

Appendix 1

Consultation – Reduction of Age-related Concession in Kent Adult Education

May 2011

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Contents

1.0 Introduction	p. 2
2.0 Methodology	p. 2
2.1 Approach	p. 2
2.2 Learner Surveys	p. 3
2.3 Contact Lists	p. 4
2.4 Electronic Surveys	p. 4
2.5 Hard Copy Surveys	p. 4
2.6 Telephone Contact	p. 4
2.7 Focus Groups	p. 5
2.8 Non-Learner Surveys	p. 5
2.9 Analysis	p. 5
2.10 Sample	p. 6
3.0 Respondent Profiles	p. 6
3.1 Kent Adult Education Learner and Survey Respondent Profile	p. 6
3.2 Importance Placed on the ‘60+ concession’	p. 8
3.3 Non-Learner Survey Respondent Profile	p. 9
3.4 Focus Group Attendee Profile	p. 9
4.0 Survey Analysis	p. 9
4.1 Mitigations	p. 9
4.2 Impact on Learners as a Result of the Proposal	p. 14
4.3 Levels of Interest in 2011/12 Courses	p. 16
4.4 Alternative Proposals	p. 17
5.0 Conclusion	p. 18
Appendix 1 – Learner Survey (Hard Copy Format)	p. 21
Appendix 2 – Non-Learner Survey (e-survey Format)	p. 25
Appendix 3 – Focus Group Structure	p. 29

1.0 Introduction

Community Learning and Skills (CLS) has undertaken a consultation with learners and non-learners, regarding the proposal to reduce the current, universal age-related concession for learners aged 60 years and over on the non-accredited Adult Learning programme from 40% to 20%, (a 50% reduction).

Reasons for the Proposal:

- The reason for this proposal stems from the national Government agenda which stated that public funding should be used for the benefit of people who are disadvantaged, whilst those able to pay for training and learning opportunities should do so. This outlook is identified in the BIS – ‘Skills for Sustainable Growth’ strategy.
- The funding that subsidises informal adult learning (Adult Safeguarded Funding) has been frozen since 2003/04, whilst the true cost of offering learning opportunities has risen since this time.
- The KCC medium term budget plan, indicates that there should be an increased contribution through adjustment to the concessions.

Aims of the proposal:

- To reduce reliance on public funding for those who can afford to pay.
- To enable more of the funding, over time, to be directed towards learners from disadvantaged groups and communities.
- To bring concessions in Kent in line with those offered in other parts of the UK.
- To reflect, over a period of time, the true cost of delivery in course costs.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Approach

The consultation took place from 1st April until 6th May 2011. A target group of learners were contacted and a small number of non-learners were also contacted.

A range of media was used in order to maximise engagement with learners known to be more difficult to reach. A consultation survey was offered in electronic and paper formats alongside telephone contact with larger numbers

of learners. Three focus groups offered the opportunity to gain in-depth feedback and opinion from our learners.

A representative sample of learners was calculated in conjunction with the KCC Public Involvement team and target numbers for the consultation were established. A small number of non-learners were also consulted, to act as a control group and in order to identify any particular issues that may have required further exploration during the focus groups.

The methods chosen to engage with learners proved particularly effective, ensuring that the target number of learners aged 60 years and over was surpassed. In total, at least 19% of all Kent Adult Education (KAE) learners aged 60 years and over responded to the consultation, (the true figure is likely to be higher as not all learners indicated their age).

Targeted and Actual Numbers of Consultation Respondents

Engagement Method	Target Number of Respondents	Actual Number of Respondents
Learner Survey	365	1,148
Non-Learner Survey	50	51
Focus Groups	24	24
Total	439	1,223

The 1,148 survey responses submitted by learners equates to 5% of all learners in 2010/11.

All quotations used in this report have been recorded verbatim.

2.2 Learner Surveys

Two surveys were designed in order to gather specific data from respondents. One survey was given to current learners and another survey was created for non-learners, (appendices 1 and 2).

The aim of the consultation was to inform Kent Adult Education (KAE) learners of the proposal to reduce the current, universal (non-means tested) age-related concession for learners aged 60 years and over. The surveys also provided information regarding the respondents' personal profiles, including information on gender, age, ethnicity and home postcode.

The surveys were distributed by e-mail, placed in the cafés and receptions of main Adult Education centres and surveys were also given to learners at the end of their classes.

2.3 Contact Lists

Enrolment records from the academic years 2009/10 and 2010/11, (as at 21st March 2011) were examined and filtered for those learners aged 60 years and over. From those learners who had stated they were happy to receive marketing information, two separate contact lists were created based on the details given at the time of enrolment. Those learners with phone numbers listed but no e-mail address were filtered into a telephone list for calling. The remaining learners who had given e-mail addresses but no telephone number (1,467) were contacted by e-mail. Non-learners (64) that had not objected to being contacted by CLS during previous market research projects were also telephoned.

2.4 Electronic Surveys

The learners who had given e-mail addresses and had not objected to being contacted for marketing purposes were contacted by e-mail, with the survey as an electronic hyperlink embedded into the message. The learners' consultation survey was launched on the 1st April 2011. Of the 1,467 sent to learners, 89 were returned as undeliverable. In total, there was a 35% response rate to the survey via e-mail (e-survey).

2.5 Hard Copy Surveys

Main Adult Education centres provided hard copy surveys in receptions and cafés and they were handed to learners at the end of classes.

2.6 Telephone Contact

Those learners who had given a telephone number but no e-mail address were contacted using a telephone script and asked to participate in the consultation via one of two methods:

- Attending a focus group.
- Completing the consultation survey over the telephone.

A third (30%) of learners contacted by telephone agreed to either attend a focus group or completed the survey over the telephone.

