

Staffordshire Community Learning Self-Assessment Report 2022-23

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Background and Context

Staffordshire County Council's Community Learning Service is funded by a £1.6m allocation from the Education and Skills Funding Agency's (ESFA) Adult Education Budget and is responsible for the delivery of the provision as the Lead Provider. The provision is led and managed by staff in the County Council's Skills and Employability team. The team also lead and manage the new Multiply delivery for maths provision.

The Community Learning Strategy and Commissioning Plan sets out our purpose and vision:

- Our purpose is to improve the lives of Staffordshire residents and meet the needs of the local economy by providing a range of lifelong learning opportunities. Our vision is to offer a service of outstanding quality, to ensure significant impact for learners, and other stakeholders, with efficient use of funding.

The Strategy and Commissioning Plan also defines our outcomes and priorities - based on strategic needs analysis and aligned with the Staffordshire County Council Strategic Plan - and identifies our target learners. The Community Learning service provides a range of formal and informal learning opportunities for Staffordshire residents to support them to gain the skills they need to progress in the world of work and give their children the best start in life. In particular, the service supports and develops individuals and groups for whom formal learning may have been a barrier in the past and works with them to build confidence and realise their true potential in a competitive world.

The service is partly delivered by the Council's Direct Delivery team, with the majority of provision sub-contracted to 18 local learning providers, consisting of schools, independent training providers, third sector organisations and local community groups. The providers deliver a range of learning opportunities for adults, families, and communities in local venues and online across Staffordshire. The delivery requirements are set out in the Community Learning Specification and Quality and Performance Framework which also describes how the delivery will be monitored and quality assured.

During 2022-23, our direct delivery team and sub-contracted providers delivered a total of 301 courses, across the 8 districts of Staffordshire in over 50 venues and online (See [Community Learning Providers](#) and curriculum areas), to 1855 adult learners, who made 2942 enrolments.

The service was inspected by Ofsted, in February 2023 and was judged to be a good service, and was audited under the ESFA's new sub-contracting standard, with which we are compliant.

During this academic year, the team also ensured the sustainability of the service through the development of (i) the Community Learning Strategy 2023-27 and new Procurement Framework 2023-27 and (ii) the new ESFA Accountability Statement, informed by the new Local Skills Improvement Plan, and Stoke and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and Skills Advisory Panel priorities. The Accountability Statement was approved by Cabinet on 21 June 2023, [Decision - Community Learning Ofsted Inspection and Accountability Agreement 2023-2024 - Staffordshire County Council](#).

Key judgements and summary

The self-assessment process

This self-assessment report summaries the judgements that we make about our service, based on the following key areas of evidence:

- Feedback from key stakeholders, including learner feedback, and focus groups, and surveys of sub-contracted providers and tutors
- Evaluations from each of the direct delivery and sub-contracted partners own self-assessment reports
- Quality assurance from monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment
- Performance data from contract monitoring, and learner achievement data
- Data from learner destination survey
- Monitoring progress against our Quality Improvement plan 2022-23
- Conclusions and learning from the Ofsted inspection in February 2023

Key Judgements

Judgements are made according to the Ofsted scale for the Education Inspection Framework:

1. Outstanding
2. Good
3. Requires Improvement
4. Inadequate

Ofsted Education Inspection Framework Area	Community Learning Judgement
Quality of Education	Good
Personal development of learners	Good
Behaviour and Attitudes of learners	Good
Leadership and Management	Good
Safeguarding	Effective
Overall effectiveness	Good

Key Strengths

The key strengths of the Community Learning provision are:

- Clear strategy and priorities, well aligned to local needs, the intent is matched by the impact,
- Good leadership and robust management of sub-contracted providers, including for the sustainability of the service,
- Effective safeguarding practice and policy,
- Learners' improved wellbeing, confidence and development of personal skills is excellent,
- Teaching, learning and assessment in Community Learning non-accredited courses is good with areas of excellent practice, and support for learners' needs,
- learners make good progress towards their subject-specific learning outcomes.

Key Areas for Development

Key areas for development in 2023-24 are:

- significant rapid improvement in outcomes for learners on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and digital courses, especially for Black and minority ethnic learners; managers must implement relevant strategies to support and improve attendance,
- effective information and advice and clearer progression pathways,
- personalised learning goals and outcomes to provide sufficient challenge, especially for more able learners, to demonstrate the progress learners make on-course and towards longer-term aspirations,
- use of effective initial and diagnostic assessment to develop appropriate English and Maths learning outcomes.

The Intent and impact of the Community Learning Service

Our intent is clearly described in our Community Learning Strategy and Commissioning Plan and is well-aligned to local needs and priorities. We aim to provide a range of excellent lifelong learning opportunities that meet the needs of the local economy and local residents in particular those who require first-steps back into learning, development of digital and study skills, wellbeing, and a reduction in social isolation.

