

Meeting of:	SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1
Date of meeting:	11 April 2024
Report title:	INFORMATION REPORT – ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING
Report owner/Corporate Director:	CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT
Responsible officer:	DONNA HOOPER PRINCIPAL OFFICER ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING
Policy framework and procedure rules:	There is no effect on policy framework or procedure rules.
Executive summary:	<p>This is an information only report on the provision offered by Bridgend County Borough Council’s Adult Community Learning Service to ensure that a meaningful offer of adult learning in the community is delivered.</p> <p>Key points in provision planning and what contributes to this process are included in the report along with some data to show that provision is engaging with the target learner cohort intended to benefit from provision.</p> <p>The report includes the summary of a recent Estyn inspection report for an inspection carried out on the work of Bridgend Learning Partnership and the recommendations.</p>

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 (SOSC1) on the provision offered by Adult Community Learning (ACL), linked specifically to one of the 15 strategic themes detailed in the Education and Family Support Directorate Strategic Plan 2023-2026; specifically Strategic Theme 13 – A meaningful adult learning in the community offer.

2. Background

- 2.1 Bridgend County Borough Council’s (BCBC’s) Adult Community Learning (ACL) Service works with several delivery partners to ensure that the offer of adult learning opportunities offered across the county borough is varied, meets the needs of learners and employers, and encompasses all priority areas identified by Welsh Government in coherence with the Estyn inspection framework.

- 2.2 In addition, ACL aims to support the wellbeing and social inclusion of learners and aims to offer engagement and learning opportunities that fully support this. To further promote the dissemination of wellbeing support and resources, ACL has worked with regional partners on developing Wellbeing Champions, a project that was recognised as good practice in an Estyn thematic report.
- 2.3 ACL will continue to recruit staff and engage learners to achieve funding targets, and to deliver a wide range of high-quality, multi-curriculum sector learning opportunities. ACL will work with delivery partners to ensure that the overall offer across the county borough is meaningful and:
- delivers learning opportunities for adults to gain skills - for employment, for community involvement and for progression - as well as support and information to improve the health and well-being of all residents of Bridgend County Borough;
 - raises the literacy and numeracy levels among adults, including those adults whose first language is not English;
 - reduces the numbers of adults (16+) who are not in education, employment or training (NEET);
 - engages with adults in all parts of Bridgend County Borough, particularly those who have benefitted least from education in the past or who are most at risk of not benefiting in the future; and
 - provides opportunities for learners to engage in learning through the medium of Welsh.
- 2.4 BCBC's ACL Service works with partners within Bridgend Learning Partnership to plan and deliver a meaningful offer of community learning opportunities across the county borough.
- 2.5 The Bridgend Learning Partnership is chaired by the Group Manager (Learner Support) within the Education and Family Support Directorate and consists of the following partners:
- BCBC ACL;
 - BCBC Employability Bridgend;
 - Adult Learning Wales;
 - Bridgend College; and
 - Learn Welsh Glamorgan.
- 2.6 Partners work together, in line with the partnership strategy, to plan a comprehensive and meaningful adult learning offer in addition to identifying and eradicating duplication within the provision offer and identifying any gaps in provision. Any identified gaps in provision are targeted within a partnership Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) as part of the self-evaluation reporting process.
- 2.7 In addition to working with partners to ensure a meaningful offer, ACL must also factor in other provision planning requirements. One of these requirements is guided by Welsh Government as part of the Community Learning Grant (CLG) priority areas which are identified on the grant remit letter as:

- essential/basic skills;
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL);
- employability; and
- Welsh-medium provision.

2.8 In addition, there is an expectation that provision will also include areas of wellbeing and engagement. Over the past two years, Welsh Government has tasked adult community learning providers with carrying out engagement activities to re-engage learners into the adult learning sector and there has been an expectation that appropriate engagement courses/activities should be offered throughout this time.

2.9 When planning provision across the partnership partners also take account of any specific skill sectors and ways of working that should be included in order to align to relevant plans/legislation such as:

- Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP);
- Cymraeg 2050;
- Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS);
- Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015; and
- Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (ALNET).