2.7 Focus Groups

In addition to the information on the focus groups being offered to learners who had been telephoned, posters (advertising the locations, dates and times of the planned focus groups) were distributed to the relevant centres prior to 5th April 2011.

The focus groups took place in main Adult Education centres in three of the districts, (Tunbridge Wells, Gravesend and Folkestone) providing a representative geographic spread across the county. The times and days chosen to run the groups, reflected the times and days when there were high proportions of learners aged 60 years and over in the centres, in order to maximise the number of 'drop-in' attendees.

Three, one hour focus group sessions were organised in each district. In total, 24 learners attended the sessions.

The focus groups were planned using the outline of the survey but with a greater focus on identifying current awareness of the mitigations and receiving feedback on the opinions of the proposal. The views given in these sessions have been analysed and feed into this report. (The focus group structure is included in appendix 3).

2.8 Non-Learner Surveys

In order to gain the opinions of Kent residents who were not current learners, non-users believed to be aged 60 years and over were contacted. These non-learners provided a control group; to identify whether any issues would affect potential learners and then discuss these with current learners during the focus groups.

In total, 51 people were telephoned using a contact list previously purchased for market research purposes. In total, 80% of those contacted completed the survey over the telephone.

2.9 Analysis

Both the learner survey and the non-learner survey received 94% completion rates from those taking part in the consultation.

The survey and focus group information has been analysed either quantitatively or qualitatively.

Quantitative analysis included:

- Statistical analysis.

- Providing supporting charts.
- Summarising key findings.

Qualitative analysis included:

- Collating verbal and written feedback.
- Identifying key themes.
- Summarising key observations.

2.10 Sample

In total, the sample size achieved (1,223) was in excess of the sample targeted (439). Therefore, the confidence levels used for the data have also surpassed their targets.

The target for the sample size was to have a confidence level of 95% and a confidence interval of 5.0. The respondents' figures within the report are actually based on a confidence level of 95% with a confidence interval of 2.5.

This means that if 50% of all learners agree with a statement, you can be 95% confident that if you asked the same question to all 2010/11 learners, between 47.5% - 52.5% of them would also agree.

3.0 Respondent Profiles

3.1 Kent Adult Education Learner and Survey Respondent Profile

The respondents to the survey broadly match the profile for KAE learners in 2009/10, the last complete academic year for which figures are available.

- Some 72% of survey respondents are female and 15% of learners have a disability, in comparison with 77% of female learners and 10% of learners with a disability in KAE in 2009/10.
- Just 0.7% of consultation respondents are Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) learners in comparison with 5% of all KAE learners in 2009/10.
- The consultation respondent profiles are equivalent to around 14,330 female learners, 2,909 learners with a disability and 140 BME learners in 2009/10.

The consultation was targeted at learners aged 60 years and over, as the proposal is more likely to have a direct impact on these learners.

- As at 13th May 2011, 10,832 learners aged 60 years and over had enrolled on one or more courses. Learners aged 60 years and over accounted for the same proportion of all learners (29%) as in 2009/10, although there were 549 fewer older learners than was the case at the end of 2009/10.
- Nine in ten (92%) consultation respondents were learners aged 60 years and over.
- Across KAE, learners aged 60 years and over accounted for a third (32%) of all learners in 2009/10.

Survey respondents who identified their home postcodes were also categorised by Kent & Medway (K&M) profile groups. Profile groups have been identified by Experian, (an information services company) and then applied to Kent & Medway.

Experian have classified households by their behaviours and attitudes. People in Kent and Medway have been placed into one of eleven K&M groups.

People categorised in K&M groups 1 and 2 are identified as living in comfortable homes with the time and money to spend on their interests. Those categorised in K&M groups 10 and 11 tend to be well qualified with savings and investments.

- Enrolments from K&M groups 1 and 2 accounted for 49% of all Kent Adult Education enrolments in 2009/10, equivalent to 15,665 enrolments.*
- Enrolments from K&M groups 1 and 2 accounted for 50% of all learners aged 60 years and over in 2009/10, equivalent to 6,597 enrolments.*
- 70% of enrolments from learners profiled as K&M groups 1 and 2 and aged 60 years and over, received a '60+ concession' in 2009/10, equivalent to 4,618 enrolments.*
- Almost two-thirds (65%) of all learner respondents can be categorised as K&M 1 or K&M 2.
- The three most over-represented categories in comparison with the Kent population are in groups K&M 1, K&M 10 and K&M 11.

* These figures are based on enrolments rather than learner numbers in order to provide an accurate K&M profile of each course.

- More than half (56%) of respondents belong to one of these three groups, despite just 27% of Kent's population being identified as K&M 1, K&M 10 and K&M 1.

3.2 Importance Placed on the '60+ Concession'

The concession was viewed as a decisive factor when choosing whether to attend courses for some focus group attendees, but as something that was 'nice to have' by others.

The 'nice to have' position perhaps reflects the higher numbers of K&M 1 and K&M 2 attendees, (which were actually under-represented in comparison with the KAE learner profile), as many learners in these two K&M groups can afford to pay for their courses. Indeed, several learners across the county made the point that, *'I can afford to pay but...'*

The '60+ concession' was more likely to be viewed as an incentive to attend by learners profiled as K&M 1 and K&M 2, with one learner in Tunbridge Wells saying that it was something that *'[we] have had – still want'*. The argument put forward by many learners that match a K&M 1 or K&M 2 profile can be reflected by the comments made by a learner from Maidstone:

'I would rather it was not reduced but I can see that in the current position its understandable and fair.'

For the learners who were more opposed to the proposal, the argument often put forward was that pensioners receiving only a basic state pension would struggle to pay more than their current outlay, at a time when utility, fuel and food costs are rising. One learner remarked that:

'Will make it more difficult for pensioners on a low income that don't qualify for access or don't have government benefits.'