Ofsted February 2023: Leaders successfully work with a range of subcontractors to shape their curriculum. They ensure that curriculum planning takes account of relevant local council priorities. Leaders prioritise their provision to take place in areas of high deprivation. As a result, leaders positively support the focus for economic prosperity across the communities in which they work. Leaders work closely with key stakeholders to select the content of their curriculum.

Our Specification and Quality and Performance Framework ensure that this intent is implemented effectively, and quality and value for money are assured throughout the year. Stakeholders, including learners, value the accessibility and flexibility of our curriculum offer, particularly for those learners returning to learning after a significant break.

We engage with potential learners through online promotion of our courses and have well-established working relationships with a wide range of local partners who provide services for our target learners, for example Shaw Trust, Restart, Job Centre Plus, social prescribers and local libraries. This allows us to effectively reach our target learners.

The total number of enrolments overall from Staffordshire residents was 2942 compared to 2714 in 2021-22, an increase of 8%. Given there was a reduction in the number of providers contracting with us, this evidences the positive impact of partnership working to increase participation and achieve service key performance indicators. There were a minimal number of enrolments (14) that were not funded due to the learners living outside the county boundary – these were mainly learners from Walsall. There was an increase in the number of enrolments in accredited ESOL learning from 139 in 2021-22 to 173 in 2022-23, an increase of 24%, which suggests an increase in confidence and resilience to engage in services following the pandemic.

In 2022-23, 59% of enrolments were from learners below full level 2, up from 55% in the previous year. 43% of enrolments were from learners living in the targeted wards, down from 50% last year. This means that significantly more learners have lower qualifications, and live in the target wards, than is average in the Staffordshire population. Enrolments were mostly weighted in favour of the districts with more priority needs although Newcastle was under-represented. One partner established a new relationship with John Hall Wellness Garden (Rethink) in order to increase access to learning in the Staffordshire Moorlands area.

The service continues to effectively target provision at vulnerable learners: 55% of learners have learning difficulties or disabilities, including long-term mental ill-health, up from 50% in 2021-22. 47% of enrolments are from learners in the 30-49 age band, and 27% from males. 85% of enrolments were made by white British learners, compared to 94% in the Staffordshire district population as a whole, with the ESOL provision in Stafford and East Staffordshire boosting the proportion of learners from diverse ethnic groups.

Learners make progress into positive destinations overall. 38% learners on the accredited Essential Digital Skills qualification courses had started on a non-accredited course first. The same proportion of learners on ESOL courses had progressed from courses in previous years, and during 2022-23 did an average of 1.5 courses each, focusing in turn on reading, writing and speaking and listening skills. This has enabled them to integrate in their communities and access services, and will enable them to go on to a higher level in the following academic year.

From the overall enrolment figure of 2942, 17% of enrolments were from people who were unemployed and looking for work at the start of their course (well above the Staffordshire average, and up from 14% in 2021-22). At the end of the course, 60% of these reported intending to continue with another course, with only 5% intending to go directly into paid employment, indicating that we are reaching those in early stages of their journey towards employment. On average learners completed 1.6 courses during the year. 18% of enrolments were from learners who had done more than 2 courses, and up to 8, with the range of courses completed by individuals demonstrating the progress they are making. For example, many learners from Upper Moreton Rural Activities, Chase Aqua Rural Enterprise, Staffordshire Care Farming and Growing Rural Enterprise initially did a course focusing on wellbeing or craft skills and then progressed onto courses more focussed on maths skills, skills for self-employment, personal development, or more specific Science Technology Engineering and maths (STEM) skills such as animal care, woodworking or floristry science.

Our courses are designed to offer well-sequenced development of skills, with clear outcomes for learners. Learners achieve a good standard of work, progress well and are confident to discuss the impact courses are having on their daily lives. Whilst retention and pass rates remain on target at 96% retention and 98% pass rate for all learner groups in non-accredited learning, these rates have slipped below target overall. This is driven by lower attendance and retention in accredited learning. Whilst learners across the range of ethnicities have good outcomes in Community Learning (non-accredited) provision, in accredited learning drop-out rates are particularly high for those from Black, Asian and other ethnic minorities. There have been significant challenges in the team that deliver accredited learning which are being addressed with the appointment of a manager, a more appropriate curriculum offer, and better support for pre-enrolment information and advice to ensure learners enrol on the right course to meet their needs. We have implemented more effective strategy to record early leavers in 2023-24 to ensure we track and benchmark this measure appropriately.

