

Briefing Paper

PAF Scrutiny Committee –

ACL Strategic Plan Implementation

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Title	ACL Strategy Implementation

Portfolio Vision

- Vision is about Lifelong learning, which is about the children, young people, and adults of Essex having equal access to excellent learning and training opportunities throughout their life-course – from early years to further years.
- We will help set the agenda for education and skills in Essex, enabling schools, providers and businesses to understand key skills priorities and translate them into delivering relevant and joined up provision
- Lifelong learning is about the people of Essex having equal access to excellent learning and training opportunities throughout their life-course. Opportunities that are clearly aligned to future need and relevant to local areas; levelling up success, driving down inequalities, and providing the means for success in achieving each person's ambitions
- Part of this is about helping to **shape** the education and skills eco-system to provide clear pathways for these opportunities throughout people's lives.

Background

As with the ACL Strategy, the curriculum also aligns with the Everyone's Essex Plan, and ACL is well-positioned to support the levelling up agenda as it offers learning opportunities that inspire people to achieve, progress and gain good jobs.

ACL has developed a strategy so that there is strong purpose and intent for both the Service itself, and that this shows itself clearly for residents, partners, employers and all other partners. Therefore, the aim of this strategy is to drive the implementation of needs-focused delivery and interventions, positively impacting on the residents and employers across Essex.

We are outcomes-led, and by 2025, we want to be able to say that we have contributed to levelling up and that:

- More people on lower incomes have increased their earning potential through entry into employment, better jobs and self-employment
- More parents have engaged in their own and children's learning
- The number of adults who are digitally included and improved digital skills is increased
- More adults with learning difficulties have been supported into employment
- More adults have gained maths and English qualifications
- Young people are given opportunities to enter the world of work through apprenticeship and traineeship programmes
- Fewer adults need to access services as a result of improved health and wellbeing
- Our learners tell us that they don't feel lonely and isolated

ACL Essex is one of the largest Adult Community Education (ACE) providers in the country (2nd) with growing learner numbers – it is principally a direct training delivery service with a local focus. The ACL Strategic Plan ties together with the LLLB Strategic Approach which links with business, locality and wider support service planning and signposting.

Funding

ACL is funded predominantly by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. Funding allocations include: Adult Learning Loans, Adult Education Budget, Community Learning, and Level 3 Free Courses for Jobs Fund. Additional incomes derive from: Apprenticeships, projects, and non-funded provision.

A Funding and Accountability Consultation was run by the DFE in October 2002 and although there has been no published response to the funding consultation a statement was realised that implementation has been pushed back to 2024/25. On this basis curriculum planning for the academic year 2023/24 has been made of assumption of allocations in line with 2022/23 as follows:

- Adult Education Budget (AEB) Grant Allocation from ESFA of £7,926,991
 - Accredited (ASB) - £3,119,150
 - Non-accredited - £4,807,841
- Level 3 Free Courses for Jobs Allocation of £156,669 (increased on request by ACL from £94,950)
- Apprenticeships circa £800k
- Advanced Learning Loan Allocation £202,308
- Circa £2.2m of funding from projects

Key Points – Curriculum Planning

Curriculum Planning to meet funding outcomes

The ESFA non-accredited funding (courses that don't lead to a qualification) is used for our community learning offer and as per the funding guidance from 2023/24 our curriculum must align to at least one of these seven strands:

- Engaging and/or building confidence
- Preparation for further learning
- Preparation for employment
- Improving essential skills (English, ESOL, maths, digital)
- Equipping parents/carers to support children's learning
- Health and well-being
- Developing stronger communities

This has an impact on the hardest to reach residents and those furthest from employment such as supported learners. ACL are working with other organisations on ambitious projects to provide learning and support alongside development of employability skills and work experience. An example of this is to offer from September Animal Care qualifications in collaboration with Sandys Farm in Tendring.

Curriculum Planning to meet strategy and wider outcomes

The planning process has been informed by:

- the skills needs across the county set out in the Essex Skills Plan
- localities data.
- Accountability Agreement (The accountability agreement is a new product emerging from funding and accountability reforms. It is a two-part document setting the overall expectations of providers in return for the DfE's funding investment)
- ECC Sector Development Strategy to provide a pipeline to jobs
- ACL MIS trend data

Ofsted Requirements that impact curriculum planning

ACL is judged by Ofsted to be a good provider with effective safeguarding in place.

The Education Inspection Framework provides the criteria to ensure that all funded delivery we provide our learners with is fit for purpose and provides value for money.

The Quality of Education is key and the ACL strategy is evidence of:

- A programme intent that is clear and consistent across the organisation.
- A well communicated and understood rationale for the range of programmes offered contributed to by all partners.