Although, there may be a proportion of learners that did not expect to attend courses in 2011/12 as a result of changes to the '60+ concession', focus group responses suggest that this is unlikely to significantly impact on the levels of interest in courses. If learners were interested in courses then they *'will come along anyway'* according to a learner at a focus group in Tunbridge Wells. This attitude appears to be fairly commonplace among focus group attendees and survey respondents.

The '60+ concession' also did not appear to have a large impact on attracting new customers. Although the majority of non-learners believed that the availability of a concession was very or quite important when deciding on whether to enrol on a course with KAE, just around one in ten stated that they would not enrol unless there was a 40% concession. Hence, for non-learners too, the concession was viewed as a bonus rather than a fundamental requirement.

3.3 Non-Learner Survey Respondent Profile

As only a small sample of non-learners were contacted to provide a control group, the survey respondent profiles are not representative. However, all respondents were aged 60 years and over and the respondent profiles are similar to those of the learners.

3.4 Focus Group Attendee Profile

In the three focus groups, across the county, a further 24 learners provided their opinions on the proposal.

- Twenty-three attendees were aged 60 years and over.
- At least half (twelve) of the attendees would be profiled within K&M groups 1 and 2.

4.0 Survey Analysis

4.1 Mitigations

In the consultation, mitigations were discussed with learners. The mitigations were:

- The existing 50% concession for learners claiming certain Government benefits.
- The existing 'Access Fund' for those on low household incomes (to help learners meet course/exam/materials costs).
- The existing staggered payment option for courses costing £60+.
- The existing 'Pay As You Go' programme.
- The potential introduction of discounts and promotions for learners enrolling on and paying for courses online.

The survey feedback suggests that the majority of learners were aware of the opportunity to pay for and enrol on a course online, aware of the availability of a staggered payment option and aware that there is a 50% concession for learners claiming certain Government benefits. However, the 'Access Fund' had lower awareness levels among learners.

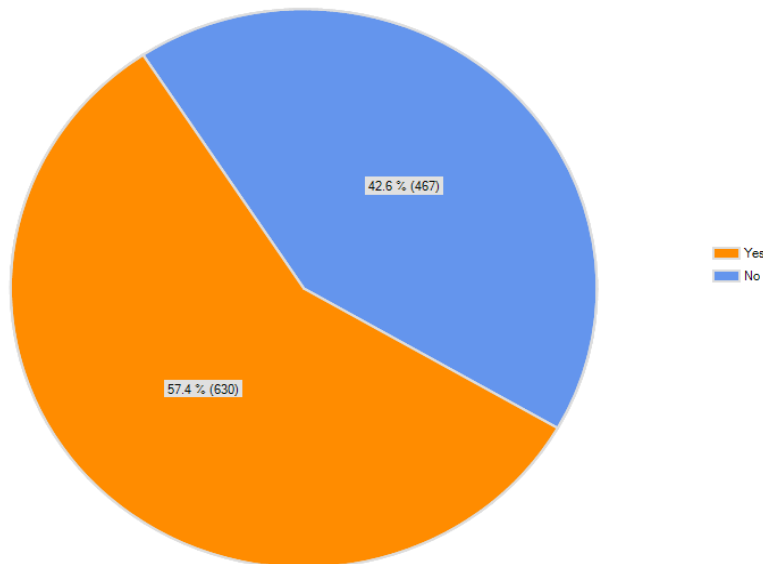
Addressing the Mitigations

- Focus group feedback suggests that the promotion of existing and potential mitigations would help to raise awareness, particularly for the 'Access Fund'.
- The provision of a dedicated area to discuss sensitive and/or confidential matters may increase use of the mitigations.

The existing 50% concession for learners claiming certain Government benefits.

- 57% of learners were aware that KAE offer a 50% concession for learners claiming certain Government benefits.

Offers a 50% concession for learners claiming certain Government benefits?



Source: Consultation – Reduction of Age-related Concession, April 2011 – 1,097 responses.

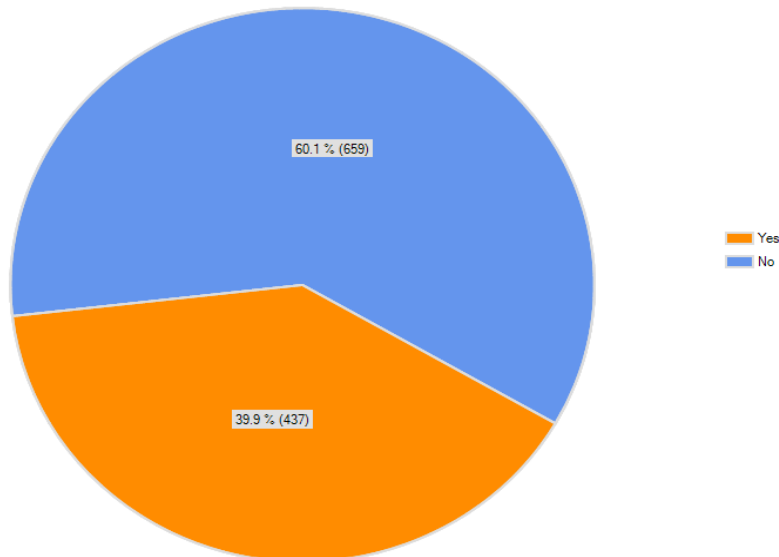
- This mitigation had very high levels of awareness among focus group attendees, but learners were not able to identify which Government benefits were included.
- A minority of learners in focus groups believed that the state pension should be one of the Government benefits that entitle people to concessions:

'I am on a state pension and I have too much money to receive these discounts but it doesn't mean I'm well off. I can only just afford my course at the moment'.

The existing ‘Access Fund’ for those on low household incomes (to help learners meet course/exam/materials costs).

