

**Report of Head Projects and Programmes**

**Report to Chief Officer Employment & Skills**

**Date: 11 August 2015**

**Subject: Community Learning 2015-16 Programme**



Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: 10.4 (3) Appendix number: 1 Community Learning 2015-16 Providers Call-Off Contracts Financial Details	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

In 2014-15, the Council and partners supported over 14,600 local residents to improve their skills, making a significant contribution to priorities set out in the Best Council Plan 2015-20 to promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth with a specific focus on improving skills and, building a Child Friendly City by helping to improve the progression and achievement of children at school.

The Community Learning Programme is a key vehicle for the Council to support local residents with skills development. Offering a broad and balanced range of activities, this programme which is primarily delivered through sub-contracting arrangements aims to re-engage adults aged 19 years plus (25 years plus for those people with a learning difficulty or disability (LLDD) to acquire new skills and interests for the benefit of the individual and their wider family networks. Community learning also provides a progression gateway to more formal adult learning, social mobility and longer term employability opportunities.

In July 2014, an open and competitive procurement process was undertaken by the Council to appoint providers to a three year framework 2014-17. This report concerns the external provider programmes for the second academic year between September 2015 and July 2016.

The funding allocation from the SFA available for external provider delivery in 2015-16 is £1.5 million. The programme is expected to support in the region of 8,000 learners this year and will be targeted to disadvantaged individuals and communities across the City. Priority will also be given to vulnerable groups including those with mild to moderate mental health problems.

The Learner Fees Policy promoted by the Council ensures that those who can afford to pay do pay and offers fee remissions to those on income related benefits. It is proposed to amend the Learner Fees policy to include a small increase to learner fees for those required to make a contribution to ensure further funds can be reinvested in provision to meet local needs and an increase in the Learner Support Assistant pay rates to bring these in line with the national minimum wage rates.

## **Recommendations**

The Chief Officer Employment and Skills is asked to approve

- the proposed funding allocations to providers to the total value of £1.5m for the academic year 2015-16 and, authorise the award of year 2 call-off contracts to providers on the three year Community Learning framework 2014-17
- the proposed amendments to the Learner Fees Policy from September 2015 to raise the learner fee from £2.30 to £3.00 per hour for adults not in receipt of any means tested benefits and, from 0.60p to 0.80p per hour for those in receipt of State Pension
- the proposed increase in the hourly rate paid to providers for Learning Support Assistants from £7.50 to £8.50 per hour in line with changes in the national minimum wage.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report concerns the award of year 2 call-off contracts for the academic year 2015-16 to providers on the three year Community Learning framework 2014-17.
- 1.2 The report also provides an overview of the budget available and type of provision to be delivered. Appendix 1, marked 'Confidential', details each provider's specific award amounts, learning programmes and learner targets.
- 1.3 The report also proposes a small increase in learner fees for those required to make a contribution to the cost of the course to ensure further funds can be reinvested in provision to meet local needs and an increase in the Learner Support Assistant pay rates to bring these in line with the national minimum wage rates.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 The Council receives a funding allocation from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) each academic year to deliver a broad and balanced programme of community learning (including a small element of adult skills provision) in Leeds to support a target number of learners. The Council uses this funding for a combination of activities, the majority of which is delivered by a range of external providers including third sector organisations. An element of the provision, Family Learning, is delivered internally by the Employment and Skills Service.
- 2.2 The purpose of Community Learning is to:
- provide a broad range of learning that brings together adults, often of different ages and backgrounds to address a need, acquire a new skill, become healthier, pursue an interest or learn how to support their children;
  - maximise access to community learning for adults, bringing new opportunities to improve lives, whatever people's circumstances;
  - promote social renewal by bringing local communities together to experience the joy of learning and the pride that comes with achievement;
  - maximise the impact of community learning on the social and economic well-being of individuals, families and communities.
- 2.3 For the academic year 2015-16, the total funding available for external delivery is £1.5m. The programme is expected to support up to 8,000 learners this year and, will be targeted at disadvantaged individuals and communities across the City. Priority will also be given to vulnerable groups including those with mild to moderate mental ill-health.
- 2.4 The Community Learning programme 2015-16 comprises the following programmes:
- Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL) – for personal and community development, cultural enrichment, intellectual or creative stimulation and enjoyment. Does not usually involve any formal qualifications.