- Meets community, commercial and business need, addresses workplace skills gaps (implementation).
- Delivers a well-designed curriculum preparing learners for the next stage of their education, training or career (implementation).

Meeting the strategy outcomes will provide the evidence of our impact.

Multiply & ACL

A programme of courses have been designed under the three key themes which supports The Lifelong Learning and Belonging (LLLBB) Strategic Approach which brings together the work of Directorates/Teams in Education Excellence, Lifelong Learning and Employability.

Maths for families and communities - these courses offer the opportunity to learn together to build strong relationships, develop new skills and raise aspirations for all the family including: Maths for Year 1- Year 11, Preparing yourself for your child's exams, Helping when you are not a Maths person, How does fractions, decimals and percentages work?, That's not how we did it at school?, Making Maths Fun, Cheap Family Days Out, KS2 Maths, Easy Half term Meals, Play to help with numeracy, Financial wellbeing for parents and children.

This meets the strategic outcome of more parents engaged in their own and children's learning.

Maths for employment- offering opportunities to make improvement to CVs, gain skills to progress in current roles, or to move into a new career including: Accountancy & Finance Qualifications, Ratios, Calculating customer discounts, Calculations using Excel, Functional Skills Maths, GCSE Maths, Maths for Speakers of Other Languages.

This meets the strategic outcome of more people on lower incomes increasing their earning potential through entry into employment, better jobs and self-employment

Maths for health and wellbeing – providing opportunities to look after mental health and wellbeing in addition to supporting family and friends including: Confidence in Maths, Money made simple, Understanding your bills, Understanding your credit rating, Buying the best offer, Financial confidence and wellbeing.

This meets the strategic outcome of fewer adults need to access services as a result of improved health and wellbeing.

All Multiply provision is promoted using the ECC branding assets and promoted through our usual channels <https://aclessex.com/multiply/>, social media and parent ambassadors.

Development work is taking place for a Multiply LearnFest that will be a mix of online self-study and online live for all ECC employees further supporting the year of number.

ACL Property

In the academic year 2022/23 ACL have delivered through various models including face to face in centre, outreach in venues such as schools, libraries, hotels, as well as online live classes, online self-lead, hybrid classrooms, fast track and rolling starts.

Future planning

ACL provision is responsive to the needs of learners and the Everyone's Essex outcomes and we continually review the areas of identified need. Work is ongoing with the localities team so that we can expand outreach into key areas such as Rochford, Dovercourt / Harwich, Canvey, and Stanstead. We are working with the property team and other services areas to identify potential satellite centres such as Youth centres, libraries and schools in evenings and weekends.

Utilisation of rooms and centres is constantly reviewed which has informed the planned closure of Rayleigh and reduction of space in Maldon. There is a steady income stream through the hire of halls and rooms within centres which also contributes to collaboration with other services and providers that supports a holistic offer to our residents.

Future plans for property include the successful levelling up bids in Clacton and Harlow which will see ACL operating in new shared spaces from September 2025.

The long-term view is to explore investment to develop facilities that align to future need and that are relevant to local areas such as the High street fund investment in Colchester supporting the Digihub. There is scope in 4 to 5 main centres with excellent facilities (science, digital, immersive technology) with satellite centre/rooms across the County for delivery of core curriculum e.g. maths, English, digital, mental health.

Physical centres are vital to meet the needs of our residents reflecting that there is an increase in the number of learners returning to face to face learning, they are also a necessity as exam centres for the accredited learner offer. They play an important role in meeting the outcome of our learners telling us that they don't feel lonely and isolated.

Further options being explored are the creation of specialist commercial venues such as salons, upcycling workshops, and cafes which would support the development of employability skills and provide real work experience opportunities.

Supporting Wider ECC Initiatives

ACL lead on a number of projects that support wide ECC initiatives:

