

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTION OF HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL'S ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING SERVICE

Report By: PRINCIPAL LEARNING OFFICER

Wards Affected: County-wide

Purpose

1. To receive a report on the Adult Learning Inspectorate's inspection of the Council's Adult and Community Learning (ACL) provision, and proposed actions of the Lifelong Learning Development Unit (LLDU) to address issues arising from the inspection report.

Financial Implications

2. None

Considerations

3. Herefordshire Council receives funding (£159,904 2002/03) from the Learning and Skills Council to provide learning opportunities. The LLDU produces an annual Adult Learning Plan (ALP) which details how the funding will be spent. The level of funding received by Herefordshire Council to support adult learning is significantly lower than the National average. This results from current grant allocation levels being based on the previous uptake of available funding by the Herefordshire and Worcestershire LEA. Officers of the Council, together with the Local LSC (Herefordshire and Worcestershire) are engaging with the national LSC to explore opportunities to redress this inequality.
4. The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) is a recently formed body which reports, both to the Secretary of State for Education and the public, on the quality of education and training received by adult learners and young people in England. The Council's adult learning provision was inspected for the first time by ALI in January 2003 and a report of its findings published in April 2003.
5. A number of significant strengths were identified, notably in the effective way in which the LLDU engaged with partners and in its progress towards its strategic objectives. The ALI team also specifically noted the high standard of teaching, learning and achievement within the taught courses and of staff development and training within the Herefordshire Council.
6. There were however a number of key weakness, primarily relating to the need to improve quality assurance and equal opportunity monitoring processes, the level of resources currently available to properly manage the service, and how this could affect any future expansion of the service to meet need.
7. As a result the ALI considered that the quality of provision was not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it and have advised that the service will be

subject to a re-inspection The Council has not yet been notified of any proposed date, but the ALI has indicated that it will normally be within a two year period of the original Inspection.

8. The LLDU has drawn up a Post Inspection Action Plan, a copy of which has been forwarded to the Local LSC and to the ALI who are considering its proposals and actions. Once any amendments suggested by the ALI and the LSC have been incorporated the plan will be submitted to Cabinet for approval.
9. The key elements of the plan are to:
 - Develop a structure to properly manage the service and ensure that an equitable, diverse, quality assured provision with established best value principles is made available to targeted learners
 - Identify and access resources to support the structure of delivery, and to increase the amount of provision currently available to learners within the county to meet need
 - To build on the strong partnership that exists with providers and stakeholders to develop a coherence of provision.
10. Integral to the implementation of the Post Inspection Action Plan will be the development of the ALP and the progress of the planned restructuring of the LLDU.
11. The ALP for 2003/04 (August to July) has been submitted for comment to the Local LSC. It has accommodated, where appropriate, actions addressing the issues raised from the Inspection.
12. Following the Policy and Community Directorate restructuring in October 2002 the LLDU moved from the Leisure, Culture and Education for Life Division to Community and Economic Development, within the Policy and Commissioning Team. A more detailed service review has since been carried out taking account of observations arising from the Inspection, and from a widespread consultation with partners and stakeholders, resulting in a proposed staff restructuring.
13. On receiving the ALI's response to the Unit's Post Inspection Action Plan a combined report to Cabinet will be submitted for its consideration together with the ALI Report, the Adult Learning Plan for 2003/04 and proposals for the restructuring of the LLDU.

RECOMMENDATION

- THAT (a) the update report is noted**
- (b) at a future meeting, the Committee considers the post - inspection Action Plan, Adult Learning Inspectorate report, Adult Learning Plan for March 2003 and proposals for internal restructuring with a view to making recommendations, as appropriate, to Cabinet.**
- (c) Prior to that meeting, the views of external bodies are sought and, if required, arrangements are made for those bodies to present information to the Committee at its meeting.**

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Post Inspection Action Plan