	Key Performance Indicators			
Headline data	Attendance Rate	Retention Rate	Pass Rate	Achievement Rate
Target	90%	96%	98%	94%
Total 2022-23	88%	96%	98%	94%

Total 2021-22	89%	97%	99%	96%
Total 2020-21	90%	98%	99%	97%

Community Learning (non-accredited)	Attendance Rate	Retention Rate	Pass Rate	Achievement Rate
2022-23 all white learners (2480 enrolments)	91%	97%	98%	95%
2022-23 all other ethnicities (151 enrolments)	91%	97%	99%	96%

Accredited	Attendance Rate	Retention Rate	Pass Rate	Achievement Rate
2022-23 all white learners (101 enrolments)	70%	81%	95%	77%
2022-23 all other known ethnicities (60 enrolments)	59%	75%	89%	67%

NB Not all learners declared their ethnicity and these have not been included.

Outcomes are very good for learners in the largest areas of non-accredited provision: Supported Learning, STEM and Community Learning Responsiveness Fund, also in Family Learning (albeit with a dip in retention in term 3). Many learners in these areas have benefitted from the emphasis on sustainable and low-cost living for example, making free play resources for children from recycled items around the home, or reducing waste from cooking.

Learner feedback shows that learners are happy with their course, and tutor, that they feel safe (99% positive responses from learner feedback survey) and that they appreciate the range of benefits of Community Learning.

We work closely with local partners to ensure that learners have information and advice they need about their wider support needs, and next steps, for example, with local colleges and Staffordshire Jobs and Careers brokers. One provider has specifically developed maths courses in response to learner requests this year, and over 40 learners have progressed from Community Learning into Multiply maths provision. Learner feedback indicates that 98% of learners agreed “the tutor helped me to know what to do next”. We must continue to share good practice and strategies to ensure that all learners receive effective information and advice about the progression pathways available to them, and that this is recorded appropriately.

Following the completion of courses, we commission a research company to telephone learners to find out what they have gone on to do after the course, and if the course helped them achieve their goals. We successfully contacted [XX (1160 in 2021-22)] learners in this way in November, and analysis of the data shows that [XX% (96% in 2021-22)] achieved their intent in enrolling on the course. At that time [XX% (51% in 2021-22)] were in work/voluntary work, including [XX% (30%)] who were looking for work at the start of their course, were in employment at this point. **TBC 2022-23 data expected December 2023.**

Implementation

Teaching, learning and assessment are good overall with quality assurance activity reporting that 83% class monitoring visits were good or better, with issues identified at other visits being addressed during the academic year.

In the February 2023 report, Ofsted inspectors noted that “...learners benefit from teaching and support from well-qualified and experienced tutors, who use their knowledge and experience effectively to teach them the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to progress”

Tutors and managers plan well-sequenced courses so that learners build their knowledge and skills. In the best cases, learner voice is used to develop the curriculum. Initial assessment is usually effective in identifying learners’ starting points, so that tutors can plan to support and challenge learners appropriately. However, in some cases, tutors should take more note of learners with more experience or higher aspirations so that their learning goals provide sufficient challenge.

Nearly a quarter of enrolments were for online courses, allowing learners from all districts including remote areas to take part. Although online provision was introduced in response to the covid pandemic in 2020, we recognise the need to continue to provide access to learning in this way; across all provision, 40% of learners reported that they had improved their digital skills whilst on the course, demonstrating the value of the provision to the digital inclusion agenda. Four key providers, working with learners who experience mental ill-health, organise transport for to their care farm venues to increase access, particularly for those from urban environments who wouldn’t otherwise access the countryside. All learners have access to excellent facilities, equipment, and resources delivery and this ensures that learners are highly motivated and engaged by their surroundings.

Tutors expertly demonstrate new knowledge and skills. Innovative use of learning technologies in many courses helps learners access learning and collaborate, as well as embedding digital skills. Learners benefit from high levels of support from staff and peers, which enables them to engage effectively, and learners are well motivated. Tutors provide regular opportunities to recap and recall new learning, and for learners to practice and apply their new skills. Learners often develop their personal skills alongside the course subject, including understanding of issues such as sustainability or British Values. Many tutors provide good support for the development of English and maths skills where relevant. This practice should be further shared so that the impact of skills development is more consistent. In most cases, tutors use assessment strategies well to check learning and use this information effectively to help close any gaps in learners’ knowledge and skills. Learner work is of a good standard, and most achieve their goals.

Approaches to Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement (RARPA) are well developed in the majority of cases and designed to fully engage learners, being well embedded within the delivery of the course. 20/26 RARPA audits were compliant, with 3 that were less than good showing improvement at a subsequent re-audit or class visit bringing the total that were compliant in-year to 88%. Two providers with small learner numbers required minor improvement but were not reaudited. However, in a few cases, personalised learning goals and outcomes are under-developed, with an emphasis on activities rather than knowledge and skills, and do not provide sufficient challenge, especially for more able learners, or do not clearly demonstrate the progress learners have made.

