

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board

Report of the Head of Support Services and Transformation – Rhiannon Crowhurst

Matter for Information

Wards Affected:

All wards

Adult Learning in the Community Update (Diweddariad Dysgu Oedolion yn y Gymuned) March 2024

Purpose of the Report

To inform Member of the progress of Adult Learning in the Community Service in Neath Port Talbot.

Executive Summary

This report contains an update of the work completed in communities by Adult Learning in the Community (ALC).

The number of learners enrolled on courses started off slowly and has gradually increased. Enrolments are up 28% on last year's figures at this time. ALC is on track to maintain and hopefully improve slightly on the number of enrolments for 2023-2024.

We have continued a hybrid learning approach for 2023-2024. This approach offers learners the choice to attend sessions online or face-to-face. This has kept attendance figures high as learners are able to learn alongside their normal life routine.

ALC has supported learners to be able to get online. We now have more learners engaging in the use of technology to allow them to continue their learning journey. Also, ALC has developed 'Using IT to Support Your Learning' courses where learners have the opportunities to study digital skills alongside their learning. We are currently planning courses around Artificial Intelligence (AI) and how this can be used in learning safely. This will be offered out to everyone on a learning programme.

Adult Learning in the Community was successful in securing £858,873 from the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF), through the Multiply project. The project aims to reach people from a variety of cohorts to develop functional numeracy, confidence with numbers and improving people's quality of life by upskilling them and providing more employment opportunities.

Funding has been secured through the Children and Communities Grant to recruit a Digital Inclusion Ambassador. This Digital Inclusion project is aimed at bridging the digital divide and empowering citizens of Neath Port Talbot to develop essential digital skills.

ALC has worked in partnership with the Community Support Services and Early Intervention and Prevention team to secure funding to support the Digital Inclusion Project. ALC has recruited 3 Digital Inclusion Officers to work alongside the Digital Inclusion Ambassador in delivering sessions throughout Neath Port Talbot.

Neath Port Talbot Council has been awarded a grant that will help towards making homes in the county borough more energy efficient. The £75,000 grant, which was obtained from the MCS Charitable Foundation, will deliver a project aimed at promoting and supporting local 'retrofitting' opportunities. The project works closely with Neath Port Talbot Group of Colleges and other partners in the region. The Adult Learning in the Community manager has been involved in the co-ordination of this project.

Background

Adult Learning in the Community (ALC) continues to deliver a range of learning activities for post 16-year-olds in Neath Port Talbot. It is non-statutory and approximately 60% of Adult Learning in the Community courses provided in Neath Port Talbot County are delivered by Adult Learning in the Community (ALC).

Adult Learning in the Community is externally funded through a grant from the Welsh Government and a franchise agreement with NPTC Group of Colleges. Both contracts amount to approximately £500K. The ALC direct funding grant from the Welsh Government remained the same for 23/24. Funding from the college covers the academic year August - July and the service is on target to deliver the appropriate amount of learning to ensure the funding allocation for 23/24.

ALC is one of the lead partners of the NPT Learning and Skills Network partnership. The partnership was set up in 2000 under the New Learning Network and involves a range of public and voluntary-sector organisations in Neath Port Talbot County Borough including NPTC Group of Colleges, Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service, Adult Learning Wales, Swansea University Department of Adult Continuing Education and Tai Tarian. The Network is committed to the continuous development of quality, curriculum and learner support across the county. Welsh Government continues to look at the ways in which it funds Adult Learning in the community with options being put forward to the minister for approval. The ALC Manager has attended regular meetings to ensure that the service is kept up to date with current information on funding.

ALC continues to deliver courses in line with Welsh Government priorities as set in the Adult Learning in the Community in Wales policy and all provision sits in the Well-being objective 4 – Jobs and Skills. By developing soft skills (including their confidence to learn) improving literacy/numeracy/digital literacy skills, employability skills, engagement activities we ensure progression into more formal learning and/or employment. For example, the service continues to have a large number of learners on childcare courses and aims to give people the knowledge and understanding to achieve a professional qualification which may lead to employment in the sector. The service is also delivering the new children's care, learning, play and development qualification with progression opportunities leading from the introduction to childcare which helps to improve their skills in preparation for more formal training onto the QCF level 2 and 3 qualifications. Other courses relevant to childcare learners are autism awareness, phonics, dyslexia awareness and classroom Welsh.

Adult Community Learning links into the overarching corporate plan's Wellbeing Objective 1 – 'Best Start in Life' by working closely with schools throughout Neath Port Talbot. Adult Learning finished the last academic year delivering Family Learning sessions and other courses across seven

schools. Parents in all schools have completed at least one accredited unit. Adult Learning are working with Family Engagement Officers in Community Focused Schools to engage with schools within their clusters and have started delivering sessions in three schools. Adult Learning has also had initial meetings with another three schools with the intention of starting to deliver courses for parents or family learning sessions.

Adult Learning continues to work with two Community Focused School Family Engagement Officers to provide accredited courses in three schools within their clusters. We also liaise directly with another three schools, including Blaendulais and Creunant. All schools completed accredited courses and parents are engaged and keen to carry on with other courses. Feedback from schools has been positive and schools are eager to have an Adult Learning presence (case study appendix B).

The learning programmes in schools are planned to provide as many free courses as possible to encourage parents back into education. We have expanded the curriculum delivered in schools by including personal development courses such as confidence building, motivation, personal development, amongst others. We still carry out Family Learning programmes where parents/carers learn alongside their children. In addition, we have in school classes just for parents. These include Popat, child psychology, food hygiene and British Sign Language.

The Multiply project has worked with Alltwen and Croeserw schools, delivering sessions to parents on 'Homework Help'. These have progressed onto completion of accredited numeracy units. Plans have been confirmed to work with Abbey, Cwm Brombil, Ynsyfach, Croeserw and Creunant primary schools from this term.

