

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Adult Independence, Health and Wellbeing
2	Date:	6 th December 2010
3	Title:	Skills for Sustainable Growth: Government Proposals for the Future of Adult and Community Learning
4	Directorate:	Children and Young People's Services

5 **Summary**

With the publication of Skills for Sustainable Growth the government has set out its strategy for the development of post-19 learning and its vision for the future of informal Adult and Community Learning. The intention is to reform informal Adult and Community Learning to encourage greater community involvement and the engagement of the most disadvantaged with progression routes to more formal learning. The details of this reform will be developed by the government over the next few months.

6 **Recommendations**

That the government strategy for Adult and Community Learning be noted. That a further report regarding the impact of the strategy on the council's Adult Learning delivery be submitted when further information is available.

7 **Proposals and Details**

The proposals within *Skills for Sustainable Growth* reflect the intention to create a more responsive and flexible system, both to the needs of employers and the demands of learners.

The government recognises there is still a problem with the level of literacy and will continue to provide free training in Basic Skills for those who left school without them. The delivery of Basic Skills will be reviewed with a move away from targets to a focus on equipping individuals with the skills they need to get a job and play a full part in society.

Providers will be given greater freedom and expected to develop social partnerships with employers, local communities and the voluntary and community sector to deliver learning. Unfunded community groups, clubs and societies will be supported to organise their own learning, opening up new spaces as learning venues if desired.

It is expected that those coming from other countries to work in England or their employers should meet the cost of English language courses. Funding for ESOL will not be available in the workplace. Full funding for ESOL will

only be available to those actively seeking work on Jobseekers Allowance and Employment Support Allowance. For others ESOL will be co-funded.

There are still 9.2 million adults in the UK (18%) who have not used the internet. All providers will be encouraged to support the broader agenda of getting as many people on line as possible by 2012. The most disadvantaged will still be supported to do this through free short courses, either as part of other accreditation or through Adult and Community Learning.

The government recognise the importance of informal Adult and Community Learning in developing skills and in improving community engagement. Future funding will be prioritised to those people who need the most help and have had the fewest opportunities. Most learners will need to at least part and in many cases fully fund their learning. The intention from 2012/13 is to move to co-funding of a first Level 2 qualification for those aged over 24 years. Any subsequent Level 2 qualification will be co-funded. From 2013/14 Level 3 qualifications and above for those over 24 years of age will be funded through the new loans.

Every adult will be offered a Lifelong Learning Account. This will offer access to the new FE student loans and other financial support, for example, an enhanced learner support fund. This account will also offer incentives for learning, including a means of recognising the social contribution made through volunteering.

A new all-age career service will be established working in partnership with Jobcentre Plus to help jobseekers improve their skills. An integrated system of online support for employers will be available through the Businesslink website. This will allow employers to access diagnostic tools to help them make decisions on training that meets their business needs.

8 Finance

The current level of funding for the academic year 2010/11 for each of the budgets under Adult Safeguarded Learning is:

- Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (£118,498)
- Personal and Community Development Learning (£247,547)
- Wider Family Learning (£57,860)
- Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy (£138,000).
- First Steps (£79,092)
- Family Learning Impact Funding (£103,600)

From the academic year 2011/12 four components of the Adult Safeguarded Learning budget will be combined into a single budget line. The four components to be combined are the budgets for:

- Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC)
- Personal and Community development Learning (PCDL)
- Wider Family Learning (WFL)
- Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy (FLLN).

Funding allocations will be based on historical allocations and delivery data, but adjusted in line with the policy direction set out in *Skills for Sustainable Growth*. Funding at national level will be maintained at the 2010/11 rate of £210,747 for 2011/12 and 2012/13. Funding at local level and the associated targets and learner numbers are not yet known. Similarly the government are committed to reducing the number of providers of adult learning with direct contracts with the Skills Funding Agency.

9 Risks and Uncertainties

Until the funding levels and required outcomes are set future delivery and the role of the local authority is unclear.

10 Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Adult Safeguarded Learning funding targets as set by the Skills Funding Agency.

11 Background Papers and Consultation

Skills for Sustainable Growth – Department for Business Innovation and Skills (Nov 2010)
Further Education – New Horizon Investing in Skills for Sustainable Growth (Nov 2010)

Contact Name: Sue Shelley
Telephone: x 22540
E-mail: sue.shelley@rotherham.gov.uk