Behaviour and Attitudes

Providers have high expectations for learners' behaviour and conduct; many negotiate a group charter or ground rules with learners to ensure that all learners are engaged in setting the expectations, resulting in high levels of respect between learners and tutors in safe, inclusive and productive learning settings. A Learner Handbook, and online accessible version of this, supports learners to understand the requirements and opportunities of their learning.

Ofsted report, Feb 2023: Tutors support learners to develop positive attitudes to their learning. Tutors create a positive environment for learning that harnesses respect. This supports them to share new ideas, which helps them to develop new knowledge further.

For the vast majority of learners, attitudes to learning are exceptionally positive. With around 55% having a learning disability or difficulty, including mental ill health, many learners have overcome significant barriers in order to attend, but they are, on the whole, committed and resilient. Where learners are absent or late tutors usually take effective measures to re-integrate learners into the group, and catch-up. This is sometimes supported by the effective use of digital tools, or support buddies or volunteers who model expected behaviour and demonstrate positive progressions. Learners demonstrate high levels of resilience, motivation and pride in their work, especially where they have produced items such as pieces of art or crafts.

Overall, attendance is well-monitored and effective strategies to support attendance deployed. However, there needs to be an improvement in attendance rates in ESOL, employability and digital provision in particular. Managers need to regularly support tutors and learners with effective strategies to ensure motivation remains high, and to tackle practical barriers to attendance for some learners, and where their new knowledge and skills have benefited their families, for example in parenting courses.

Case study: learner on Families First Pram to Primary course who had benefited greatly from course, while child was on waiting list for CAMHS referral. "...it calmed things down...we talk more as a family, partner and I work together".

Personal development

Opportunities for personal development of learners are exceptionally good on Community Learning courses, thanks to the design of the curriculum. Providers are very invested in delivering wellbeing outcomes to learners who need this support. Learner feedback evidences that many feel they have gained more than they expected from the course. Many providers offer opportunities for learners to get involved in their local communities or charities such as Sudbury Gasworks, support for Ukrainian families living in Staffordshire, and the Transforming the Trent Valley project. Other opportunities offered include enterprise projects and group visits, or guest speakers. As a result, learners develop their confidence, wellbeing, employability and social skills.

Case study: Upper Moreton Rural Activities learner who reported course helped her enormously as she was dealing with bereavement.

Leaner feedback data – Wider benefits of Community Learning		
	2022-23	2021-22
wellbeing is better	76%	67%
made new friends	66%	64%
more positive about the future	60%	67%

more confident to keep family safe	54%	52%
more confident to support my family	51%	50%
healthier	44%	44%
confident to use community facilities	40%	42%
more confident to take active role in community	39%	36%
more independent	38%	39%

The service is matrix accredited for its information and advice services and providers deliver effective information and advice to ensure learners are on the right course. At many providers this involves 1-1 conversations pre-enrolment; the effectiveness of this is evidenced by the retention rate of 95%. This is followed up by a range of effective information and support during the course to encourage learners to understand and move towards their next steps.

More targeted support, information and advice is given in some cases. For example, job brokers from the Staffordshire Jobs and Careers service have visited learners at Upper Moreton Rural Activities, and Chase Aqua Rural Enterprise to inform them about the range of opportunities and support available to them. In a number of organisations (Chase Aqua Rural Enterprise, Direct Delivery team, Upper Moreton Rural Activities, Families First) learners are taken on as volunteers or learning buddies to support their peers and develop their volunteering skills. A number of providers offer a wide range of training and, in some cases, a volunteer passport scheme which recognises the skills and achievements of ex-learner volunteers to support them further in this journey. In 2023-24 we aim to share and build on this good practice to ensure all volunteers have an excellent experience and outcomes.

Case studies: a learner has developed from volunteering at Chase Aqua Rural Activities to enrolling on a Level 3 Award in Education and Training course and supporting in delivery.

Community Forest Services learner who has been able to sell her artwork, following on from creativity in Nature course.

Growing Rural Enterprise learners who took art in Dragons Den activity resulting in being commissioned to produce planters for local garden centre.

Ofsted: Learners gain significant benefits from their courses. Those studying ESOL, who previously felt isolated, feel more confident to communicate with their children's school or access their local doctor's surgery. Learners benefit from well-developed links with local community organisations. Staff nurture effective links with a range of partners [...]. They support learners to get quick access to the critical services they need to support their wider lives.

In most areas, there are opportunities for learners to further develop employability skills including English, maths and digital. For example, 8 ESOL learners developed their digital skills through a bespoke course in term 3. Although only approximately 9% of courses are in the Digital Skills curriculum area, learners on most courses develop their digital skills through use of learning technologies. Other learners develop maths skills as applied in woodwork or animal care courses. In some cases, this is effective, however in a minority of cases there is not enough focus on developing *new* skills in these areas, rather than using existing skills. Tutors should work with learners to develop specific learning outcomes for English, maths and digital where this contributes to their long-term aspirations.