- Parent Ambassadors
 - Work with parents to encourage engagement in learning to improve social and economic outcomes including Year of Reading and Year of Numbers
- Nightingale Extension
 - Including: Training, Train the Trainer, Electric Bikes, Fast Track programmes
- Mental Health Recovery
 - Commissioned work from ECC to develop and deliver a mental health recovery programme for the residents of Essex. Programme address confidence, resilience, taking control. Aim is to support people back into work or learning as a result of this programme. Sessions are co-delivered with tutors having a lived experience of mental health.
- Levy Transfer Service
 - A Levy Transfer Hub will be created that will support Levy paying employers to 'gift' unused levy funds to Essex based SME's. Additionally, ECC will commit to 'gift' 25% (£312k) of its unspent levy. ACL and the Skills, Strategy & Growth Team (Economic Growth) will work collaboratively on this project. Additional ECC partners will include the Youth Team and Marketing & Communications.
- Canvey Levelling Up
 - Scoping the opportunity for ACL to have a permanent base on Canvey Island and identify the skills needs that require addressing. Initially ACL will utilise an existing space on the Island to run courses for a fixed period that will enable the service to establish need and future provision opportunities and whether a permanent presence is required. This dedicated space would enable ACL to trial their presence within the community whilst enabling improved access to Adult Learning courses on the Island. Project includes a part time engagement officer and hybrid/tech for delivery
- Braintree Levelling up
 - A 12-month programme that works with the village schools to run Family Learning provision for parents, carers and if required other members of the community. Provision would include maths, English and digital programmes and will link well to both Year of Reading and proposed Year of Maths. We will employ 2-3 part time tutors who will carry out engagement work across the district to develop positive working relationships with the schools and then deliver provision within their facilities. If required additional facilities could be sourced e.g. village hall
- Harwich Levelling Up
 - Scoping the opportunity for ACL to have a permanent base in Harwich and identify the skills needs that require addressing. Initially ACL will utilise an existing space to run courses for a fixed period that will enable the service to establish need and future provision opportunities and whether a permanent presence is required. This dedicated space would enable ACL to trial their presence within the community whilst enabling improved access to Adult Learning courses locally. Project includes a part time engagement officer and hybrid/tech for delivery
- Colchester Levelling Up-
 - To increase participation and the learning experience of individuals undertaking courses and apprenticeships in health and science-based subjects, ACL seeks to create a multipurpose training room that would enable learners to gain improved hands-on experiences within the health

and science sector. Awarded funds would include the purchase of health and science equipment and resources which includes a part time technician for 10 hours per week.

- Social Prescribing
 - Development a localised Social Prescription offer that meets the needs of the people of Essex. For that offer to have short, mid and long-term ambitions and be targeted in different ways across the county. By having a clearly defined offer commensurate with its ambition, ACL will ensure its offers are aligned with key community anchors and embedded into appropriate district assets
- Digital Hub
 - The underutilised gym building at Wilson Marriage in Colchester will be fully refurbished and kitted out to create a new Digital Hub. Our vision is to create a dedicated digital space in the heart of Colchester that addresses the identified need for improved digital skills for its residents to access digital services and gain good jobs (including those in the digital sector).
- Digital Champions
 - Engage volunteers across Essex and train them to become digital champions. Volunteers will work with residents to develop skills and support digital confidence and competence. Supports the reduction of the digital divide. This project is delivered alongside EWS and ECC developing communities team
- Multiply
 - Government initiative in which ECC has been allocated £7,908,304.04 to deliver a package of interventions across the county to support maths skills for residents. Skills Team are leading on this with support from ACL
- Retrofit Academy -supporting the Green Skills agenda
- Library Collaborative Work
 - Development a four pronged approach to working with libraries across Essex this will include: codesign of programmes that can be delivered within library spaces, upskilling of library staff using AEB allocations, Joint usage of library and ACL facilities and how we collaborate to market and promote both services effectively. E.g Harlow homework club as part of Warm Welcome scheme

Possible opportunities:

- Housing Association Engagement Programme
 - To strengthen ACL relationships with relevant Housing associations in Essex. Support residents and employees to access a range of courses and programmes that support positive outcomes for individuals e.g. improved wellbeing, reducing social isolation, breaking the digital divide and accessing good jobs.
- Men's Mental Health - Look Good Feel Great!
 - Promoting Mental Health, Wellbeing, Resilience and Domestic Violence Courses to Men. Initially this will be through Barbers - targeted marketing materials that are inclusive and raise awareness of these often-sensitive subjects.
- Voluntary Sector Collaborative Work
 - Working strategically with the main third sector organisations in Essex to strengthen relationships and develop partnerships that benefit their customers and employees.
- Volunteer Programme
 - Develop a structured volunteer programme that supports the ACL service but also encourages wider participation in learning
- Schools Levy Programme
 - A plan of work designed with the ECC Education Team to maximise the ECC schools unspent levy allocations. ACL will release tranches of programmes so that cohorts of apprentices can be recruited throughout the year. Activity is to be targeted where schools require improvement, in areas of deprivation and ECC priority areas. The approach is to ensure all schools have the opportunity to access the levy and use it to recruit and train new employees and upskill eligible staff.

Recommendations and Next Steps

Following the support given to the ACL Strategy, we therefore recommend that the PAF Scrutiny Committee:

1. Supports the approach detailed within the ACL Strategy Implementation.
2. Supports us to publicise and encourage stakeholders to promote/collaborate with ACL services to residents.

Our next steps are:

1. Complete the final Curriculum Plan on confirmation of the funding allocation from the ESFA (April 2023).
2. Finalise target setting for Curriculum teams.

3. Consider further opportunities to maximise utilisation of property, investment in specialist resources.
4. Research and analysis the method and how far learners travel to learn to inform the ongoing property review.