- 40% of learners were aware of the CLS Access Fund, (which provides financial support to help learners meet course costs, material costs, exam fees or other associated course costs).

Offers an access fund to those on low household incomes (to help you meet course/exam/material costs)?



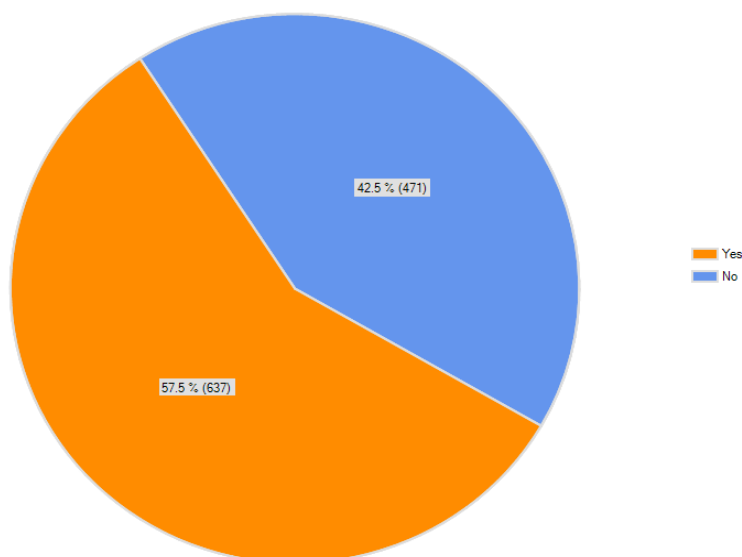
Source: Consultation – Reduction of Age-related Concession, April 2011 – 1,096 responses.

- The Access Fund was the least well-known mitigation among focus group attendees.
- The presence of this particular mitigation was rather surprising and pleasing for many of the focus group attendees.

The existing staggered payment option for courses costing £60+.

- 58% of learners are aware that there is a staggered payment option for courses that cost at least £60.

Offers a staggered payment option for courses costing £60 ?



Source: Consultation – Reduction of Age-related Concession, April 2011 – 1,108 responses.

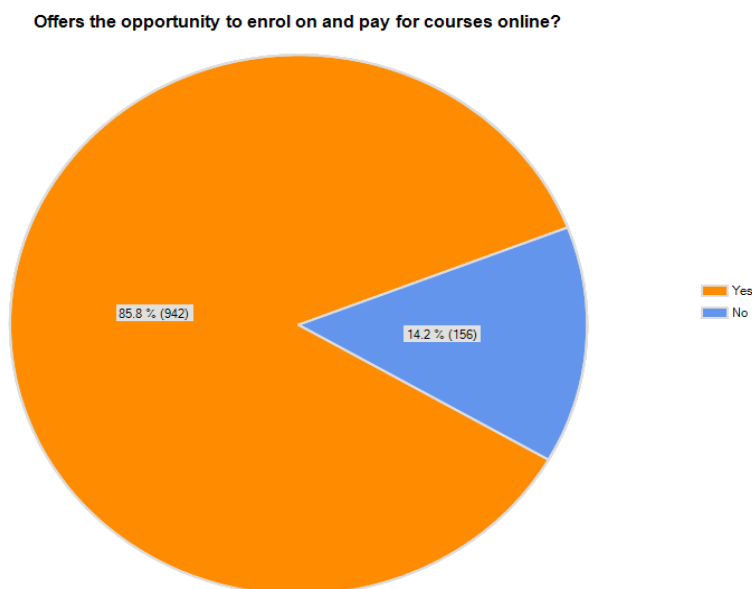
- The staggered payment had mixed awareness levels in focus groups.
- Many learners in focus groups believed that the standing order payment option was valuable for learners who are not well-off and may find it difficult to pay upfront for a course.

The existing 'Pay As You Go' programme.

- Learners at focus groups, who were unhappy with the proposal, stated that they thought Adult Education prices should be low and concession levels should remain the same as in 2010/11, because many courses provide a physical or mental benefit to learners.
- The existing Pay As You Go (PAYG) programme, which particularly caters for courses in the Leisure and Fitness programmes, had low awareness levels among the focus group attendees.
- Focus group attendees believed the PAYG scheme was a positive way to support learners keeping active and maintaining their mental and physical health, whilst acknowledging that learners may need to miss some sessions due to ill health or health-related appointments.
- Several focus group attendees stated that they would like to see the PAYG programme extended to other courses which may provide mental stimulation but not necessarily physical activity.

The potential introduction of discounts and promotions for learners enrolling on and paying for courses online.

- 86% of survey respondents (almost 9 out of 10), were aware of the ability to pay for and enrol on a course online.



Source: Consultation – Reduction of Age-related Concession, April 2011 – 1,098 responses.

- The opportunity to enrol online had the highest awareness levels among focus group attendees and non-learners. The most popular mitigation discussed at the focus groups was the introduction of an online discount.
- Most learners were in favour of even a small discount, although several learners commented that this may disadvantage those without computers.
- When learners were informed about the public access computers available in some main Adult Education centres as well as those available in Libraries, the focus group attendees acknowledged the benefits of an online enrolment discount.

Addressing the Mitigations.

- Some focus group attendees suggested that the mitigations discussed should be more widely advertised.

In Gravesend, one learner in a focus group stated that they thought the concessions should be advertised in the areas (such as the civic centre or the housing associations), where the potential customer-base can be found:

'Do these people that would benefit from this discount actually know that it's available to them?'

It was noted by several focus group attendees that learners would have to provide evidence in order to benefit from certain mitigations, such as the 50% concession related to the receipt of Government benefits.

- Providing a dedicated area to discuss sensitive and/or confidential matters may increase use of the means-tested mitigations.