Leaner feedback data – Wider benefits of Community Learning
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	2022-23	2021-22
developed digital skills	40%	39%
developed English skills	32%	33%
developed maths skills	18%	22%
more confident to start new job/career	24%	26%
upskill/progress in career	16%	17%

In some cases, tutors have not sufficiently challenged learners who have more experience, or higher starting points, resulting in some learners not having goals that are appropriately challenging. This should be addressed through more effective personalised goal setting based on thorough initial assessment, and effective adaption of learning activities where relevant.

In term 3 approximately 100 learners took part in focus groups exploring British Values, at 7 different providers, and covering 5 different curriculum areas, including learners with long-term mental ill health and learning difficulties/disabilities. The sessions were a useful insight into learners' own values and how they were able to identify British Values, as these are demonstrated in the delivery of their courses. The focus groups helped learners to extend their understanding, and served as a model for tutors to use in future for exploring this topic. In addition, they provided us with input from learners on the importance of respect and kindness as key values. It was notable that a number of learners referred to how they felt accepted despite differences in their groups and that they appreciated the non-judgmental ethos. The learner voice is fundamental in the development of a renewed Diversity, Equity and Inclusion statement which is planned for 2023-24.

Leadership and Management

Local needs are at the heart of the Community Learning Service; leaders have a clear focus for the curriculum which is strongly aligned to local needs because we have made good use of local intelligence to plan the curriculum offer. We work with relevant partners to develop the curriculum offer to achieve the council's objectives and priorities and have established stable relationships with these partners. Our next steps will be to develop our communications strategy to ensure all partners can get the information they need about our service.

Governance and sub-contracting arrangements are effective. We have a well-designed and effective Quality and Performance Framework which we use to clarify our high expectations for internal and sub-contracted providers. We set challenging key performance indicators for the provision and monitor performance and quality regularly, agreeing actions with sub-contracted providers, when necessary, at regular contract management meetings, to ensure the targets are achievable.

Managers report on quality and performance regularly, through Skills and Employability Management Team and Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Business Delivery Plan and Performance Reports. Our Quality Improvement Plan records and tracks progress against the outcomes we have set ourselves; actions have been made SMART-er during the year to ensure clear lines of responsibility and timely completion.

Through the analytical use of learner achievement and feedback data, we evaluate the effectiveness of provision and give effective support and challenge to sub-contracted providers and tutors.

We deliver effective support and challenge to tutors through a range of interventions. Good practice is shared through regular Provider Engagement updates and events, and a number of providers continue this collaboration independently. We also provide a well-used and comprehensive Teaching

and Learning Blog to ensure tutors understand the expectations of their role, and Continual Professional Development sessions which have included LGBTQ+ awareness, how to support learners with dyslexia, and how to increase learners' awareness of British Values. In 2022-23 we implemented a more collaborative approach for working with individual or small groups of tutors - following Education and Training Foundation (ETF) training, our officers provided a Mentoring programme, to develop tutors' practice; this will be further developed in 2023-24 to ensure all actions are SMART and the impact monitored in a timely manner. 70% of tutors engage with the CPD offered by the service and overall, find the service to be supportive of their development.

Providers are committed to the development of their own staff teams, and tutors undertake a wide variety of other CPD relevant and sufficient to their own needs, for example, national FE Sustainability Community of Practice, workshops to support learner wellbeing, and learner engagement, ETF Visualising Maths course, and qualifications in Information, Advice and Guidance Level 2, First Aid awareness, Mental Health First Aid, Autism awareness.

Tutors take pride in and get a sense of achievement from what they do. Of the respondents to our Tutor feedback survey 100% agreed that they understood how their work relates to Staffordshire Community Learning and Council priorities, that they get a sense of achievement from this work, that they feel respected and valued for the work they do, and that leaders and managers in their organisation are considerate of their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

There is a high regard for safeguarding, and practice is effective.

Leaders and managers are fully committed to their duty to safeguard learners and staff and implement the Prevent Duty. Effective policy and procedures are in place to ensure safe learning and recruitment practices. All tutors and staff are subject to regular DBS checks and required to regularly update their Safeguarding & Prevent Duty training. Senior managers who take the role of Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy DSL are well-qualified in Safeguarding at Level 4. They work effectively with local partners, for example the Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board, and Staffordshire Prevent Board, and communicate key messages to provider staff through termly Safeguarding and Prevent Updates, Briefing sessions for tutors at the start of the academic year and in monthly Provider Updates. The DSL and deputy respond appropriately and promptly to concerns raised, and maintain accurate records and a Safeguarding and Prevent Action Plan through the year to monitor progress on emerging issues. Safeguarding is reported via Performance Briefings to the Director of Economy, Infrastructure and Skills (EIS) and Deputy Leader of the Council. Safeguarding is also reported at monthly Strategic Manager Meetings.