2.10 ACL also endeavours to offer provision needs as identified by learners through learner voice surveys carried out each term. Provision planning will incorporate areas of provision identified by learners through the survey process and courses are planned accordingly where appropriate.

3. Current situation/proposal

3.1 The Bridgend Learning Partnership's self-evaluation report (SER) 2021-2022 clearly identifies areas for improvement within the partnership provision offer; These include:

- to monitor opportunities for learners to access Welsh language learning and/or Welsh-medium learning opportunities;
- to increase the number of Welsh-medium learning opportunities across the county Borough;
- to ensure individual partners are aware of attendance trends and data and will share with the partnership the strategies and support that is in place to help improve attendance; to ensure appropriate continued professional development (CPD) for the continued development of teaching and learning to promote quality learning experiences for all learners;
- to ensuring that delivery methodologies are up-to-date and relevant;
- to develop a progression pathways document for learners for specific curriculum areas;
- to monitor the impact of learning on wellbeing is a strength in BCBC, this will be developed across the partnership in the forthcoming academic year; and
- to review skills delivery model and curriculum analysis for 2021-2022 to ensure we are still delivering a suitable curriculum and focusing on development in appropriate sectors.

3.2 In addition, the partnership has identified the need to increase provision within numerous sectors on their QIP:

Action 3 - IA3.2	<p>Continue to review and analyse the current curriculum offer across the partnership to ensure that we are meeting the needs of the learners and the community, to identify gaps and ensure that there is no duplication of provision within Bridgend ACL; linked to local, regional, and national priorities. Expand provision offer to promote engagement across target cohorts to include more males.</p> <p>Links to Partnership Strategy - strategic plan refs: 2.1-2.4</p>
Action 4 - IA3.2 and 3.3	<p>Monitor opportunities for learners to access Welsh Language learning and/or Welsh-medium learning opportunities. Increase the number of Welsh-medium learning opportunities across the county borough.</p> <p>Links to Partnership Strategy - strategic plan refs: 2.5</p>
Action 10 - IA 1	<p>Develop a progression pathways document for learners in a range of subject areas</p> <p>Links to Partnership Strategy - strategic plan refs: 2.1</p>

3.2 Partners within Bridgend Learning Partnership are working well together to ensure that there is a meaningful offer of adult learning in the community and that data is consistently being monitored and reviewed to attain standards set by the partnership which aims to deliver quality learning experiences to learners across the county borough.

3.3 The partnership was inspected by Estyn in February 2023 and received a positive inspection report.

3.4 The Estyn report notes that across the Bridgend Adult Community Learning Partnership, many learners make suitable progress in their learning. They learn and apply new skills as well as developing confidence and motivation. Many learners improve their employment opportunities and benefit from the social interaction in their classes. Learners with additional learning needs make solid progress in developing life skills and their learning enhances their enjoyment of life. The majority of learners have a clear understanding of their goals and targets. Nearly all learners show very good attitudes to learning and they are respectful of others and their well-being. Providers ask learners about their experiences regularly and they respond in a timely way to their suggestions.

3.5 Bridgend Adult Community Learning Partnership offers a useful range of courses based on the Welsh Government priorities of literacy, numeracy and digital skills and ESOL. The partnership does not offer courses to improve Welsh speakers' literacy or courses through the medium of Welsh. The partnership is keen to offer

personal interest courses, but challenges in recruiting teachers make this difficult at this time.

- 3.6 Tutors are well qualified and knowledgeable about their subjects. Most tutors plan their sessions well. They take their learners' interests into account, and they use a variety of strategies to help individual learners develop their knowledge and skills effectively. They use a wide range of assessment, feedback, tracking and monitoring systems to ensure that they understand learners' progress and needs.
- 3.7 The partnership provides a range of impartial advice, guidance and support to help learners stay on track and progress in their learning.
- 3.8 Partners in the Bridgend Adult Community Learning Partnership work effectively together. Their evaluation of the provision is open and honest and there is a clear focus on equity of opportunity and experiences. The partnership offers regular professional development to its tutors to help them keep up to date in their practice through a range of means, including online training. The partnership uses its funding streams well to reduce duplication and to support learner aspirations.

