

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Monday 14 March 2011
7.00 pm
Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

Supplemental Agenda

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Contact

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Date: 8 March 2011



Clr Catherine McDonald
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Scrutiny Team
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Date: 18 February 2011

Dear Clr Catherine McDonald

Southwark's Children Services and Education scrutiny committee met with Southwark Youth Council (SYP) at our last meeting on the 12th January. SYP presented a paper, and this is enclosed.

One of the outcomes of our meeting was that we agreed to monitor the Children's and Young People Plan (CYPP) together, through quarterly progress meetings.

SYC made four other suggestions and the committee would welcome your thoughts on opportunities for progression:

- 1 Young people would like an incentives scheme to promote and encourage youth participation in the community. Youth representatives and committee members agreed to explore what this might mean practically and we will get back to you on outcomes following these discussions.
- 2 The youth council proposed workshops in schools on social issues. These might be linked to citizenship classes and be run, for example, by ex gang members and young mothers and young fathers.
- 3 Representatives would like increased communication and avenues for participation and suggested the council set up a text service that would alert young people in the borough to service provision. SYC also want better publicity using, for example, the website and Southwark Life.
- 4 SYC requested feedback on budget proposals following on from earlier consultation carried out by you. In the meantime we have sent representatives the draft revenue budget paper, including the Plain English version.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Clr David Hubber
Chair, Children Services and Education scrutiny committee

CC Southwark Youth Council

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Adult Education – submission by scrutiny vice chair, Cllr the Right Reverend Emmanuel Oyewole

There seems to me to be some real crisis points now with Adult Education and its future in Southwark which have not been on the radar but should have been. I think that this Scrutiny would help in examining this situation and it should be sooner rather than later if possible. The issues are:

All of Adult Education has been funded by the Learning and Skills Council and now by the replacement agency the Skills Funding Agency which has an uncertain future. I think uncertainty is a good reason for looking at this service.

Provision has been contracting under the SFA and has two sections - skills and qualifications and Community Learning and Personal development.

What is happening locally is that community learning classes such as ceramics, art and keep fit interestingly, where different payment rules now seem to apply after Term 1 (Sept) are now closing in Southwark because the concession fees cease after one term - according to some contested rule. Not very surprisingly I have in the last few weeks received a stream of protests about this from users. (This is a brief summary - there are further issues about this)

Thomas Calton has been refurbished with money from the SFA and a small capital sum from Southwark. So this is a good facility but what is its future?

The Economic Strategy we recently agreed in Cabinet lists the main barriers to employment indentified in Southwark - one of which is "limited access to ESOL courses".

Does "Keep Fit" in Adult Education align with the wider health promotion agenda?

Adult Learning has never been the subject of a Scrutiny and yet it is vital component of our economic strategy because it is about language skills and literacy, keeping healthy programmes, support to vulnerable people within the community and about acquiring confidence, skills and new learning. Future funding is uncertain.

It would be good if the Scrutiny could:

- establish what the service is providing at the moment including the subject of charges and eligibility for concessions
- establish the current financial position and future of the Skills Funding Agency and seek to find out what direction this agency is going in
- hear from users about the present service
- Advise what direction for the future this service might take - especially in the light of the contexts above eg. regeneration, economic well being healthy living programmes etc



DRAFT Scrutiny review proposal

1 What is the review?

Adult Education

2 What outcomes could realistically be achieved? Which agency does the review seek to influence?

Advise what direction for the future this service might take - especially in the light of the contexts above e.g. regeneration, economic well being healthy living programmes etc

Seek to influence, as appropriate:

- Southwark Council
- Southwark Collage
- Skills Funding agency
- Adult learners

3 When should the review be carried out/completed? I.e. does the review need to take place before/after a certain time?

May 2011

4 What format would suit this review? (e.g. full investigation, q & a with executive member/partners, public meeting, one-off session)

One off meeting

5 What are some of the key issues that you would like the review to look at?

- establish what the service is providing at the moment including the subject of charges and eligibility for concessions
- establish the current financial position and future of the Skills Funding Agency and seek to find out what direction this agency is going in

6 Who would you like to receive evidence and advice from during the review?

- hear from users about the present service
- hear from the Skills Funding Agency
- hear from Southwark Council officers

7 Any suggestions for background information? Are you aware of any best practice on this topic?

To be considered further.

