

Learning for Life

Community Learning
and Skills Strategy



2015-2019





Introduction and Context

West Berkshire Council is committed to providing a wide range of learning opportunities in and for our local communities that reflect and respond to the diverse range of community needs; to offer enrichment, progression and development in support of individuals, their families, their neighbourhoods and the wider community and its economy.

The council recognises the significant impact Community Learning delivers, whether this is by encouraging further interest, gaining a new skill, a broadening of current knowledge and understanding, the development of personal confidence, building self esteem or social inclusion within our rural and urban communities.

For 2015/16 we will make learning accessible for those who most need it, supporting and strengthening other council services to achieve best impact and value.

Changing lives across West Berkshire

In 2010, the then government set out their *Skills for Sustainable Growth* strategy for improving and using skills for sustainable economic growth and extending social mobility and inclusion, mapping out the direction of reform for further education for adults aged 19 and over.

New Challenges New Chances followed in 2011, raising expectations of Community Learning. That strategy, which is still current, endorsed a clearer commitment to using the Community Learning public funding subsidy to support access, and progression in its widest sense, for people who are disadvantaged and who are furthest from learning and therefore, least likely to be economically active and/or able to support themselves, their families and their wider community.

#2014 in numbers:
2,616 enrolments
365 courses
50 venues
21 providers



Supporting Services

Community Learning adds value to many other services and supports wider council objectives. The Community Learning objectives for 2015/16 will complement those detailed in other council policies and strategies so that the services provided are galvanised in a response to positively impact and bring about needed change.

This approach will ensure best value for money, avoid duplication of effort and create a strengthened drive to improve outcomes.

Shaping our District is the council's strategy for 2015-2019. Community Learning supports the strategy's strategic aims of *Better educated communities* and *Maintaining a high quality of life within our communities*. Community Learning supports the strategy's priorities for *improving educational attainment, safeguarding children and vulnerable adults* and *supporting communities to do more for themselves*.



Shaping our District



A Record of Action A Promise of More

A Record of Action, A Promise of More is the local Conservative Manifesto. Community Learning supports all four of the major themes under *An Even Better Future: Spending Your Money Wisely in, Learning in, Working in and Living in, West Berkshire*. Community Learning principally supports the pledges of providing for *Children's Centres, Adult Education, Troubled Families* and *Mental Health*.

Building Communities Together is the council's approach to helping people and their communities to help themselves and help each other, enabling a focus on those who need help most. The vision of a *Brilliant West Berkshire* builds on community resources, skills, experience and expertise to enable change. Community Learning supports this community centred approach.



Building Communities Together



Partnership

*#2014 21% of
learners from
areas of
deprivation*

West Berkshire Council recognises the importance of enabling and providing access to learning opportunities for adults, many of which who will be returning to learning for the first time to seek progression and betterment from our partnership organisations. The council understands the high impact learning has on the social, economic and health well-being of individuals, families and communities and, importantly, the crucial role our partners play in helping to achieve our objectives.

Our partners have, and continue to, work closely and successfully in our communities; identifying and prioritising disadvantaged groups, working with those from different backgrounds, empowering individuals to develop skills and knowledge and providing personalised information, advice and guidance.

The council is committed to supporting existing partners and will seek to add value to planned quality projects wherever possible. In addition, the council will also welcome and encourage new partners and new ways of working in recognition of changing needs; to target support where it is needed most, working in a different way to achieve a different outcome.

To transform learner's opportunities and help them to:

- gain new skills to progress in employment.
- improve their confidence to engage or re-engage with learning.
- improve their health and social well-being.
- develop their social responsibility.
- better support themselves and their families.
- improve literacy – communication, digital, financial.
- identify their personal goals and take actions to reach them.



Purpose



Themes

In 2015/16, West Berkshire Council will focus our Community Learning Grant and Adult Skills Budget more against two themes: *Family Learning* and *Targeted Learning*. The council will continue to support the *Skills Learning* theme and contribute to maintaining a level of learning against the *Universal Learning* theme.

The council recognises the need to support a broad and balanced community learning and skills offer but also the greater need to draw support away from some areas that can support themselves, to target those areas that need it most.

Family Learning focuses on improving outcomes for families, helping them to help themselves with their own learning. Both formal and informal and often community based, family learning is wide ranging and can include developing parents capacity to support and encourage their children's learning and development, building confidence in returning to a learning environment or developing strategies to support the learning of children with special educational needs.



Family Learning

#2014 16% of learners living with a learning difficulty



Targeted Learning

Targeted Learning focuses on improving outcomes for disadvantaged individuals or groups facing barriers to progression, responding to individual need and having high impact. Targeted learning can include independent living support for those with additional learning needs, confidence and self-esteem building for those who have suffered domestic violence, developing coping strategies for those with mental health needs or finance literacy development for those moving from homelessness to independent or supported living.



Skills Learning

Skills Learning focuses on improving an individual's skills to progress them into or within employment. Skills Learning is supported by the single Adult Skills Budget (ASB), which is used for flexible and responsive provision to learners and employers in the workplace and classroom, delivering qualifications, units and other learning aims. Skills Learning targets both the unemployed and those in employment with low skills levels that restrict their progression. Skills Learning can include English, maths and wider literacy qualifications, employability qualifications, Apprenticeships, Traineeships, language qualifications, construction site readiness and a wide range of professional development qualifications.

Universal Learning in its broadest sense is community based and outreach learning opportunities to help people of different ages and backgrounds to gain a new skill, reconnect with learning, follow an interest or simply to keep engaged in active learning. West Berkshire Council uses their Community Learning public funding subsidy to contribute towards delivery costs of supported universal programmes to ensure learning opportunities are accessible to all. Providers deliver a broad and balanced Universal Learning offer, targeting priority groups with courses that improve confidence and well-being in addition to offering leisure opportunities that could include upholstery, modern foreign languages, ballroom dancing, cooking, music, drama, photography or family history.



Universal Learning



Keeping Active

Keeping Active is a part of Universal Learning but specifically focuses on developing learning opportunities for older people either in West Berkshire Council residential care homes or those that attend our resource centres, including those with additional learning difficulties and physical disabilities. The ranges of programmes are designed to engage and stimulate groups of learners through using interactive activities. These activities could include creative arts, crafts, music or movement, or reminiscence sessions to improve memory.



Strategic Priorities and Actions

*#2014 33% of
learners from
areas of low
educational
participation*

West Berkshire Council is ambitious for Community Learning to respond to need and impact on those who need help most, to do this, the council has set three strategic priorities:

Governance

The council will strengthen governance across Community Learning to provide strategic direction and additional support and challenge to hold to account the impact of the council and its commissioned Community Learning partner providers.

Family Learning

The council will increase the commitment to family centred learning and work closely with Children's Centres and other hubs to deliver opportunities in the heart of local communities, using a grant funding approach to allow flexibility in delivery. We will grow this year on year.

Targeted Learning

The council will increase the commitment to learning targeted on priority individuals and groups, removing funding restrictions to encourage innovative and creative solutions. We will grow this year on year.

Ambitious for impact and progression

If you require this information in an alternative format or translation, please call 01635 519060 and ask for the Community Learning Team.

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