There were three recommendations listed on the inspection report:

- R1 Strengthen management information systems to ensure that the partnership can track, monitor and quality assure learners' progress effectively across the partnership.
- R2 Ensure that marketing strategies help potential learners access an overview of the partnership's course offer and progression pathways.
- R3 Ensure that Welsh culture and the Welsh language are appropriately embedded within the curriculum offer and courses.

Partners will continue to work together to address the recommendations fully going forward.

- 3.9 Along with recommendations from Estyn report above, there should be a continual expansion in range and scope of provision offered in order to achieve maximum funding through CLG. In order to do this, additional staff will need to be recruited. All additional staff recruited will be funded entirely through CLG as permissible spend against grant, the main area for recruitment will be focused on delivery staff – Adult Tutors in line with grant terms and conditions. These will be recruited with a contract end of March 2024 which can be extended once grant funding for 2024-2025 is confirmed by Welsh Government. This is in line with the processes followed for other fixed term posts within the service.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

- 4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report. Therefore, it is not necessary to carry out an equality impact assessment in the production of this

report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

- 4.2 The management team in ACL is continually monitoring provision and support to address any equality implications in relation to learners being able to access provision. Many of the courses (particularly those that fall within the priority areas identified by WG) are offered free of charge to ensure that learners from across the socio-economic range are able to access provision and participate in learning to improve skills for life and work.
- 4.3 In addition, ACL offers loan equipment (for example, laptops and tablets) to learners who may not have access to the equipment that they may need to be able to participate in a course. ACL also offers connectivity where appropriate with the loan of mobile internet devices along with data cards to enable learners to access the internet to enhance their learning.
- 4.4 Contextual learner data taken from Welsh Government data indicates that the partnership is engaging learners from the target learner cohorts with higher percentages of learners engaged from the most deprived domicile.

Age and gender	16-18	19+	All Ages
Male	0.2%	30.7%	30.9%
Female	1.6%	67.2%	68.8%
Total	1.8%	98.2%	100.0%

Ethnicity	
White	95.6%
Black, African,	0.4%
Asian, Asian B	1.5%
Mixed or Multi	1.1%
Other	1.5%

Deprivation of domicile	
Most Deprived	28.6%
↓	
Least Deprived	18.2%

- 4.5 Engagement of learners by gender is typical of engagement in adult learning in the community with most learners being female aged 19+. The percentage of males engaged through Employability Bridgend is high at 56.4% overall, which is higher than other partners, but the partnership will look to engage more male learners overall as the provision develops in the next academic year.
- 4.6 Engagement by ethnicity is consistent with data included in the 2021 Census where learners engaged within each ethnicity category were consistent, displayed in table in 4.4.
- 4.7 As identified within the partnership QIP, and included in the recommendations of the inspection report, Welsh-medium provision remains an area for development across the partnership. Partners are working together to identify existing tutors who could deliver through the medium of Welsh but also to recruit Welsh-speaking tutors to expand this provision. Vacancy management adverts for all delivery partners indicate that the ability to speak Welsh and/or deliver through the medium of Welsh is preferred. In addition, the partnership is seeking to work with other partners such as Menter Bro Ogwr to expand the Welsh-medium provision further. In this instance, partners will commission Menter Bro Ogwr to deliver Welsh-speaking staff to deliver on behalf of the partnership. It is intended that this will start with taster sessions but progressing to short courses.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 The work of the service will align to the 7 well-being goals detailed in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 this is as follows:

A prosperous Wales – provides opportunities for people in Bridgend to access community-based provision which enables them to gain skills for everyday life and employment, thereby improving skills for participating in daily life and communities and enhancing wellbeing.

A resilient Wales – courses are offered to those who are long-term unemployed or those who experienced a previous negative education experience often have a positive impact on resilience of learners. Some learners take time to develop the resilience to continue to attend provision when their learning experience proves challenging, and it is the attainment of small modules of learning offered by the service that enable them to experience a positive learning journey which develops resilience along the way.