8 What approaches could be useful for gathering evidence? What can be done outside committee meetings? e.g. verbal or written submissions, site visits, mystery-shopping, service observation, meeting with stakeholders, survey, consultation event

The committee will:

- receive reports from officers and the cabinet lead
- request submissions from adult learners
- invite the Skills Funding Agency to the meeting

Children and Education Scrutiny

14/03/2011

1. **The Scrutiny Committee has advised that it wishes to do the following in relation to the Adult Learning Service:**

- Establish what the service is providing at the moment including the subject of charges and eligibility for concessions
- Establish the current financial position and future of the Skills Funding Agency and seek to find out what direction this agency is going in
- Advise what direction for the future this service might take - especially in the light of the contexts above e.g. regeneration, economic well being healthy living programmes etc
- General issues relating to limited access to ESOL.

These issues are addressed below.

2. **The committee wishes to establish what the service is providing at the moment, including the subject of charges and eligibility for concessions.**

2.1. All courses are delivered through funding provided by Skills Funding Agency – different streams for 2010/11 these are:

- Further Education (FE) – courses leading to nationally recognised qualifications
- First Steps – feeder courses for further education and learning
- Personal and Community Development (PCDL) – courses for personal and community development
- Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC) – courses to help the voluntary sector build capacity
- Family learning – courses to help families learn together

2.2. Roughly 50% of courses are delivered directly by the Adult learning service and the other 50% are delivered by voluntary sector partners. Courses are delivered face-to-face.

2.3. Courses are currently delivered in the following curriculum areas:

- Art and ceramics
- Childcare
- Creative writing
- Fashion and textiles
- Family learning
- Health and fitness
- New technologies
- Skills for life (literacy, numeracy, employability and ESOL)
- Woodwork and upholstery
- Local voluntary sector partners deliver a range of programmes in a wide variety of curriculum areas including: social enterprise skills, family learning, IT, ESOL, sewing, business admin, employability, horticulture and animal husbandry (beekeeping), art, security training, health and safety, first aid, food hygiene, jewellery making, programmes for adults with special needs, media.

- 2.4. Details of courses can be found on the Council's website at: http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/100009/leisure_and_culture/1001/adult_learning_courses
- 2.5. A revised fee structure was introduced in Adult Learning Service in line with the academic year, from September 2010, approved through the IDM process. These fees were advertised in the autumn term brochure as follows:
- Course fees**
- Fees for each course are shown in the course listings. There are four fee categories: Standard (S), Concession (C), Nil (N) and Part-Cost Recovery (R)
- Standard fee: £3.60 per hour (this is fee contribution from the learner, the rest is subsidised by the Skills Funding Agency)
 - Concessionary fee: £1.55 per hour*
 - Part-cost recovery fee: £5.50 per hour (for learners wishing to enrol on second and subsequent courses)
 - Nil fee: no cost to the learner.
- * those who are in receipt of a means tested benefit (including pension credit) are eligible for concessionary fees on their first course. We also give a concessionary fee for the first course to those whose sole source of income is the government state pension.
- Means tested benefits that are eligible for a concessionary fee [as identified by the Skills Funding Agency] are:
- Jobseekers allowance
 - Income support
 - Housing benefit
 - Council tax benefit
 - Working tax credit
 - Unwaged dependent on one of the above
 - Pension credit
- Learners need to bring proof of benefit or entitlement when they enrol. We can not accept a freedom travel pass as proof of concessionary eligibility.
- 2.6. The subsidised fee of £5.50 do not cover the full cost of the course. Full cost recovery would be at least £9.50 per hour for most courses.
- 2.7. The hourly fees includes the hourly payment to the tutor, course materials (e.g. in basic skills courses this includes dictionaries, books, worksheets; in ceramics this includes tools, glazes, firing the kilns, repairs to equipment such as pottery wheels, extractors), initial assessment cost, contribution to building overheads (including gas, electricity, water, rates, premises officer, repairs and maintenance), and management fees (includes building insurance and management, council recharges for services such as legal, payroll, HR, finance). It also includes membership for awarding bodies, registration fees for examination boards/awarding bodies, external verifiers and internal verification of assessment.
- 2.8. Eligible learners who took a course in the autumn term paid only the subsidised fees, for subsequent courses they paid part-cost recovery fees. There are a number of learners taking more than one course in one term who have paid for one subsidised course and the part-cost recovery fee for their subsequent courses.
- 2.9. Learners were made aware through the course guide. Team leaders were briefed extensively a number of times. Tutors were briefed by team leaders.