Learners have an appropriate understanding of safeguarding in most cases, thanks to information they receive from tutors. Tutors follow clear guidelines about Safeguarding, Prevent Duty and Health and Safety to introduce these concepts at induction, and continue to discuss them through delivery of courses. For example, in some practical courses, learners are involved in devising risk assessments for the learning activities. Nearly all learners responding to the Learner feedback survey (99%) state that they feel safe in the learning environment, as in previous years. The very few individuals not feeling safe were more likely to be learners with mental ill health or learning difficulties, and experiencing low confidence or anxiety.

The vast majority (99%) of respondents knew what to do if they did not feel safe, (98% in 2021-22, and 2020-21). Learner feedback results show that over 97% said they were informed how to protect

themselves from risks associated with radicalisation and extremism, across all equality groups; this is an improvement on the previous years (96% in 2021-22, and in 2020-21).

Through strong partnership working, providers are able to identify existing safeguarding concerns with individual learners at an early stage, and learners are confident to discuss with tutors challenges they face in their wider lives.

Tutors ensure that appropriate support is in place for vulnerable learners. In particular, some Family Learning provision has a strong role in safeguarding. Families First provision is targeted at learners who have not engaged in learning for some time, have low levels of qualifications or who have low confidence and self-esteem. Some learners come to the organisation as referrals from Early Help and family support services across Staffordshire. The courses aim to develop parents' understanding of child development and positive parenting models, and the impact of these courses is particularly strong.

Multiply

Background

In 2022 the UK government made improving maths skills the first priority of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, allocating £430m over 3 years to support the Levelling Up mission by providing bespoke adult numeracy programmes via the Multiply programme.

The Government commissioned Employer Skills Survey (ESS) showed that over a third (37%) of employers with skill-shortage vacancies identified basic numeracy skills as difficult to obtain from applicants. In addition, a quarter (24%) of employers felt that basic numeracy skills needed improving. Staffordshire has generally higher demand for STEM skills including numeracy due to our strong manufacturing base and associated industries which are a priority for growth locally.

In Staffordshire latest DfE participation and achievement data provides an indication of current learner demand, with the overall trend showing a gradual decline in maths participation and achievements over the last five years of available data. Between 2014-15 and 2018-19 Staffordshire has seen a 51% decline in maths participation compared to 42% decline nationally and a 50% decline in maths achievements compared to 37% decline nationally.

Leadership and Management

The county council established a Multiply Programme Board to oversee the development of the Investment Plan, tendering process and overall management of the Multiply programme. The board is chaired by the Head of Adult Learning & Skills and includes officers from Skills & Employability, Finance, Legal, Audit, Communications, Care leavers team, and District Strategic Delivery. The board has a reporting link to the Council's Economic Recovery Cabinet, Senior Leadership Team and Cabinet.

Effective engagement activity took place in the summer of 2022 with residents, employers and local stakeholder organisations, and a working party was established, resulting in education providers submitting expressions of interest which informed the Investment Plan. The Investment Plan was approved by cabinet. We successfully secured £4.2m for programmes to be delivered across the Spending Review period 2022-23 to 2024-25.

The aim of the funding is to increase engagement in numeracy across Staffordshire by providing a range of bespoke high-quality numeracy-based skills interventions. The interventions are delivered flexibly and implement a bitesize approach to reach out to parts of local communities and employers

and their staff who do not engage well with traditional classroom-based learning and/or Adult Skills or Community Learning provision as their starting point.

The provision delivers opportunities for individuals to improve their confidence with the use of numbers to a level that will allow them to have greater control over their daily lives or motivate them to progress onto further programmes or qualifications. To support skill development and progression the Multiply provision will consist of engagement, non-accredited and accredited numeracy programmes with a flexible coherent pathway, including where appropriate onto local Adult Education Budget provision.

The Multiply provision did not perform fully in Year 1 in terms of recruitment of learners and expenditure of the funding, but the project was able to launch, with operational processes and communication strategy established in collaboration with sub-contracted partners. The learning from Year 1 continues to inform improvement and development for Year 2 delivery and onwards. For example, in developing approaches to working with care leavers, schools, and other residents who need to increase their confidence to taking their first steps back into learning.

Comparison with local authorities across the country indicates that our challenges are common to other areas, particularly in engaging successfully with employers to support employees to upskill and progress in their career.

Thorough due diligence measures ensured that contracts were awarded to providers who had the capability to deliver a good quality service. The quality is assured through class monitoring visits, and officers collaborating with providers to thoroughly review the contract on a monthly and quarterly basis.

Impact – meeting the needs of learners

In Year 1 (April 2022-March 2023), delivery started in December 2022. Eight providers delivered learning across 7 intervention types, and one provider also delivered outreach provision. The outreach provision was successful in engaging 124 people in year one, often the “hard-to-reach” and including learners with learning difficulties and with English as a second language, and a good proportion (43%) of these went on to substantive learning.