Other courses delivered by ALC are literacy, numeracy, digital literacy, study skills, confidence building, IT and employability skills. Our GCSE and A-Level programmes remain highly attended. Overall enrolment figures for 22/23 are 28% higher than 21/22.

One of the reasons for maintaining good enrolment figures is the partnership working that the service has with organisations. ALC attends regular events arranged by different organisations e.g. DWP, Crisis and Communities for Work+. These raise the ALC profile and generate many referrals for work skills courses such as hospitality, retail, admin and other provision. It also allows ALC to anticipate changes such as the introduction of universal credit and monthly employment themes.

New courses introduced for 23/24 include: Introduction to popular psychology, retail: shop and counter work, handling payments, study skills, note taking, understanding safeguarding, cooking skills, personal development, budgeting for Universal Credit, time management, positive approaches to understand and reduce behaviours that challenge, using money, ethics and morality, digital productivity, time management and action planning, developing time management skills, spreadsheet techniques, Welsh in the workplace, being a parent, counselling skills and strategies.

We have delivered courses in the majority of NPT areas. We are especially focusing on harder to reach geographical areas such as Croeserw, Ystalyfera and Cwmgors and are developing links and courses in more areas further afield. In partnership with agencies like Tai Tarian we are also delivering in the more deprived areas for example Sandfields East and West. Our Engagement officer is attending workshops, coffee mornings and events in all areas of NPT to engage more participants (appendix A).

The Adult Learning Multiply project Multiply your Confidence is now fully underway. We have worked with local businesses, community groups, schools, and other support agencies to work in partnership and access people within Neath Port Talbot. Steps have been made to engage with those hardest to reach in our communities. We have worked closely with organisations such as Thrive, Dewis and the Wallich. While all courses are aimed at improving participants' numeracy skills, we have seen that the wider benefits include social skills and confidence in using language and speaking to new people. We have been using cooking on a budget to introduce our service and courses to learners, this course seems to engage people well. In addition they learn about budgeting, weights and measures and division via portioning.

When considering the Corporate Plan and Wellbeing plan and specifically objective 2 'All communities are thriving and sustainable' Adult learning's Digital Inclusion project improved digital connectivity across Neath Port Talbot is running successfully. The Digital Inclusion Ambassador has supported the new Digital Inclusion Officers in delivery, working alongside the lead for the SPF project Digital Inclusion and Enablement. The officers have been able to set up more digital inclusion groups for those users able to leave their homes. We have been able to interlink with the digital enablement side of the project where the digital enablement officers support participants to use digital devices and access websites,

forms and platforms to help support independent living. We spread awareness of these services through engagement to members of the public. The project has had a positive effect on the community, and we are able to reach out to more people across the borough to feel digitally included. Working with the digital inclusion officers, digital inclusion sessions have now expanded to areas of the borough where digital inclusion was not reaching previously (appendix A).

The new sessions currently running or due to start in the following locations are Port Talbot opportunity Hub, Port Talbot Workstation, Cwmafan Library, Cymmer Library, Bryn Community Village Hall, Margam Community Centre, Neath Town Hall, Skewen Library, Neath Library, Glynneath Library, GCG Library and GCG Community Hall.

The digital inclusion sessions still run weekly, where they have supported over 180 participants.

Partnership working is robust within the service. ALC continues to have good links with Department of Work and Pensions, Communities for Work+, DOVE, Glynneath Training Centre, Skills and Training and Mental Health Co-ordinators. Working with Maximus many learners started off with the confidence courses and have built up to personal development and interview skills. Some learners have secured work placements and employment. A group of volunteers from the Stroke Association (Briton Ferry) attended a recent course on safeguarding. This supported their volunteering to understand safeguarding and to support both their service users and families.

Adult Learning is working with the Pontardawe Local Area Co-ordinator who facilitates a women's group which consists of approximately 12 ladies who have experienced past traumas and domestic violence. Some learners have opted to do the confidence courses and others are engaged in arts and crafts courses for health and wellbeing. Learners have progressed onto the confidence, assertiveness and resilience courses at the Pontardawe Arts Centre which has helped them to gain confidence and learn the relevant skills to help them to move forward.

Organisations are keen to send their staff on to our Additional Learning Needs programme and we have worked with Citizens Advice staff to provide accredited training in ADHD awareness, autism awareness and dyspraxia awareness. We are also working with Thrive and Women's Aid to provide accredited ADHD awareness courses for participants.

Adult Learning in the Community ensures that costs are kept to a minimum with numerous classes being free e.g. literacy, numeracy, study skills, employability, retail and hospitality to enable all residents in NPT to be able to access learning to improve their skills.

Our aim is to deliver throughout NPT to more outreach community venues. ALC are currently working with local libraries such as Cymmer and Pontardawe to develop a learning programme to suit the needs of the community.

Performance Data Academic year 2022-2023

Direct Delivery

Completion – 100% Attainment – 100% Success – 99%

Franchise Delivery

Completion - 100% Attainment - 91% Success - 91%

Adult Learning in the Community will continue to look at ways to improve the service. This is evidenced by the learner survey and the steps taken to implement feedback. ALC will also be sending out a survey to organisations who refer learners onto courses to gain information regarding the service.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts in relation to this report.

Equality Impact Assessment

There are no equality impacts associated with this report.

Workforce Impacts

There are no direct workforce or staffing issues in relation to this report.

Legal Impacts

There is no legal impact in relation to this report.

Risk Management

There is no identified risk to this report.

Consultation

Not applicable.

Recommendations

The report is for information purposes only.

Appendices

Appendix A – Mapping of geographical delivery

Appendix B- Cast study – Family Learning delivery

List of Background Papers

NA

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