

**By:** Mike Hill – Cabinet Member for Community Services  
Roger Gough – Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform  
Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director for Education and Young People’s Services

**To:** Cabinet – 27 April 2015

**Subject:** Adult Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy 2015 - 2018

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Summary:**

This report presents the final draft of the Adult Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy and reports on the consultation process.

**Recommendation:**

Cabinet is asked to approve the amended Adult Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy for publication, following consultation, and agree to the development of a more detailed Action Plan to deliver its priorities and targets.

**1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The draft *Adult Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy* and accompanying *Datapack* were presented to the Education and Young People’s Services Cabinet Committee in January 2015, with a proposal to go out to consultation.
- 1.2 The consultation was subsequently undertaken, during February and March, with key stakeholders, including: other relevant departments of KCC, FE Colleges and HE institutions, training providers and employers. The consultation ended on March 20<sup>th</sup>. The responses to the *Strategy* consultation are set out below.
- 1.3 The amended Strategy was considered and endorsed by the Education and Young People’s Services Cabinet Committee on 15 April 2015, with a recommendation that it be approved by Cabinet.

**2 Responses from consultation**

- 2.1 The *Strategy* was, generally, well received by stakeholders during the consultation. There was widespread agreement about the principles and priorities set out in the Strategy, together with its targets for improvement.
- 2.2 However a number of respondents, although agreeing to the aims of the Strategy, wanted to see a more detailed delivery plan to set out how our ambitious targets will be delivered. A more detailed *Action Plan* will be developed as the next stage of taking this Strategy forward.

- 2.3 Respondents suggested that the title '*Adult Skills, Learning and Employment Strategy*' better reflected the content of the Strategy
- 2.4 Providers asked for an addition to the document explaining current context, specifically: changes to funding (including a 24% reduction, nationally, in the Adults Skills budget); the Review of Adult Vocational Qualifications currently taking place; and the review of Apprenticeships. In response to this request an additional section has been added to the *Strategy*
- 2.5 Respondents agreed that the main emphasis of the *Strategy* is rightly on economic growth, adult skill development and employment but also wanted to see stronger recognition of the wider benefits of community learning for social inclusion, community cohesion, health and wellbeing. Amendments have been made to reflect this view.
- 2.6 The KCC Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Directorate asked for greater recognition of the role that adult skills and learning can play in the lives of vulnerable adults, including those with sensory and learning disabilities, autism and mental illness. This request has been reflected in the revised *Strategy* and will be further developed in the subsequent *Action Plan*.
- 2.7 There was general agreement that the references to the Priority Employment Sectors, as defined by the LEP and by KCC, needed further development before specific KPIs could be determined. Currently they provide a broad framework, but there needs to be recognition of occupations within sectors and specific local requirements. This will be reflected in the *Action Plan*.
- 2.8 At the same time as this Strategy was out for consultation the Department of Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) published its own consultation on the future of adult skills, 'A Dual Mandate for Adult Vocational Education'. This government report places an emphasis on higher level skills for growth, and for inclusive programmes for adults with low level or no qualifications. This is consistent with the proposals in the *Adult Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy*.

### **3 Priorities**

- 3.1 The Strategy is built around the following priorities to:
- increase adult employment in Kent
  - improve the education and the skill levels of the adult population of Kent
  - provide pathways, such as apprenticeships and re-training opportunities, to enable people to take up employment in priority sectors
  - increase participation in learning and employment amongst priority groups, in isolated communities and deprived neighbourhoods; and including vulnerable adults such as those with disabilities.

3.2 These priorities respond to the national and local challenges, and the framework closely mirrors the four key themes in the 14-24 Learning, Employment and Skills Strategy, which are to improve :

- Participation and Youth Employment,
- Achievement and Attainment,
- Vocational Education and Apprenticeships and
- Support for Vulnerable Learners.

#### 4 **Next Steps.**

- 4.1 A detailed action plan, containing the Key Performance Indicators and milestones will be developed, which will be reported to the Kent and Medway Education, Learning and Skills Partnership Board. This board is an advisory group to the Local Enterprise Partnership on skills. This will ensure there are clear interdependencies between the LEP Skills Strategy and a new *Adult Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy* for Kent.
- 4.2 Employer engagement is critical to the successful delivery of the Strategy. This will be achieved by working through the Chambers of Commerce and other employer led organisations.
- 4.3 The Strategy will also inform the service specification for the Community Learning and Skills Service currently under consideration for becoming a Local Authority Trading Company. The CLS growth strategy and service plan, regarding provision from September 2015, include priorities and commissioned services that will contribute to the KPIs in the Adult Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy.

#### 5. **Recommendations**

Cabinet is asked to approve the amended *Adult Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy* for Kent, for publication, and agree to the development of a more detailed *Action Plan* to deliver its priorities and targets.

Name and title: Allan Baillie, Skills and Employability Manager (Adults)  
Telephone no: 01622 696377  
E-mail: [allan.baillie@kent.gov.uk](mailto:allan.baillie@kent.gov.uk)

Relevant Director: Patrick Leeson

Name and title: Corporate Director, Education & Young People's Services  
Telephone no: 03000 416384  
E-mail: [Patrick.leeson@kent.gov.uk](mailto:Patrick.leeson@kent.gov.uk)