

To: Communities Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee

From: Mike Hill, Cabinet Member
Amanda Honey, Managing Director, Communities

Date: 16th September 2010

Subject: Informal Adult Learning: Lead Accountable Body role

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary:

This report provides an update on the national policy context and local authority role in informal adult learning and the associated funding for Adult Safeguarded Learning. The report provides the background to the entry in the Forward Plan of Key Decisions entitled “Lead Accountable Body for Informal Adult Learning in Kent”.

FOR INFORMATION AND COMMENT

1. Introduction

- 1.1 On March 25th 2010, local authorities were invited by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) to become the Lead Accountable Bodies for Informal Adult Learning. This followed from the policy context developed within the 2009 White Paper, The Learning Revolution. The White Paper made the case for the development of local strategies for informal adult learning led by local authorities. Informal adult learning is associated with funding known as “Adult Safeguarded Learning” and KCC responded to the invitation in April 2010, expressing interest in the role, in principle.
- 1.2 For Kent, the Adult Safeguarded Learning budget currently amounts to £6million of a total national budget of £21 million.
- 1.3 Assumption of the Lead Accountable Body role was identified as a possible key decision and entered into the Forward Plan published in May 2010. This would have allowed for the decision to be made after the end of July 2010, subject to confirmation from BIS.
- 1.4 To date, however, there has been no further information from BIS about the potential role of local authorities in this regard. In June 2010 a letter went from the Local Government Association to the Minister, John Haynes, urging him to continue with plans for devolve

responsibility for informal adult learning and the Leader of KCC was among the signatories of this letter.

- 1.5 In July 2010, BIS published “Skills for Sustainable Growth”; a consultation document outlining the government’s future approach to skills policy. This was accompanied by “A Simplified Further Education and Skills Funding System and Methodology” which proposes a single post-19 budget. Both consultations run until October 14th 2010. The latter consultation specifically asks for views on whether Adult Safeguarded Learning should be retained or whether it should be combined within the single post-19 budget. Neither consultation envisages a strong role for local authorities in the planning and commissioning of provision.
- 1.6 It is clear that the policy direction relating to adult learning and skills will change and KCC will respond to the consultations. It does now seem unlikely that Local Authorities will become Lead Accountable Bodies for adult informal learning and the entry in the Forward Plan will be reviewed in September.

2. How the Funding has been used in Kent

- 2.1 For Kent, the Adult Safeguarded Learning budget currently amounts to £6 million pounds. Commissioning was undertaken by the Learning and Skills Council.
- 2.2 Adult Safeguarded Learning includes a range of programmes, generally focused on providing learning opportunities for adults, families and communities. In Kent, examples include targeted family learning which has been developed by Adult Education in partnership with CFE Extended Services. This is the largest such provision in the UK with over 7300 adults and children from Kent’s most deprived neighbourhoods participating. Other examples include provision aimed at engaging adults with low skills like the Response programme in the south of the county. This has helped over 800 adults engage with training and seek work.
- 2.3 In addition to such programmes, the majority of Adult Safeguarded Learning money is used to enable vulnerable adults to access learning of their choice.

3. Resource Implications

- 3.1 There are no resource implications to be reported. Future resource implications may emerge from changes in the Further Education and Skills Funding consultation.

4. Recommendations

Members of the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to

4.1 NOTE the contents of the report.

4.2 NOTE the intention to review the entry in the Forward Plan of Key decisions.

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