

Briefing Paper PAF Scrutiny Committee – ACL Draft Strategic Plan

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Title	ACL Draft Strategic Plan

Background

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 stakeholders. 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

Key Points from PAF Scrutiny Committee Meeting May 2022

The draft ACL Strategy was brought to Scrutiny in May 2022, and responding to the feedback, this note reflects the actions taken to refine the Strategy and specific comments that were raised.

This is what was asked by members of the Committee, this is what was done:

Some disconnect between outcomes and Strategy

Outcomes are more prominent, featuring at the beginning of the Strategy and set the direction for the Strategy

Engagement with employers and partners

ACL, alongside ECC teams, are engaged with sectors and employers through the development of the local skills plan (LSIP), which this Strategy underpins.

Strong collaboration within the ECC Sustainable Growth Directorate including Skills & Employability, Sector Development as evidenced with Retrofit pilot, Circular Economy.

ACL Business Development team link with employers through apprenticeships, networking events and ECC Localities teams.

The Strategy was reviewed by these stakeholders, Cabinet Members, as well as the ACL Strategic Advisory Board (governing body). Engagement with ACL staff was also a key element of its development.

Ambitious and Inspiring Strategy

Strategy design and layout improved to be more visually engaging.

Refers to jobs of the future, moving into employment and includes inspirational learner case studies.

Links made throughout to our commitment to support wider ECC initiatives across other service areas e.g. refugee response, Multiply Scheme, and Nightingale.

The Strategy is the top-level intent and the real ambition is seen in its implementation through Curriculum Planning and responsiveness to socio-political influence e.g. Cost of Living, Green skills.

New Digi Hub incorporates Virtual Reality technology to embed into delivery.

Funding, Investment and Surplus

ACL income for 22/23 budgeted to cover all costs including staffing and onboarding, supplies, property and ECC recharges and generate a surplus. We are required to invest any surplus back into Adult Education.

As we recover from the impact of COVID our priorities are to continue to reinvest the surplus to support the delivery of courses within deprived areas of the community or to reduce barriers to learning for disadvantaged residents, in line with Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funding agreement.

Reinvestment of surplus includes:

- Providing digital access (Laptops, data packages)
- Learning resources (books)
- Loans (bursary for non-accredited learning)
- Improved Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance for progression to employment
- Increased learner support (wellbeing, recruitment of learners, travel, childcare)

Clarity on Hybrid and Online delivery

This table below shows the number of learners according to type of delivery.

This data and trends are affected by the pandemic and the Strategy reflects that provision must meet the needs of the learners and not disadvantage those that are hard to reach or digitally excluded.

Delivery type	2020	2021	2022
Classroom Based	3910	5311	6953
Online Live	697	1595	1443
Online Self Study	1446	464	620
Hybrid	0	0	289
Total	6053	7370	9305

Hybrid delivery is in pilot for 22/23 as per the Strategy; this allows for a growth in class sizes with some learners in the classroom and some connecting virtually whilst also providing flexibility for learners.

The self-assessment process and quality improvement plan will address any identified achievement gaps.

Sustainability of Centres

ACL aims to offer learning spaces which are safe, inclusive, accessible, welcoming and sustainable. We are keen to explore alternatives, including co-location with other ECC services and wider public sector such as the Harlow shared space with libraries. ACL has also invested in hybrid learning spaces, providing distance learning opportunities and reducing costs. We work with Essex Property to constantly review the property portfolio in line with learner needs.

Marketing, reach and opportunities, and a plea to all

ACL has its own marketing and PR team, including apprentices.

There is an active LinkedIn and Twitter profile targeted towards employers, individual learners and communities. Over the last year collaboration has improved with the central ECC comms team, and strengthened collaboration across all ECC services has boosted the reach and reputation.

Notably there is a strong positive working relationship with Libraries, with cross promotion of events, services and delivery.

ACL sends out regular emails to contacts, as well as newsletters targeted to particular stakeholder groups. PR opportunities are well utilised with multiple articles in local press, as well as ITV and BBC Essex radio coverage.

Headlines on ACL Essex

Background

- ACL Essex is one of the largest Adult Community Education (ACE) providers in the country (3rd) with growing learner numbers – it is principally a direct delivery service with a local focus.
- ACL provision is currently delivered across the whole political County, usually in its main Centres, online, hybrid, as well as at employer premises and different out-centres in communities. This also includes a small amount of delivery carried out through sub-contractors for specific cohorts/projects.
- ACL receives its funding from the DfE's Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to deliver programmes of learning.

The Strategy

- This is about helping learners to achieve the goals they have set their sights on. As well as skills and qualifications, ACL is also about making sure that learners flourish.
 - This means their health, wellbeing and independence
 - Their sense of community belonging, and their confidence and belief in themselves.
 - As well as supporting the development of a green and environmentally friendly community.
- The Proposal 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.
- The Strategy sets out our Intent which is a key focus of the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework
- We will review and refine the 3 year ACL strategy annually because lifelong learning matters, and even more so with the legacy of the pandemic.

Funding, Fees, and Support

- ACL receives its funding from the ESFA to deliver programmes of learning, to residents and businesses across Essex. In addition, learners pay fees towards the cost of some of the courses. However, ACL is about breaking down barriers to learning – and so learners who are eligible for **full funding** will not be charged a fee for any aspect of the course, including exams, resources or awarding organisation registration and fees.
- For courses not leading to a qualification, learners pay a subsidised fee, which further drops in costs for those on benefits/low income/supported learning

Everyone's Essex

Essex County Council recognises the vital role that Adult Community Learning (ACL) plays in meeting its key ambitions as set out in [Everyone's Essex](#):

Lifelong learning supports sustainable economic prosperity and health and wellbeing. Our purpose is to provide our residents with the opportunities to succeed, wherever they are in the county. To be there in communities across Essex, to make a difference to residents and employers, so they can make a difference for themselves and to the places that they live in.

Strong, Inclusive and Sustainable Economy – incl. Good Jobs; Green Growth; and Levelling Up the Economy

Also,
Health, Well-being and Independence for all Ages –
incl., Healthy Lifestyles, and Levelling Up Health – helping to reduce health inequalities

A Good Place for Children and Families to Grow – incl., Education Outcomes and Family Resilience and Stability

Education Excellence, Lifelong Learning and Employability 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.
- This means access to 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.
- 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.
- 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.