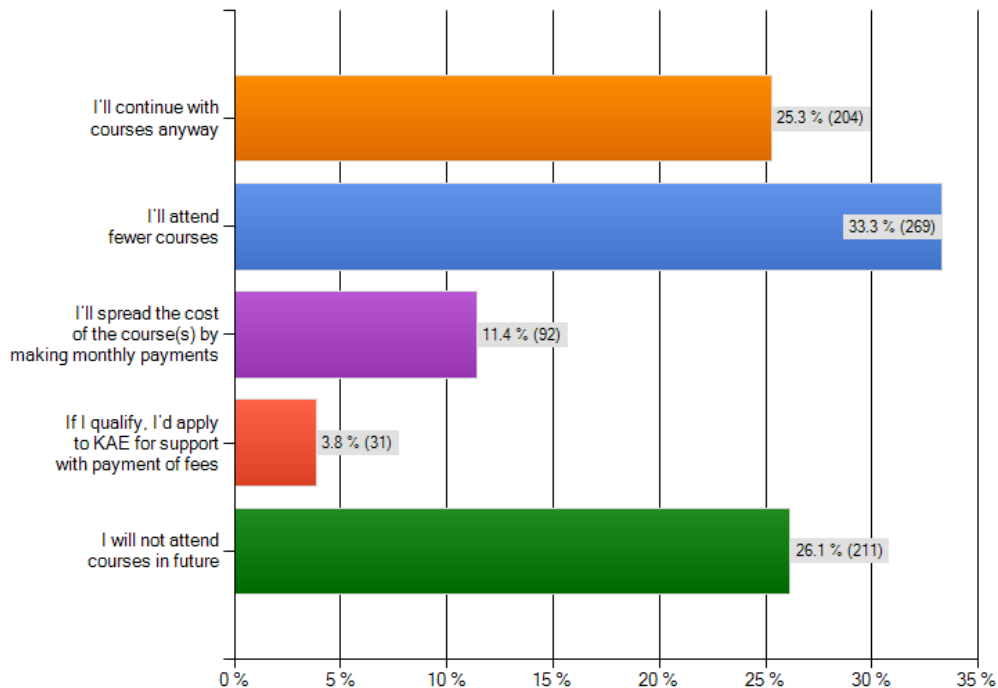
4.2 Impact on Learners as a Result of the Proposal

- As at 13th May 2011, 4,734 learners had received the '60+ concession'. Therefore, in 2010/11, four in ten learners (44%) aged 60 years and over had received a '60+ concession'.
- It can be inferred that if a similar proportion of K&M 1 and 2 learners who received a concession in 2009/10 also received a concession in 2010/11 then around 2,032 learners would have received the '60+ concession'. This is equivalent to 43% of all those receiving a '60+ concession' in 2010/11.
- As at 13th May 2011, 31% of all 2010/11 courses were eligible for a concession. (The concession only applies to longer courses with 20 or more guided learning hours).
- As at 13th May 2011, 41% of all learners aged 60 years and over were enrolled on more than one course, equivalent to 2,627 learners.

All learners currently receiving the '60+ concession', were asked what they expected to do as a result of a reduction in the concession:

- 33% of learners stated that they would attend fewer courses.
- 25% stated that they would continue with courses anyway.
- 15% of learners stated that they would look to use the standing order or means-tested mitigations (the CLS Access Fund or the 50% concession for learners receiving certain Government benefits).
- 26% of learners stated that they would not attend courses in future.

What are you likely to do as a result of the reduction in the 'age-related concession'? (Please choose one from the following that most closely matches your view).



Source: Consultation – Reduction of Age-related Concession, April 2011 – 807 responses.

33% of learners stated that they would attend fewer courses.

- If 33% of learners aged 60 years and over and currently attending more than one course were to attend fewer courses in future, this would equate to around 875 learners attending fewer courses.
- This is equivalent to just 4% of all current learners attending fewer courses, (as at 13th May 2011).

25% of learners stated that they would continue with courses anyway.

- If 25% of learners aged 60 years and over and currently receiving the '60+ concession' were to continue to attend courses in future, this would equate to around 1,198 learners.
- This is equivalent to 6% of all current learners continuing with their courses, (as at 13th May 2011).

15% of learners stated that they would look to use the standing order or means-tested mitigations

- If 15% of learners aged 60 years and over and currently receiving the '60+ concession' were to utilise the standing order or the means-tested mitigations, this would equate to around 720 learners.
- This is equivalent to just 3% of all current learners looking to use the standing order or means-tested mitigations, (as at 13th May 2011).

26% of learners stated that they would not attend courses in future.

- If 26% of learners aged 60 years and over and currently receiving the '60+ concession' were to no longer attend courses in future, this would equate to around 1,236 learners.
- If 1,236 learners did not attend courses in 2011/12, this would equate to a decrease of 6% in total learner numbers, (as at 13th May 2011).

A comparison of KAE figures between 1st May 2010 and 17th December 2010 and the same period in 2009 indicated that 39% of learners lapsed, (this period typically involves large numbers of enrolments each year). In the normal course of events, it would be expected for this proportion of learners to lapse.

It is unclear whether the learners that stated they would not attend courses in future would have been among the expected year-on-year lapsing customers. Therefore, the reduction in the concession may affect fewer than the 1,236 learners identified above.