A more equal Wales – courses offered by the service are very often free of charge (in target curriculum areas) and learners are offered the loan of IT kit to enable them to continue learning where they may not have access to this themselves. Specific areas of the service aim to engage with learners from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to help them to gain accreditation, upskill and increase employability options so that they are able to enhance their socioeconomic status; having a positive impact on them and their families.

A healthier Wales – statistics from learner voice surveys indicate that learners feel that attending courses has a positive impact on their wellbeing with some reporting that they feel mentally fitter after attending – 86% of learners attending courses in 2022-2023 stated that attending courses was beneficial or very beneficial for their wellbeing.

A Wales of cohesive communities – learners often meet people from within their own communities for the first time on courses. In addition, provision is offered in community venues across the county borough therefore financially supporting community venues which can then be used to provide other services to further promote community cohesion.

A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language – all courses offered by Adult Community Learning have Welsh dimension incorporated so that learners are exposed to examples of Welsh culture, heritage and/or Welsh language. Adult Community Learning are part of Bridgend Learning Partnership alongside Learn Welsh Glamorgan so Welsh language courses are also promoted across the partnership.

A globally responsible Wales – all courses have Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) embedded therefore promoting issues encompassed within a globally responsible Wales.

Links to the five ways of working

The service aims to deliver courses based on a short-term approach which will ultimately impact positively on long-term goals of creating a more prosperous, resilient, equal and healthier adult learning population who can contribute positively

to the betterment of their own communities whilst also being aware that they are learning in Wales and have increased awareness/knowledge of Welsh heritage, culture and language.

ACL works in partnership with other partners to ensure that a range of stakeholders are engaged and involved to support learners to achieve any specific goals pertinent to them. We aim to prevent any widening of skills gaps or digital divides by collaborating with partners to offer support and learning in targeted curriculum areas.

6. Climate change implications

- 6.1 All courses have Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) embedded within them. This ensures that learners are made aware of wider implications for decarbonisation and are asked to consider how their own choices and decisions may impact on wider agendas.

7. Safeguarding and corporate parent implications

- 7.1 ACL works to the BCBC Safeguarding Policy and has a clear safeguarding reporting process for all adult learners. Safeguarding is also a standing agenda item in the partnership Strategic Board meetings, and this is discussed across all partners to share information on trends and good practice.
- 7.2 100% of learners who completed the learner voice survey at the end of courses in July 2023 stated that they had all of the learning support they required from their tutors.
- 7.3 All learners interviewed as part of the quality assurance process indicated that they felt safe and secure in their learning environment.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 At present funding allocations are as follows:
- £149,300 council net budget; and
 - £288,685 CLG funding 2023-2024.
- 8.2 The predicted overspend for the year is estimated at £110k. which is primarily due to expenditure on areas which are no longer eligible following Welsh Government changing the grant terms and conditions. This is included in the overall projected overspend for the Education and Family Support Directorate at quarter 3 of £1.139m reported to Cabinet on 16 January 2024. The overspend is one off and will not be incurred in 2024-2025. The draft Medium-Term Financial Strategy, considered by Cabinet on 16 January, also included a budget reduction proposal (EDFS9) to remove the core funding for the ACL provision from 2024-2025. The final budget will be considered by Cabinet on 20 February and by Council on 28 February.
- 8.2 There currently is capacity in the CLG funding to recruit additional members of staff which would contribute to service delivery in order to meet the recommendations by Estyn. Additional staff would include hourly paid tutors (Grade 8). The number of

tutors will vary depending on availability to deliver (but would utilise uncommitted funding that was set aside in the grant for teaching staff); two part-time internal Quality Assurers (Grade 9); one part-time data and MIS assistant; one part-time engagement and development worker (grade to be confirmed once evaluated). These would all be recruited on temporary/fixed-term contracts.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 It is recommended that SOSC1 considers the progress made and provides any feedback as necessary.

Background documents

None