- Family English, Maths and Language (FEML) – designed to improve English, Maths and language skills of families.
- Wider Family Learning (WFL) – supports different generations of family members to learn together in order to support children’s learning and development.
- Skills for Jobs (SFJ) – this activity is aimed at adults aged 19 and over, with low skills levels, who are not currently in employment but want to work. Activities deliver tailored, individual support, integrated with other services/opportunities where possible. A key element of Skills for Jobs is ensuring progression to employment or further learning.
- Targeted Learning Projects (TLP) - aimed at learning provision where learners have multiple and/or complex needs/are difficult to reach e.g. recovering from drug abuse, at risk of offending, socially isolated etc. and/or the activity is innovative and delivers added value e.g. includes a work placement or residential element and/or delivers high levels of individual support.
- Adult Skills Budget Projects (ASB) - comprise accredited learning towards eligible qualifications from a national catalogue remunerated at the rates defined by the Skills Funding Agency e.g. level 1 and level 2 ICT, English and Maths courses.
- A new Mental Health targeted learning pilot to promote collaboration between mental health treatment organisations and learning providers. The pilot will establish referral pathways and effective learning provision for learners with mild to moderate mental health conditions such as anxiety or depression.

2.5 For the academic year 2015-16, the activities and learner groups targeted through this programme have been informed by the objectives of the SFA and the Leeds Community Learning Strategy 2013-16. The programme has also been aligned with the Council’s priorities set out in the Best Council Plan 2015-20, to ‘promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth by improving the economic wellbeing of local people and businesses’ with a specific focus on improving skills and, building a Child Friendly City by helping to improve the progression and achievement of children at school, through the Family Learning provision.

### **3 Main issues**

3.1 The main changes to the 2015/16 programme are summarised below:-

- There is an increased emphasis on English, Maths, English as a second Language (ESOL) and ICT provision to support unemployed residents, in areas of high deprivation, to become more confident to apply for jobs near their locality.
- For the second year running, the budget allocated to the Skills for Jobs programme has increased significantly. Standard and targeted programmes budgets were reduced to accommodate this increase.

- Provision that no longer aligns with the Council priorities will not be prioritised. There is more emphasis on provision identified through local intelligence from Community Committees and their elected member Employment, Skills and Welfare champions to meet specific needs in each locality (see details at 2.9 below).

3.2 A summary of the proposed provision to be delivered in the academic year 2015-16 is set out in the table below:

<b>Provision in 2015-16</b>	<b>Number of Providers</b>	<b>Total Value of Orders (£)</b>	<b>Enrolment Numbers</b>
Personal and Community Development (PCDL)	14	723,840	3,902
Family English and Maths (FEML)	2	110,280	420
Wider Family Learning (WFL)	6	99,100	656
Skills for Jobs (SfJ)	12	297,135	1,475
Targeted Learning Projects (TLP) including Mental Health Pilot	6	250,637	1,118
Adult Skills Budget (ASB)	1	15,976	52
<b>Totals</b>		<b>1,496,968</b>	<b>7,623</b>

3.3 Further information on each provider award including activity and learner targets is attached at Appendix 1 and marked 'Confidential'. For those organisations where the Evaluation Panel felt it was unable to recommend funding for 2015-16, the basis for this decision is also summarised.

### 3.4 Proposed Provision by Locality

#### 3.4.4 City wide:

The following activities are proposed at venues across the city:

- ICT, English, Maths English as a second Language, Family Learning, Preparation for Life & Work
- Arts and Crafts, Health and Childcare and, Languages
- Range of provision targeting LLDD learners
- Skills for Jobs such as literacy, numeracy, ICT and confidence building.

#### 3.4.5 East North East:

In addition to the citywide provision, the following activities are proposed:-

- Crafts, Creative Arts, and Design
- Foundations for Learning and Life
- Health and Well Being
- Vocational taster programmes
- Media and Communication

#### 3.4.6 West North West:

In addition to the citywide provision, the following activities are proposed:-

- Conservation and Gardening
- Arts, Media & Publishing
- Health, Public Services and Care
- Vocational taster programmes
- Woodworking

#### 3.4.7 South:

In addition to the citywide provision, the following activities are proposed:-

- Arts, Media & Publishing
- Health and Well Being
- Vocational taster programmes

- 3.5 Each year the Skills Funding Agency requires fund holders to have in place a robust financial plan setting out how they will add value to their community learning allocation. This is referred to as 'Pound Plus' and is the Government's way of ensuring that public funds are targeted at those least likely to participate in learning e.g. people on low incomes with low skills etc. This move was informed by the SFA's Skills Funding Statement 2013-16 published in February 2014 and the SFA's Funding Rules 2015-16.
- 3.6 In Leeds, all providers on the Community Learning framework must adhere to the Council's Learner Fees Policy. Learners who are able to pay are charged a fee for the learning they receive, at an appropriate fee rate depending on individual circumstances. From September 2015, the Council proposes to raise the learner fee from £2.30 to £3.00 per hour for adults not in receipt of any means tested benefits. This will impact less than 600 adults based on the previous year's figures. It is also proposed that the learner fee is raised from 0.60p to 0.80p per hour, for those in receipt of a State Pension. This will impact approximately 900 adults based on the previous year's figures This increase would bring the fees in line with other learning providers both in the Yorkshire region and in Leeds and maximise the amount of income the Council receives to be reinvested in the delivery of further learning opportunities in Leeds.
- 3.7 It is also proposed that the hourly rate paid to providers for Learning Support Assistants, is increased from the current rate of £7.50 per hour to £8.50 per hour in line with increases in the minimum wage. Learning Support Assistants meet the additional support needs of specific learners, for example a learner with behavioural issues.
- 3.8 The proposed activities will support the achievement of overall programme targets for delivery and learner numbers and, ensure the Council fulfils its contractual obligations to the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). The SFA does not provide a set target for learner numbers under the Community Learning programme, however there is an expected requirement that learner numbers are maintained year on