The most successful providers worked well with community groups, charities and organisations such as Job Centre Plus to engage learners. Engagement via employers has been less effective than anticipated. Word-of-mouth proved to be the most effective recruitment strategy, and we will continue to work collaboratively with providers and the Council’s Communications team to develop strategy to ensure stakeholders are aware of the offer, and that residents find the offer appealing.

Providers’ performance in recruiting learners varied considerably, leading to 3 providers not delivering any learning in Year 1 and some declining contracts in Year 2. During Year 2, Quarter 1 performance was again lower than expected. A revision of the Investment Plan and further procurement activity has been planned to mitigate the impact of this on final year 2 performance.

Quality of Education

During Year 1 providers developed their curriculum offer to make it more relevant to residents, for example making courses for parents more focussed on practical family life and including activities for children. Delivery was of good quality overall, with experienced providers able to deliver courses that meet learners’ needs, and ensure they are ready for their next steps. Whilst some delivery is based on 1-1 interventions that support individuals in a very targeted way, other delivery is delivered to groups of learners in classroom or community settings. Officers were able to support

tutors where necessary to improve RARPA practice where this had not been well-established initially in Year 1. Year 2 quality monitoring activity reflects good practice now in place.

Learner feedback from Quarter 1 Year 2 indicates that learners are (97% of respondents) enjoying their learning and are happy with their tutor (100%), 100% of respondents feel safe and would know what to do if they did not. 100% of respondents also report that their tutor had helped them to understand what they can do next. 26% are intending to continue with further learning.

Learner feedback/success stories

Community Learning learner feedback

My child loved having me coming to school and doing activities with him, we both really looked forward to it every week! I've noticed that since we started, he's a lot more motivated to read with me at home and he wants me to ask him maths questions!

The course was far more useful than I had anticipated. Not only did it give understanding about how my daughter is learning, but also gave me understanding of how my mind works too! It was a bit of a revelation for me.

The course has been instrumental in my journey through bereavement, it has been better for me than counselling,

I am now confident in dropping him off so I can go to work. I am going to get myself some more support for my dyslexia so I can keep reading to him.

During and after covid I was extremely anxious and unable to mix or go out much socially. This course got me out regularly and helped me forget my problems. The other members of the group were friendly & I enjoyed their company.

Wellies has helped me to build my confidence and independence so much that I am now able to start university next term. There is no way I would have been emotionally, mentally, or physically ready to go to uni without Wellies.

Brilliant tutor on iPad course, very patient with me and helping me to understand this course.

Loads of great ideas shared in a friendly and inspiring manner.

It's a fantastic place and everyone makes me feel welcome. I always feel better after.

I am more confident in meeting and engaging with new people, using public transport and sticking to a time frame/management/team building.

Doing this course has improved my family life and relationships.

Thank you for such a positive friendly + well run course. My wellbeing + my daughter's learning has improved so much from the course tutor was fantastic.

Simply Play has given us lots of idea to aid learning and development and information to help keep us all safer and healthier.

Volunteers' success stories

I get a sense of achievement out of my volunteering especially by helping others. I can relate to others by having a lived experience – I remember what it is like to feel life was a struggle. It is good to give back to others and very rewarding to see how people grow in confidence. Everything is positive with my volunteering; it has helped me with my wellbeing – made me realise that there is a way forward.

I've been volunteering for Wellies for the last 2yrs. It has improved my mental health dramatically, I love everything about it and get so much out of it. Love being able to help and support others improve their mental well-being. Volunteering is a great, takes commitment without the pressure of a full time job.

After talking to my tutor about my options I decided to support the Simply Play courses, helping the tutor to support the parents and their children. I had a DBS and initial training via the Volunteering Co-ordinator through the Council. I have also taken a Breastfeeding Peer Support course and have my first appointment this week with a new parent. The Pram to Primary course helped us as a family and volunteering is giving me more confidence in my abilities.”

Multiply learner feedback

I can support my son better with his Maths

The course has given me hope for the future and pushed my confidence up overall.

The impact of attending Lichfield Campus for the college course has been quite significant. It has taught me a good work ethic, structured days of the week, and improved my well-being a lot. I have become more confident. It takes an hour to get there each day which has showed me that if you make the effort, it is worth it.

Confidence, social and maths skill have come such a long way.

A lot more confident using maths to work out household spending and bills. More understanding of how Universal Credit works.

I am more confident to apply for a better career stage in the company where I work now.

I really enjoyed this course I'm sad that it has come to an end, I've learnt so much, about money management and, what is more important, to keep me out of debt.