4.3 Levels of Interest in 2011/12 Courses

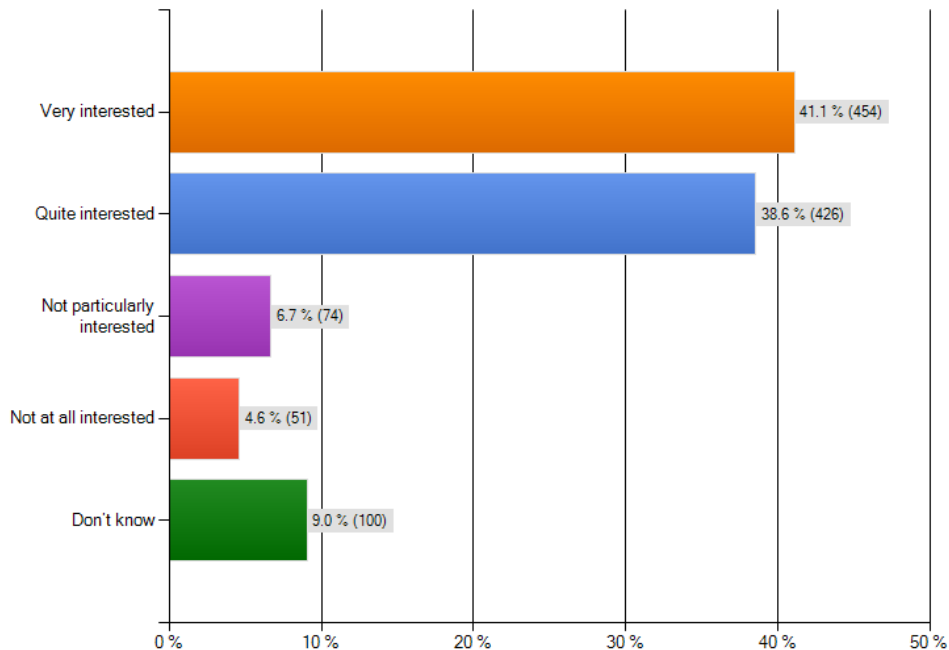
Learners were asked to state how interested they would be in enrolling on a course in 2011/12, taking all things into account including the proposed reduction in the concession.

This question was asked as a control question, to identify whether or not the proportion of learners stating that they would not attend courses in 2011/12 was a true reflection of interest in KAE courses.

- 80% of learners stated that they were very or quite interested in enrolling in a course in 2011/12.
- 81% of learners currently receiving a '60+ concession' were very or quite interested in enrolling on a course in 2011/12.

- 11% of learners stated that they were not at all interested or not particularly interested in enrolling on a course in 2011/12.

Taking all things into account, how interested will you be in enrolling on a course in 2011/12?



Source: Consultation – Reduction of Age-related Concession, April 2011 – 1,105 responses.

If learners that answered ‘Don’t know’ to this question were added to all those learners either not at all interested or not particularly interested in enrolling on a course, this would account for 20% of all responses to the question.

This figure (20%) is lower than the proportion of learners that stated that they would not attend courses in future (26%). This indicates that the control question has identified a greater interest in KAE courses than would have been expected as a result of the responses to the previous question.

Therefore, some respondents (approximately 6% – 15%), may be interested in courses in 2011/12 even if they did not believe that they would enrol on a course in future. This would equate to around 284 - 710 more learners aged 60 years and over and receiving a ‘60+ concession’ interested in attending courses in 2010/11, than was indicated by the question on likely actions as a result of a reduction in the concession.

4.4 Alternative Proposals

Some learners put forward alternatives to the proposal. Two suggestions commonly put forward by a small minority (<2%) of survey respondents and focus group attendees were that:

1. The proposal could be phased in over a longer period.

2. The concession could be varied based on age cohort.

As these suggestions were often put forward with similar sets of conditions, this may suggest that these alternative approaches could prove to be popular alternatives with learners.

1. Several learners felt that a 50% reduction would have a significant impact on their ability to pay for courses in future. Typically, learners putting forward a 'phased approach proposal' have suggested reducing the '60+ concession' to 25-30% in year 1 and then 20% in year 2.

This alternative proposal would reduce the financial impact to learners in year 1 and give learners a year to prepare for the next reduction.

However, if KAE was to dilute the immediate impact of the proposal by phasing it in over a longer period, this could be detrimental to the overall programme of courses offered in future. This is due to a strong message from Government indicating that funding for provision is likely to be reduced and redistributed in future. Therefore, savings would still need to be met in year 1, so this alternative is not viable.

2. Some learners responding to surveys and in the focus groups, felt that learners in their 60s may still be at work and therefore able to pay for their courses more easily. Whilst learners aged in their 70s and 80s may find it harder to pay with a reduced concessionary rate.

Learners putting forward an 'age-dependent concession proposal' have suggested a 20% concession for those learners aged 60-69 years, 30% for those learners aged 70-74 years and 40% for those learners aged 75 years and over.

This approach may be considered unfair as it moves away from the universal concession and arbitrarily requires learners of different ages to receive a higher or lower concession irrespective of the ability to pay. The ability to sustain this approach would also be dependent on future funding and would therefore need to be reviewed regularly.

5.0 Conclusion

In the consultation, a representative sample of learners provided their views on a proposal to reduce the current, universal age-related concession for learners aged 60 years and over, on the non-accredited Adult Learning programme from 40% to 20%.

Mitigations

During the consultation, mitigations were discussed with learners to identify current awareness levels and raise awareness levels among older learners.

The consultation suggests that learners are interested in:

- The existing staggered payment option for courses costing £60+.
- The existing 50% concession for learners claiming certain Government benefits.
- The existing 'Access Fund' for those on low household incomes, (to help learners meet course/exam/materials costs).
- The potential introduction of discounts and promotions for learners enrolling on and paying for courses online.
- The existing 'Pay As You Go' programme.
- The promotion of existing and potential mitigations to help raise awareness.

The CLS Access Fund and the PAYG programme appeared to have the lowest awareness levels of the existing mitigations. There is also the potential to increase the promotion of the mitigations currently available to learners and potential learners, in order to increase awareness and up-take of the mitigations.

Overall, the consultation suggests that if awareness levels of the mitigations were raised across the county, then potentially 15% of learners, (equating to around 720 learners) currently receiving a '60+ concession' would consider utilising them in future.