- 2.10. The revised fee structure was necessary to ensure that the courses cover their costs and those learners who return, for whom there is no additional funding from the SFA, contribute a greater amount towards their second and subsequent courses.
- 2.11. In 2011/12 academic year the concessions eligibility criteria have changed. Only the following will qualify for concessionary fees:
- Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) – including the partner where the claim is joint
 - Employment Support Allowance (ESA) in the Work Related Activity Group
- 2.12. The following benefits will no longer be able to be used to claim fee remission:
- Council tax benefit
 - Housing benefit
 - Income support
 - Working tax credit
 - Pension credit
 - Contribution based ESA (unless in the Work Related Activity Group)
 - Unwaged dependents of those listed above
- 2.13. Learners have to produce evidence of their relevant UK residence status.

3. Establish the current financial position at the SFA and seek to find out what direction the agency is going in.

3.1. Direction of SFA

Coalition Government's plan for reform of the FE system is founded on principles of fairness, shared responsibility and greater freedom:

SFA Guidance note 6, 16/12/2010 states:

- Fairness means supporting those in need, including prioritising young adults, the unemployed on active benefits and those without basic literacy and numeracy skills
- Shared responsibility acknowledges that citizens must join the Government in taking responsibility for ensuring their own skills needs are met.
- There is an expectation of a greater contribution towards the costs of education and training from individuals

3.2. In addition to this, we are advised that:

- In 2011/12 a single Adult Safeguarded Learning budget will be allocated but organisations will be responsible for continuing to deliver a balanced offer that meets the policy imperatives of the four elements, and is responsive to the local community. Colleges and organisations are expected to ensure that learner numbers are increased through efficiencies in the use of the budget and by collecting more revenue in fees.
- The SFA expects the sector to increase the level of income secured from individuals during 2011/12. If it appears that levels of fee income are not increasing, then the Agency may need to intervene. This could entail reducing future years' allocations where there is non collection of fees.

3.3. The position of the SFA will be clarified as Business Innovation and Skills department (BIS) undergoes restructuring.

4. Advise what the direction for the future might take, especially in the light of regeneration, economic well being, healthy living etc

- 4.1. We are working to secure the future of the service through meeting the expectations of the sole funder, the Skills Funding Agency, and OFSTED, the key regulator. The service makes a good contribution to the regeneration, economic wellbeing, and healthy living priorities of Southwark people through local learning opportunities.

Progress

	2007	2010	Percentage Increase	Proportional increase
Total number of learners	1600	4000	150%	More than doubled
Number of voluntary sector partner	7	14	100%	Doubled
Partnerships with Southwark Schools	6	12	100%	Doubled
Southwark wards delivered from	5	15	200%	trebled
Number of Council departments partnered with	0	4	400%	quadrupled

- 4.2. Full details of the most recent OFSTED inspection, its findings, the Council's response and progress are set out in the accompanying report, paragraphs 12-29.

5. Concerns have been raised about the application of SFA guidelines on access for people on benefits and new learners. We have been asked to address this in our responses to question 1 above including;

- What the guidelines are,
- How they have been applied,
- What the issues are,
- Could the rules be interpreted differently to allow increased access?

- a) **SFA Guidance for Adult Safeguarded Learning for 2010/11 states:** "Skills Funding Agency policy, particularly for Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL) courses, is to ask providers to develop and implement a policy on fee income / charging. They should seek more in fees from those who can afford to pay in order to ensure that the maximum amount of public funding can be focussed on supporting and maximising the number of disadvantaged learners. For example, where appropriate, providers could consider **full cost recovery for repeat learners** who register for similar courses over a period of several years"

Also from guidance note 6: "There is an expectation of a greater contribution towards the costs of education and training from individuals "

Having looked at the number of repeat learners attending courses (in PCDL funded courses particularly) for whom we are not given any additional funding from the SFA, we have identified that we need to increase the income from these learners to cover the cost of them attending. This has led to two things - the introduction of a part-cost recovery fee (for repeat learners, those on benefits and those who would pay our standard fee) of £5.50 per hour, and to set a minimum number of 8 new learners who need to be in a class to make that class viable (through SFA funding). **Number of learners attending 2 or more courses as of 11 June 2010**

Number of courses taken	Number of students taking x courses	amount of funding generated by the learner (one attendance) - assumptions made: PCDL course (would be more if FS or LR courses)	amount of funding lost (i.e. if new learners took up the places taken by repeat learners amount of revenue they would have generated) - assumptions again: PCDL courses (would be more if FS or LR courses)
2	390	£138,925.80	£138,925.80
3	141	£50,227.02	£100,454.04
4	55	£19,592.10	£58,776.30
5	24	£8,549.28	£34,197.12
6	18	£6,411.96	£32,059.80
7	8	£2,849.76	£17,098.56
8	6	£2,137.32	£14,961.24
9	5	£1,781.10	£14,248.80
10	1	£356.22	£3,205.98
		£230,830.56	£413,927.64

b) The issues include:

- The same learners benefiting from numerous courses repeatedly. This takes away the chance for other people to take advantage of the learning opportunity.
- The cost of the same learners doing several courses over 2009/10 is in excess of £400K for which we are not receiving any funding.
- This has resulted in the service losing approximately £400K. The overspend has currently been absorbed by the Council. This is not sustainable. The service cannot fund what it cannot recoup.
- This also puts the service contract with the Skills Funding Agency at risk of being reduced or even taken away (reference to question 2 response).

c) Costings have been calculated to see how many hours can be delivered from each funding pot. The costings have to cover tutor costs, building costs and overheads as described in response to question 1. The amount of funding per learner is fixed (more hours do not equal more money). It is necessary to increase the number of learners in the class and deliver courses within the hours we are funded for (30 hours is the maximum possible from the PCDL funding stream) and to get a greater contribution from the learner (through increased fees).

6. Access to ESOL

6.1. How has ESOL been increased in the last 3 years?

ESOL has been increased by:

- Increasing the range of evening and twilight courses including entry level provision and Levels 1 and 2
- Working in partnership with Southwark Parent Liaison to offer ESOL and ESOL with Computing in primary schools to parents
- Outreach classes at community centres
- Providing ESOL for Work courses
- Providing classes at Sure Start Centres
- Ensuring all interested learners have an initial assessment/ Skills Check by appointment - offered on a weekly basis
- Commissioning local voluntary sector partners to deliver ESOL classes that are delivered across the borough at local venues and children's centres.

6.2. Employability

Local people, including those who are current learners, benefit from information and guidance about courses, paid and voluntary work and related matters. The Service has built an effective working relationship with Next Steps/Prospects. People make good use of the service for:

- Writing effective curriculum vitae.
- Improving interview skills and application form skills
- Improving reading, writing, maths and IT skills
- Finding courses that are right for you
- Job search advice
- Careers advice and information

Information advice and guidance are offered through bookable one to one sessions and group workshops.

6.3. What is the Basic Skills curriculum area doing to increase employability?

- Learners benefit from being able to achieve nationally recognised qualifications in literacy and numeracy.
- All learners have access to taught UK Online sessions which offers a course called *Online Jobs*. It supports job hunting, how to sign up for job alerts, form filling support, searching for jobs on-line, understanding job requirements and developing interview skills
- A good working relationship with Next Step Employment Adviser who refers learners to us from Job Centre Plus
- Employment Adviser visits classes, gives out leaflets and information, learners are invited to make an appointment to see him
- Offering NCFE Awards in Exploring Employability Skills, Employability Skills and Developing Skills for the Workplace (QCF qualifications)
- Offering Short Summer courses in ICT and ESOL, Writing Skills for the Workplace and Business English

6.4. Changes to eligibility rules surrounding ESOL from 2011/12

From **SFA Guidance note 6, 16/12/2010**:

Learners from 2011/12 who are entitled to fee remission include:

- Those taking learning aims that are funded as Adult Skills for Life and Functional Skills in literacy and numeracy, excluding skills for life ESOL.
- ESOL will continue to be co-funded for eligible learners (set out in the eligibility guidance – including refugees, and a variety of others, most of whom must have resided for 3 years, with some exceptions) and will be:
 - Fully-funded for those how are on JSA or ESA in the Work Related Activity Group

From **BIS strategy document – Further Education – New Horizons, Nov 2010**

It more clearly says:

We will fully-fund ESOL for individuals on JSA and ESA (work related activity group). Co-funding for those who are settled here.