Data

Community Learning Providers and curriculum areas

Provider	Curriculum Area	Districts
Direct Delivery	Digital Skills, Employability - ESOL	Tamworth, Stafford, Newcastle, East Staffordshire, Lichfield, Cannock, Staffordshire Moorlands
Sub-contracted Providers	Community Learning Framework providers Curriculum Area	Districts
Acorn Training	Employability, Digital Skills	Newcastle, East Staffordshire, Staffordshire Moorlands
Chase Aqua Rural Activities	Supported Learning, Employability, Digital Skills. STEM	Stafford, South Staffordshire, Cannock
Community Forest Services	STEM, Family Learning, Leisure, Health and Wellbeing	Cannock Chase South Staffs Stafford
Families First	Family Learning	All districts
Growing Rural Enterprise	STEM	East Staffs Lichfield Tamworth
Staffordshire Care Farming	Supported Learning	East Staffs Lichfield Tamworth
Upper Moreton Rural Activities	Supported Learning	Cannock Chase Stafford
Victoria School Primary	ESOL and Health	East Staffs
Ashcroft Primary	Family Learning - Parenting	Tamworth
Beam Staffordshire	Supported Learning	Stafford
Chase Terrace Academy	STEM	Lichfield
Dyslexia Association of Staffordshire	English and Maths	All districts

Gartmore Riding School	Supported Learning	Lichfield, Tamworth
Horton Lodge Special School	Supported Learning	Staffs Moorlands
Liberty Jamboree	Supported Learning	Lichfield
Staffordshire Venture	Supported Learning	Stafford
Two Gates Primary	Family Forest School	Tamworth
Pulse for Music	Supported Learning	East Staffs

Table showing enrolments per district over years:

District and share of adult population (2021)	Number of targeted wards	Enrolments in 2021-22 number of enrolments	% of total 2021-22 enrolments	Enrolments in 2022-23 number of enrolments	% of total 2022-23 enrolments
Cannock Chase (12%)	8	385	14%	528	18% ↑
East Staffordshire (15%)	7	559	21%	490	17%
Lichfield (12%)	4	351	13%	333	11%
Newcastle-under-Lyme (14%)	13	237	9%	277	9%
South Staffordshire (12%)	1	197	7%	174	6%
Stafford (15%)	6	490	18%	507	17%
Staffordshire Moorlands (10%)	4	157	6%	261	9% ↑
Tamworth (9%)	7	347	13%	384	13%

Multiply Data

Types of intervention and Enrolments Year 1

Intervention	Number of people engaging with outreach	Target	Target % against Actuals	Number of learners participating in substantive learning	Target	Target % against Actuals
A	124	125	99%	114	523	22%
B	0	0	0%	82	350	23%
C	0	0	0%	16	478	3%
D	0	0	0%	0	152	0%
E	0	0	0%	8	101	8%
F	0	0	0%	21	792	3%
G	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
H	0	0	0%	0	35	0%
I	0	0	0%	36	181	20%
J	0	0	0%	19	70	27%
TOTAL	124	125	99%	296	2682	11%

Learner Achievement

	Enrolments	Completed	Withdrawn	Passed	Not passed	Attendance	Retention	Pass	Achieved
2022-23 Q4	261	241	20	234	7	69%	92%	97%	90%
2023-24 Q1 total	52	45	7	44	1	80%	87%	98%	85%

NB Does not include learners who are continuing in learning to date. Final enrolment figures will be higher.

Quality Improvement Plan – End of Year RAG ratings

Area for development 2022-23	End of year position
<p>Participation - maximise funding, ensuring that the contract is feasible for sub-contractors, and that the full curriculum offer attracts our target learners, whilst ensuring our learners are representative of the demographics of Staffordshire and of our target learners. Outcome: funding performance at 97%</p>	Amber
<p>RARPA - Aspects of RARPA in a minority of courses need development, to support learner reflection on the progress of their skills, and fully recognise their personal development to raise aspirations, fully stretch learners whose starting points are higher. Outcome: 100% of RARPA audits compliant</p>	Green
<p>Progression - We need to make clearer progression routes for learners to support their progression towards work, including clearer links with Further Education providers and employers to raise aspirations. Outcome: Increase learners going into further learning following course (destinations survey data).</p>	Awaiting data
<p>Attendance, retention and Quality of education - We need to implement a further range of improvements in the Quality of Education in Digital skills, Employability, and Adult Skills courses to ensure existing good practice is consistent throughout. Outcome: Attendance 90%, retention 96%</p>	Amber
<p>Maintain effective safeguarding practices and Prevent practices Outcome: increase % of learners report they have been informed of how to protect themselves from risks associated with radicalisation and extremism</p>	Green
<p>On-going development of performance management Outcome: good quality data</p>	Green
<p>On-going development of quality management Outcome: high tutor satisfaction with support</p>	Green
<p>Addressing learners' needs and goals in relation to the development of their English and maths skills Outcome: RARPA audits and class visits to report good practice in place</p>	Green