Potential Impact of Proposal

It can be inferred that if a similar proportion of learners aged 60 years and over and profiled as K&M groups 1 and 2 receive the '60+ concession' in 2010/11, as was the case in 2009/10, this would be equivalent to around 43% of all those receiving the '60+ concession'. Therefore, it appears that the '60+ concession' is currently accessed by four in ten learners who would not normally be described as 'disadvantaged'.

It is anticipated that up to a quarter (26%) of learners may choose to lapse as a result of a reduction in the '60+ concession', however, this equates to just 1,236 learners. A further 875 learners could attend fewer courses in future.

However, these responses may not be entirely reliable. It may have been expected that, in general, learners would harbour more negative than positive

feelings towards a potential reduction in the concession. Until a reduction actually takes place, it is difficult to know whether the 2,111 learners identified above, will actually attend fewer courses/lapse or whether they continue to attend courses in 2011/12.

The fact that KAE has an annual turnover of 39% of learners each year (and then replace the majority of these with new or returning learners), means that the learners who stated that they would not attend courses in future could potentially be among the expected numbers of lapsing learners.

The consultation also suggests that four in five (80%) learners are interested in enrolling on a course in 2011/12, when taking the proposal and other factors into consideration.

A minority of learners offered alternatives to the proposal but the two approaches put forward do not offer realistic alternatives.

Appendix 1

Learner Survey (Hard Copy Format)

Consultation - Reduction of Age-related Concession

The Adult Education Service is currently undertaking a consultation with current learners and non-learners regarding our age-related concessionary prices.

We value the opinions of our learners and potential learners and so we regularly consult on a range of issues.

Please take five minutes to participate in this consultation if you are currently aged 60 years old or over, or are approaching 60.

All responses are anonymous. The results of the consultation will be used to help us better understand how the proposed reduction in concession could affect Kent Adult Education learners.

Thank you in advance for participating in this consultation.

Proposal

The Adult Education Service is proposing to reduce the current, (non-means tested) concession for learners aged 60+ on the Adult Learning programme from its current level of 40% off the price to 20%, (a 50% reduction).

Reason for the Proposal

The reason for this proposal stems from the national Government agenda which states that public funding should be used for the benefit of people who are disadvantaged, whilst those able to pay for training and learning opportunities should do so. This outlook is identified in the 'Investing in Skills for Sustainable Growth' strategy, which was launched by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in November 2010.

It is also the case that the Service can no longer afford to offer the 40% reduction to everyone over 60.

The funding that subsidises adult and community learning has been frozen since 2003/04, whilst the true cost of offering learning opportunities has risen by over 20% since this time.

Aims of the Proposal

- To reduce the reliance on public funding for those who can afford to pay.
- To enable more of the funding to be directed towards learners from socially and economically disadvantaged groups/communities.
- To bring concessions in Kent in line with those offered in other parts of the UK.
- To reflect, over a period of time, the true cost of course delivery in course costs.

Consultation - Reduction of Age-related Concession

1. At which Kent Adult Education Centre have you taken your most recent course?

2. Which course(s) are you currently/were you most recently taking with Kent Adult Education?

3. How long have you been learning with Kent Adult Education?

- 0-2 years 5-9 years Don't know
 3-4 years 10+ years

4. Do you currently receive a '60+ concession'?

- Yes No Don't know

5. How important is the availability of the 60+ concession when deciding whether to enrol on an Adult Education course with us?

- Very important Important Neither important nor unimportant Unimportant Not at all important

Consultation - Reduction of Age-related Concession

6. Did you know that Kent Adult Education...

Offers a staggered payment option for courses costing £60+?

Yes

No

Offers an access fund to those on low household incomes (to help you meet course/exam/material costs)?

Yes

No

Offers a 50% concession for learners claiming certain Government benefits?

Yes

No

Offers the opportunity to enrol on and pay for courses online?

Yes

No

7. What are you likely to do as a result of the reduction in the '60+ concession'? (Please choose one from the following that most closely matches your view).

I'll continue with courses anyway

I'll attend fewer courses

I'll spread the cost of the course(s) by making monthly payments

If I qualify, I'd apply to Kent Adult Education for support with payment of fees

I will not attend courses in future

8. Taking all things into account, how interested will you be in enrolling on a course in 2011/12?

Very interested

Quite interested

Not particularly interested

Not at all interested

Don't know

Consultation - Reduction of Age-related Concession

Please add any other comments regarding the proposal to reduce the concessionary rate for the over 60s.

The following questions are not mandatory but we would appreciate your responses.

All responses collected in this section will only be used to check that we have a representative set of views for this consultation.

Gender identification

Male

Female

Age

16-59 years old

65-69 years old

75+ years old

60-64 years old

70-74 years old

Which of the following groups do you consider yourself to belong to?

White British/Irish

Indian

Mixed ethnic group

White other

Pakistani/Bangladeshi

Other ethnic group

Black/Black British

Chinese

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Yes

No

Home postcode (this will not be used to identify respondents).

Thank you for participating in this Kent Adult Education consultation.

You can hand this survey to the reception in your centre.

Appendix 2

Non-Learner Survey (e-Survey Format)

Consultation – Reduction of Age-related Concessionary Price

The Adult Education Service is currently undertaking a consultation with current students and non-students regarding our age-related concessionary prices.

We value the opinions of our learners and potential learners and so we regularly consult on a range of issues.

Please take five minutes to participate in this consultation if you are currently aged 60 years old or over.

Kent Adult Education is a department of Kent County Council, Community Learning and Skills.

All responses are anonymous. The results of the consultation will be used to help us better understand how the proposed reduction in concession could affect the Adult Education Services' customers.

Thank you in advance for participating in this consultation.

Proposal

The Adult Education Service is proposing to reduce the current, (non-means tested) concession for learners aged 60+ on the Adult Learning programme from its current level of 40% off the price to 20%, (a 50% reduction).

