

## **BUSINESS SUPPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**13 AUGUST 2015**

### **MEDWAY ADULT LEARNING OFSTED REPORT**

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#### **Summary**

This report outlines the outcomes from the recent OFSTED inspection of Medway Adult Learning and proposes the way forward in addressing the issues raised by the inspection.

#### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

1.1 The terms of reference for the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Chapter 4 Part 5 paragraph 22.2 (a) (xxvi) of the Constitution) include the function of scrutinising adult education.

#### **2. Background**

2.1 The Medway Adult Learning Service (MALS) was inspected by OFSTED between 23-26 June 2015, and the report was published on 28 July 2015. The outcome of the inspection was Level 2 (Good), across all areas. A copy of this report can be found on the OFSTED website at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/53295>.

2.2 The service was previously graded as Level 4 (inadequate) in 2012 and Level 3 (requires improvement) in 2013. The outcome shows there have been vast improvements made by the service, and to gain a Level 2 across all areas is a great achievement. The areas include: Subject Specialist grades for Community Learning and Foundation English (including ESOL) and overall Grades for effectiveness of provision, outcomes for learners, quality of teaching, learning and assessment and effectiveness of leadership and management.

2.3 Ofsted made the following observations, listing the strengths of the provision:

- Outcomes for learners are good, with high success rates on non accredited and accredited courses.
- Retention on accredited and non-accredited courses is good, with particularly high retention on family learning and employability programmes. Attendance is very good.

- Learners develop a good range of skills which allow them to make good progress, enhance their employability and increase their wellbeing and involvement in their communities.
- Standards of learners' work are high. Written work is often highly reflective and demonstrates good subject engagement. In craft and other practical courses, learners produce high-quality artefacts.

2.4 Ofsted Inspectors concluded the key findings from the inspection:

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Tutors ensure that classes are interesting and involving, with a good range of varied and challenging activities. Tutors skilfully encourage learners on all courses to extend their knowledge and develop new skills.
- Learners receive good support, reflecting the service's strong focus on removing barriers to learning.
- Leaders and managers connect well with disadvantaged communities. Learners in these communities improve their personal wellbeing, receive good support to adopt healthier lifestyles and improve their employment prospects.
- Tutors give excellent progression advice and use their subject specialist knowledge well to encourage and support their learners.
- Learners enjoy using the Virtual Learning Environment to measure their progress and achievement, and many undertake extra revision and research work outside classes.
- Leadership and management are good at strategic and operational levels, and curriculum management is good.
- Since the previous inspection, significant and secured improvements have been made, and managers have implemented effective plans to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Self-assessment is comprehensive and accurate, with good consultation amongst staff and learners.
- Measures to monitor & enhance the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through internal observation are effective and generally well understood.
- Many learners benefit from the training and progress into further education or employment.

2.5 It was noted that there are further improvements for the service to strive towards, which in turn could achieve an outstanding level:

- Ensure that all tutors make good use of individual learning plans to develop and record meaningful, skills-based personal targets that drive progress and help learners understand the steps they need to take to improve.
- Improve the frequency with which tutors in all subjects correct spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors in learners' written work.
- Support tutors with staff development activities that focus on pedagogical approaches and teaching and learning methods. Help tutors to maintain good and better teaching & learning by identifying good practice in pedagogy and by sharing this widely.
- Improve success rates on accredited foundation mathematics courses.

### 3. Next Steps for the Service

3.1 Whilst this is an excellent OFSTED outcome, which demonstrates that the service is providing a worthwhile and valued service there are significant issues relating to funding which need addressing. These are:

- Year on year reductions in grant, leading to the need for a reorganisation to significantly reduce costs. This new structure should be in place by the end of September 2015
- Extensive ongoing advertising for the new enrolment in September 2015 to increase participation
- Ongoing discussions with Mid Kent College and Hadlow College around joint working/partnership options
- Continued work with Public Health and Mental Health organisations (additional funding for new project) to extend the range of courses and opportunities for funding.

### 4. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk
Grant funding reduced	Reduced funding to offer courses	Options being discussed with partners for the potential of joint working, to ensure that classes are delivered to full capacity
Reduced employee morale following reorganisation	Employees de-motivated, performance dips	Strong visible leadership within the new structure. Good communications, training and face-to-face discussions with all staff.

### 5. Financial and legal implications

5.1 It is clear that the service will not receive any growth in funding and should it fail to improve the financial implications are severe and could affect the viability of the service. The running costs of the service are some £2.4m, funded by grant (£1.8m) and other income. However, the pressure on the budget is significant and there is currently a shortfall of £240K, despite the proposed reorganisation; however the service continues to work on management action plans to further reduce this shortfall.

### 6. Recommendations

6.1 The committee is asked to note this report and the improved inspection grade, together with the necessary further improvements to make the service outstanding.

6.2 The committee is also asked to note the changes with grant funding and note that options are being discussed with partners about joint working to alleviate funding difficulties.

**Lead officer contact**

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**Background Papers**

Ofsted Report: <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/53295>