year. The proposed awards to providers including in-house provision will include targets to work with up to 8,000 learners in 2015-16.

- 3.9 The mix of providers, types of activity and target groups proposed will enable the Council to provide a broad and balanced programme of community learning for a range of learners and covering a wide selection of subject areas. This will meet the SFA requirements to deliver a broad programme of activities and reflects the SFA's objective that community learning provision will "maximise access to community learning for adults". For the second year running, the 2015-16 programme has significantly increased the Skills for Jobs provision, especially in or near localities where large employment developments are planned that will require a local workforce. The local priorities identified in the Leeds Community Learning Strategy 2013-16, developed by the Council, in consultation with the Leeds Community Trust Board (CLTB), have also been taken into account. This includes widening participation for marginalised and underrepresented groups including men and people with mental ill-health; improving impact measures and further development of progression pathways.
- 3.10 The SFA requires the funding to be focused on "people who are marginalised and least likely to participate including workless adults, people on low incomes with low skills and those who did not achieve at school." As part of the ongoing contract management procedures all providers are required to demonstrate the need for their proposed activity, how learners are engaged and what measures are in place to remove barriers to learning. Providers are also required to state what learner groups they work with and what proportion come from the Council's geographic priority areas. These are defined as those Super Output Areas (SOAs) which either fall into the 20% most deprived nationally and/or have residents with low levels of skills.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 4.1.8 The Executive Member for Employment, Enterprise and Opportunity was consulted in July on the specific proposed changes for 2015/16. Community Committee Champions for Employment, Skills and Welfare were consulted throughout 2014-15 to identify specific locality needs.
- 4.1.9 Feedback from community consultation, provider and learner forums has informed the project brief against which provider awards are proposed. This includes information obtained through the self-assessment reporting (SAR) process; learner satisfaction feedback, observations, teaching and learning and learner focus groups etc.
- 4.1.10 The Community Learning Trust Board, (representing providers, public service partners, FE and HE Learning institutions and third and community sector organisations) has supported the Council to identify emerging learner needs and trends, changes required to payment rates and the fees policy.

### **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

- 4.2.1 An equality screening was carried out on 15 July 2015 to ensure that equality, diversity, cohesion and integration issues have been appropriately considered

prior to the awarding of contracts. The key findings are that the EDCC assessment of providers, as part of the commissioning process, ensures that the proposed activities that will be delivered have effectively been considered in terms of equality issues. The Equality Impact Analysis is detailed at Appendix 2.

A privacy impact assessment was carried out on 14 July 2015 to ensure that the Council and its sub-contracted providers remain compliant with information governance policies and statute. The Privacy Impact Analysis is detailed at Appendix 3.

### **4.3 Council policies and Best Council Plan**

4.3.1 The Community Learning programme will support the delivery of the Best Council Business Plan 2015-20. The delivery of targeted skills provision in community based settings across the city will contribute to the achievement of the Council Plan objectives to promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth by increasing the number of people with improved skills and to building a Child Friendly City by helping all children to progress and achieve at school.

### **4.4 Resources and value for money**

4.4.1 The activities proposed will be funded through the 2015-16 Community Learning budget allocated to the Council by the Skills Funding Agency. £1.5m will be awarded to providers to support the delivery of activities detailed in the Appendix 1 marked 'Confidential' for the academic year 2015-16.

4.4.2 The awarding of year 2 call-off contracts was influenced by the robust 2014-15 provider contract management process which assessed factors such as quality of provision, learner outcomes and cost per learner to ensure the programme delivers value for money. Value for money will also continue to be monitored and measured as part of the robust contract management arrangements in place.

4.4.1 The set tariff rates for standard provision are comparable with those set in other local authority districts where provision is commissioned. Payments made to providers will be subject to the submission of invoices and satisfactory evidence of delivery and learner achievement. Courses being proposed or delivered where learner numbers fall below the minimum target threshold will not normally be funded without good reasons.

4.4.2 Funding for the next academic year starting in September 2015, has been reduced significantly for six learning providers on the Community Learning framework, who did not meet their 2014-15 contractual targets or where a large proportion of their provision does not align with Council priorities.

### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

4.5.1 Providers were selected from the three year Community Learning Framework 2014-17 and, will be awarded one year call-off contracts for academic year 2015-16 in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Procedure Rules.

4.5.2 This is an officer delegated key decision which was notified in April on the Forward Plan for July 2015 and is subject to "call-in".



- 4.5.3 Officers in Legal Services were consulted on the changes to call-off contract Terms and Conditions to reflect recent changes in SFA funding rules and, also the introduction of a new Management Information System that all community learning providers will be obliged to use from September 2015.
- 4.5.4 Following approval, processing of call-off contracts for academic year 2015-16 will be undertaken in conjunction with Legal Services and CPPPU officers.
- 4.5.5 The information contained in Appendix 1 to this report relates to the financial or business affairs of provider organisations and is considered to be commercially sensitive. This information has been obtained through the framework contract management process which is still subject to negotiation in some areas. It is therefore considered that this element of the report should be treated as exempt under rule 10.4 (3) of the Access to Information Procedure Rules
- 4.5.6 Following a merger with Northern Refugee Centre (NRC) the award of a 2015-16 call-off contract to the provider previously known as RETAS will be delayed. This award is pending subject to novation of the previous RETAS three year framework contract to NRC and also completion of due diligence checks on the NRC organisation and their learning delivery capability following the merger.

## **4.6 Risk Management**

- 4.6.1 The year 2 call-off contract awards for the 2015-16 Leeds Community Learning Programme has been undertaken with the support and advice of the Council's Legal and Procurement Service. Advice on the terms and conditions and award methodology and criteria has been sought from the Procurement Governance and Regulation Manager.
- 4.6.2 All contracts awarded are subject to robust financial and quality monitoring procedures by the Employment and Skills service in accordance with the Council's and Skills Funding Agency's regulations to ensure compliance, delivery and learner achievement and to ensure Ofsted standards are met.
- 4.6.3 One learning provider ceased trading in May 2015 and another provider was taken over resulting in a change of focus away from community learning. These providers will not receive 2015-16 call-off contracts. Call-off contracts will also not be allocated to three providers that failed to deliver in 2014-15.
- 4.6.4 The providers to be awarded call-off contracts have largely delivered the target number of learners over the last academic year, therefore, the available budget has been fully allocated across the 2015/16 programme. However, previous experience suggests that the performance of individual providers can change during a 12 month period and to ensure that programme expenditure and impact is maximised, an additional over-programmed allocation of up to 8% has been identified against each provider to enable allocations to be increased where necessary to minimise the risk of programme underspend. Contracts are closely monitored throughout the year and where necessary, adjustments will be made to ensure the programme is delivered within budget and achieves the learner targets by the end of the academic year.

## **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 Through the undertaking of an open and competitive tender process in July 2014, a number of organisations were appointed to a three year framework 2014-17 to deliver the Leeds Community Learning Programme and, to be awarded annual funding contracts for each academic year. This report deals with the award of call-off contracts for the second academic year from September 2015 to July 2016.
- 5.2 The funding available for external delivery in the academic year starting this September 2015 is circa £1.5m. The Community Learning programme 2015-16 is expected to support up to 8,000 learners.
- 5.3 The recommended award of contracts to proven providers will deliver a broad and balanced programme of community learning across Leeds targeting priority learner groups, primarily from disadvantaged areas and, with provision delivered by range of public, third sector and specialist organisations. This will play a key role in the Council fulfilling its contractual obligations to the Skills Funding Agency and will support the delivery of the Best Council Plan 2015-20.
- 5.4 The increase in learner fees for those required to make a contribution to the cost of the course will ensure that provision remains largely targeted to those in greatest need and that further funds can be reinvested in provision to meet emerging local needs. The increase in the Learner Support Assistant pay rates to bring these in line with the national minimum wage rates to support staff retention and quality provision.

## **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 The Chief Officer Employment and Skills is asked to approve
- the proposed funding allocations to providers to the total value of £1.5m for the academic year 2015-16 and, authorise the award of year 2 call-off contracts to providers on the three year Community Learning framework 2014-17
  - the proposed amendments to the Learner Fees Policy from September 2015 to raise the learner fee from £2.30 to £3.00 per hour for adults not in receipt of any means tested benefits and, from 0.60p to 0.80p per hour for those in receipt of State Pension
  - the proposed increase in the hourly rate paid to providers for Learning Support Assistants from £7.50 to £8.50 per hour in line with changes in the national minimum wage.
- 6.2 The Head of Projects and Programmes, Employment and Skills service will be responsible for the implementation of the contract awards, revisions to Learner Fees, payment rates to providers and the management of the programme.

## **7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 7.1 There are no background documents

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.