,880	£365,317	£228,323	N/A
	Less 15% management fee	Less 15% management fee	Less 15% management fee	Less 15% management fee	

Together these sources fund most of the adult learning provision that is currently delivered across the county. This reduction has necessitated a fundamental re-structure of the service.

- 3.3 All the service's Adult Community Learning partners have been similarly affected by substantial reductions in funding which will have a knock-on effect on room hire income at Gartholwg Lifelong Learning Centre and also on the number of courses being offered in communities across the county borough.
- 3.4 Early indications from Welsh Government Officers are that there will be a further reduction of *at least* 10% in the Community Learning Grant in 2015/16. This reduction is likely to be replicated in the Franchise Agreement with the college. Such reductions will make it impossible to maintain a Local Authority- delivered service unless other income streams are identified.
- 3.5 The Adult Education Service is the largest provider of community learning in the county borough currently delivering around 56% of the learning in communities. The second largest provider is Coleg y Cymoedd, delivering around 35% of the learning. The college's budget for post-19 learning has been reduced by 33%. The combined effect of the reduction in the provision of the two main providers of adult community learning should not be underestimated. 36% of the Adult Community Learning Partnership's provision is delivered in the most deprived areas of RCT with only 15% of the provision being delivered in the least deprived areas of the county.

4. POTENTIAL IMPACT - LEARNERS

4.1 In the 2012/13 academic year¹ there were 7,251 enrolments onto 663 courses delivered by the Adult Education Service. In 2014/15 it is anticipated that the number of courses will fall to approximately 350 with a similar pro rata reduction in the number of enrolments.

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15 indicative
Number of courses	663	650	350
Number of enrolments	7,251	4,995	2,800

4.2 Data for 2013/14 indicates that 32% of learners are male and 68% are female. 14% of learners identify themselves as being disabled.

4.3 In respect of age, 60% of learners enrolled on adult education courses are under the age of 49. The growth in the 25-49 age group reflects the success that the service has had in delivering a curriculum that prepares people for work and enhances their essential skills so that they are more employable. The reduction in classes will have a potentially wider impact than on individuals learners in this age category as many of these will have young children and research has established that parental engagement with learning is a good indicator of attendance and achievement of children at school. Removing access to learning for parents, especially those that struggle with literacy and numeracy or who are economically inactive will have a major impact on their families and local communities.

Ages of learners engaged with the Adult Education Service 2013/14

Under 16	0.1%
16-18	3.0%
19-24	11.7%
25-49	45.5%
50-74	35.8%
75+	3.8%
Not recorded	0.2%

4.4 Previously the service has managed to retain some arts and crafts provision, sustaining most of these courses through removing accreditation and introducing fees at a level designed to cover all costs. These courses are very popular especially among older learners who make up almost 36% of our learners. Engagement with learning has been identified as an effective way for older people to avoid social isolation and to ensure better health. There will be a hidden cost to the

¹ This is the most recent year for which verified data is available.

health service and social services of removing learning provision for older learners.

- 4.5 Unfortunately full cost recovery courses will have to be reduced this year as even non-accredited courses fall under the Estyn framework and take up considerable staff time in relation to quality monitoring and assurance. The service no longer has the staffing capacity to do this type of work for courses that do not contribute to the achievement of contractual targets.
- 4.5 The Learning Steps Programme that was designed to provide individuals with moderate or severe learning disabilities has been a great success over the past few years and approximately 350 people have engaged with this programme and developed life skills. It is a programme that has been valuable not only to the individuals themselves but also to their parents, carers and the council's Day Centres. It has been made clear that Welsh Government does not regard this programme as an appropriate use of the Community Learning Grant and they view it as a social service rather than an education provision. Consequently the number of courses will be reduced from 59 to 11 this year with the intention of removing the provision completely in the 2015/16 academic year. This is likely to result in many complaints and its impact on the most vulnerable and their families cannot be underestimated.
- 4.6 The service has developed close links with Communities First and the Looked after Children team over the past three years and deliver programmes in partnership with them. Therefore there will be an impact on other council provision.