Reason for the Proposal

The reason for this proposal stems from the national Government agenda which states that public funding should be used for the benefit of people who are disadvantaged, whilst those able to pay for training and learning opportunities should do so. This outlook is identified in the 'Investing in Skills for Sustainable Growth' strategy, which was launched by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in November 2010.

It is also the case that the Service can no longer afford to offer the 40% reduction to everyone over 60.

The funding that subsidises adult and community learning has been frozen since 2003/04, whilst the true cost of offering learning opportunities has risen by over 20% since this time.

Aims of the Proposal

- To reduce the reliance on public funding for those who can afford to pay.
- To enable more of the funding to be directed towards learners from socially and economically disadvantaged groups/communities.
- To bring concessions in Kent in line with those offered in other parts of the UK.
- To reflect, over a period of time, the true cost of course delivery in course costs.

Consultation – Reduction of Age-related Concessionary Price

Have you ever previously enrolled on a Kent Adult Education course?

- Yes No Don't know

At which centre did you take your most recent course with Kent Adult Education?

Which course(s) were you most recently taking with Kent Adult Education?

Approximately how long has it been since you were last enrolled on a course with Kent Adult Education?

- 0-2 years 3-4 years 5-9 years 10+ years Don't know

Did you receive a '60+ concession' when enrolling on this course?

- Yes No Don't know

How important do you feel the availability of a 60+ concession would be, when deciding whether to enrol on an Adult Education course with us?

- Very important Quite important Neither important nor unimportant Quite unimportant Not at all important

Did you know that Kent Adult Education...

Offers a staggered payment option for courses costing £60+?

- Yes No

Offers an access fund to those on low household incomes (to help you meet course/exam/material costs)?

- Yes No

Offers a 50% concession for learners claiming certain Government benefits?

- Yes No

Offers the opportunity to enrol on and pay for courses online?

- Yes No

Consultation – Reduction of Age-related Concessionary Price

If you were planning to enrol on a course with Kent Adult Education in 2011/12, what would you be likely to do as a result of the reduction in the '60+ concession'?
(Please choose one from the following that most closely matches your view).

- I would enrol on course(s) anyway.
- I would attend fewer/cheaper courses.
- I would spread the cost of the course(s) by making monthly payments.
- If I qualified, I'd apply to Kent Adult Education for support with payment of fees.
- I would not attend courses unless there was a 40% concession.
- I would not attend courses in any circumstance.

Taking all things into account, how interested will you be in enrolling on a course in 2011/12?

- Very interested
- Quite interested
- Not particularly interested
- Not at all interested
- Don't know

Please add any other comments regarding the proposal to reduce the concessionary rate for the over 60s.

The following questions are not mandatory but we would appreciate your responses.

All responses collected in this section will only be used to check that we have a representative set of views for this consultation.

Gender identification

- Male
- Female

Age

- 60-64 years old
- 65-69 years old
- 70-74 years old
- 75+ years old

Consultation – Reduction of Age-related Concessionary Price

Which of the following groups do you consider yourself to belong to?

- White British/Irish Indian Mixed ethnic group
 White other Pakistani/Bangladeshi Other ethnic group
 Black/Black British Chinese

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

- Yes No

Home postcode (this will not be used to identify respondents).

Thank you for participating in this consultation.

Appendix 3

Focus Group Structure

Welcome and Introductions

- ❖ Housekeeping.
- ❖ Participant names, courses attending and reasons for focus group attendance.
- ❖ Explain reason for focus group utilising consultation mandate/survey introduction.
- ❖ Refer to surveys and explain that completing surveys in addition to attendance is fine as focus group will be more in depth and have a different focus.
- ❖ (Ask if everyone is happy with having the discussion noted)

1. Discussion on the Use of '60+ Concession' and its Importance [Short introductory questions]

1. How long have you been attending courses with Kent Adult Education?
2. Have you ever received a '60+ concession'?
3. Do you currently receive a '60+ concession'?

[Open discussion on the importance of the availability of the '60+ concession']

1. How important is the availability of the '60+ concession' when deciding whether to enrol on an Adult Education course with us? Why?

2. Informing Learners of the Alternatives [Pre-written list of mitigations on flip chart]

KAE offer some other concessions as well as alternative methods of payment.

[Question and then description of mitigation areas identified in survey]

1. Have you heard of the CLS 'Access Fund'?
2. Have you heard of the 50% concession offered to learners receiving certain Government benefits?
3. Have you heard of the option to pay for courses by standing order?
4. Have you heard that you can enrol and pay online?

[Open discussion]

1. Have you ever utilised any of these options when enrolling on a course?
2. Have you heard of the 'Pay As You Go' (PAYG) programme?

3. Would you now consider utilising any of these options when enrolling on a course in future?

3. Discussion on Identified Potential Benefits

[Pre-written list - seven key benefits - on flip chart]

Seven key benefits

- Discounts and vouchers on future/multiple courses.
- Online discounts.
- Discounts/vouchers for course materials.
- Excursions/days out.
- Additional course materials available online.
- Free vouchers for PAYG courses.
- Discounts on refreshments.

[Open discussion]

1. KAE is considering offering older learners some additional benefits when taking courses with us. Which of the following benefits would you like to receive? Why?
2. What other benefits could KAE offer to provide you with better value for money?

4. Likely Future Action

[Open discussion]

1. If the change to the concession affects you, what are you likely to do a result of the reduction in the '60+ concession'?
2. Taking all things into account, how interested will you be in enrolling on a course in 2011/12?

Close

- ❖ Thank attendees for giving their time.
- ❖ Explain that their views are contributing to a KCC consultation and that a future announcement will be made after the report is submitted to the relevant Member of the KCC Cabinet.