5. POTENTIAL IMPACT – STAFF

- 5.1 The Adult Education Service has been through a number of restructures since 2010 which has resulted in a significant number of management and some staff roles being made redundant. The effects of previous restructures have been taken into account in the new proposal.
- 5.2 In restructuring the service a number of factors have been important. These include the need to:
- Retain professionally qualified staff who can deliver a quality learning experience to learners, as measured by Estyn;
 - Meet the reporting and quality requirements of Estyn, Welsh Government and other funders;
 - Meet changed priorities in Family Learning and the Community Learning Grant;
 - Make best use of financial resources by, for example, merging support roles across programmes;

- Ensure that staff are paid appropriately for the work which they undertake and eradicate any historic anomalies by ensuring that job descriptions are checked by the Job Evaluation section;
 - Lead the Adult Community Learning Partnership in the county borough.
- 5.3 Accordingly, tutor/teaching roles have been protected as far as possible in the key subjects identified by Welsh Government as their priority areas.
- 5.4 Administrative assistant roles currently split between Family Learning and mainstream Adult Education will be reduced by 50% to reflect the reduced number of enrolments and data input required as a result of the lower numbers of courses being delivered.
- 5.5 The role of Learning Support Assistant will be removed as the new priorities for Family Learning requires the appointment of tutors with relevant qualifications in delivering learning to children. These latter roles are likely to require external advertisements as staff with these skills and qualifications are not currently available within the service and may not be available within the wider council pool. All internal avenues will be pursued prior to any decision being made to externally advertise.
- 5.6 Development Worker roles will be deleted and replaced by a smaller number of Lead tutor roles that will combine organisation of classes with a teaching timetable. Changes across the county borough especially the embedding of the Adult and Community Learning Partnership responsible for joint curriculum planning, as well as the development of Learning Leads in Communities First clusters, has reduced the need for dedicated Development Workers in the service.
- 5.7 Casual tutor posts will be adversely affected as there will in future be minimal finance available for utilising their services.
- 5.8 The operational management of the revised service will consist of 1 Principal Officer, 2 Senior Officers and 1 ESF Project Coordinator. Strategic management lies with the Head of Community Learning that also oversees Libraries and Welsh Language Services (Welsh Translation Unit).
- 5.9 Thirty two roles are potentially affected by the reduction in funding, the majority of which are part-time and 15 of which are casual/temporary. There will be opportunities for job-share and flexible retirement options to mitigate some of the effects of the reduction in posts. Casual staff will be offered redundancy or the opportunity to remain as casuals.
- 6. PROVISION FOR 2014/15**
- 6.1 It will be vital to target scarce resources on the areas where the greatest impact will be felt and the greatest benefit achieved.

- 6.2 There is a large body of research that supports the importance of Family Learning in improving the attendance and attainment of pupils. This is supported by outcomes in primary schools where the service has delivered programmes. Family Learning provision will remain at a similar level to previous years although the method of delivery will differ due to new guidance from the Department for Education and Skills.
- 6.3 The biggest barrier to work is a lack of literacy, numeracy and basic IT skills. Adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy have been confirmed as Welsh Government priorities for the Community Learning Grant. Therefore the adult education programme for September onwards will continue to focus on the delivery of these subjects and will deliver bespoke classes in Communities First Work Clubs and will also provide a roll-on, roll-off programme for unemployed individuals through the ESF funded Bridges into Work Programme.
- 6.4 An extension to the Bridges into Work programme has been agreed by WEFO so that delivery of support for unemployed and economically inactive individuals in RCT will continue till 31st December 2014 with close-down of the project achieved by 31st March 2015. However, after March it is possible that the council will not be involved in direct delivery of any programme dedicated to supporting the unemployed and economically inactive back to work.
- 6.5 With continued pressures on core budgets the future of Gartholwg Lifelong Learning Centre must be considered prior to the next financial year as it will be impossible to maintain the centre should there be any further cuts to its core budget or a drop in generated income. (The current core budget allocation for Centre specific staff is not sufficient to cover the current staffing level which is the minimum that is required to run the Centre and commercial income generation covers the £80,000 shortfall.)
- 6.6 In the past the Adult Education Service has been successful in tendering for other funding streams in order to provide a wider variety of courses and learning support for residents in RCT. The service is currently waiting for decisions on 2 applications that it has submitted in partnership with other council departments and if they are successful the service will be able to offer additional Employment Routes training throughout the coming year. Unfortunately this decision is unlikely to be made in time to affect the current restructure.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Adult Community Education is not a statutory service and is mainly funded from sources external to the council. Reductions in the amount of funding received from Welsh Government will have an impact on residents from September 2014 onwards.

- 7.2 The impact will be not only on the number of courses and learning opportunities that can be delivered but also on the type of courses being provided.
- 7.3 The service will undergo a full re-structure to ensure it can continue to meet its contractual obligations and the standards expected. Redundancies will be unavoidable.
- 7.4 The service will continue to look for tendering opportunities and innovative solutions that will enable it to continue to deliver quality learning opportunities for adults across the county borough. However, a further review of provision and staffing will be required by April 2015 once the funding priorities of Welsh Government are clarified as further reductions in funding will make it impossible to sustain the service.