Adult Learning Service Scrutiny report March 14th 2011

Background

1. The Adult Learning Service is managed within the Culture, Libraries, Learning and Leisure division of the Environment department.
2. The service operates from the Thomas Calton Centre in Alpha Street, SE15. This is the main base for direct provision of the service, but in addition to this, 20+ local voluntary sector organisations are commissioned to deliver a variety of learning programmes across the borough. This ensures both easier local access to learning and that we are working with local voluntary sector partners.
3. The service is funded entirely through an annual financial allocation from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA - formerly the Learning and Skills Council). The Council does not provide core funding but does provide support in terms of management, financial, human resources and where necessary, legal advice. The service pays recharges for this support. The Council has also made an allocation of £250,000 capital monies towards the current refurbishment of the Thomas Calton Centre. (see appendix 1 for budget details).
4. The Council's Adult Learning Service is just one of a range of adult learning providers in the borough. It is not the largest or the best-resourced provider, with Southwark College and Morley College both being substantially larger than ALS. London South Bank University also has a major programme of adult learning activity in addition to its degree level and above programmes. ALS complements the services offered by these other major providers and avoids duplication of offer.
5. Adult learning is subject to the OFSTED inspection regime. The last inspection took place in 2009 and resulted in an overall rating of "satisfactory" with many areas of good provision. This is an encouraging result given that the service had unfortunately been somewhat neglected for several years and had stagnated.
6. Over the last few years, and especially in the lead up to and follow up from the OFSTED inspection, significant improvements have been made to the service in order to ensure better adherence to the quality requirements of OFSTED and the SFA, better financial management and a more focused use of resources. Details of the range of improvements are set out in section 30 below.
7. Partly as a result of these improvements, the service was successful in securing a capital grant of £750,000 from the former Learning and Skills Council in 2008 in order to upgrade the learning environment. In addition to this, the Council has invested a further £250,000 in the refurbishment making a total of £1 million investment in the building. This funding has been focused on improving the learning environment and making the building more attractive to learners. However, there are still some building matters that need addressing as this is the first time in many years that there have been major works at the centre.

Funding issues

8. The service is entirely funded through an annual financial allocation from the SFA.
9. SFA funding comes with strict regulations in terms of what it can be used for, quality standards to be achieved and maintained and funding linked learner targets in terms of recruiting “unique” learners, retaining learners and ensuring that they achieve.
10. There are a number of funding streams within the overall allocation from the SFA. Amounts allocated to Southwark in the current financial year are set out in section, but the categories of funding are:
 - Further Education (FE)
 - First Steps
 - Family Learning Impact Fund (FLIF)
 - Wider Family Learning (WFL)
 - Personal and Community Development (PCDL)
 - Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC)
 - Family Learning, Literacy and Numeracy (FLLN)
11. In addition to this there are two small grants totalling about £15,000 per annum – the 19+ Access Fund and the 19+ Childcare FE allocation.

OFSTED inspection

12. Adult Learning is subject to inspection by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). The most recent inspection took place in May 2009.
13. In the two years preceding inspection, considerable work was undertaken to improve ALS. This included a major re-structuring of the service, the improvement of internal and external verification; improved financial management and a strengthened approach to the commissioning of third party delivery. Progress was also been made in diversifying the funding of the service, with successful bids to a number of sources including one for £750,000 from the then LSC’s capital fund.
14. Inspectors use a four point scale to summarise their judgements about Achievement and Standards, Quality of Provision, Leadership and Management and overall effectiveness of provision. Leadership and Management also includes a grade for Equality of Opportunity.
15. Four grades are identified for each area inspected. These are:
 - a. Grade 1 = outstanding
 - b. Grade 2 = good
 - c. Grade 3 = satisfactory
 - d. Grade 4 = inadequate

Scope of the inspection

16. In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local LSC/ SFA or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorates' monitoring visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.
17. In addition to reporting on the overall areas identified above, this inspection focused on specialist provision in the following subjects:
 - Arts, media and publishing
 - English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)
 - Literacy and numeracy
 - Community learning
 - Family learning
18. The previous inspection took place in February 2004. All areas were judged to be "Satisfactory" with the exception of Leadership and Management which were rated "Inadequate". This element of the service was re-inspected in May 2005 and was found to be "Satisfactory".

Overall judgements from 2009 inspection

19. The Overall Effectiveness of Provision was judged to be Satisfactory, as were all subject areas inspected. Achievement and Standards were also judged to be satisfactory, with learner's achievement of their own personal learning goals being "at least" satisfactory. The inspectors noted that overall success rates had significantly improved since the previous inspection, especially for accredited provision.
20. The inspectors also considered that capacity to make further improvements is "Satisfactory". The report highlighted the significant improvements made and the distance travelled since the previous inspection. The inspectors noted that success rates had significantly improved to above the national average, a comprehensive quality framework had been introduced, partnership working was seen as flexible and effective in terms of capacity building, the service offer has been expanded geographically, significant funding secured for the refurbishment of the Thomas Calton Centre and communication and accountability within the service improved following a re-organisation.

Outcomes – areas of good practice

21. The inspectors judged all areas of provision to be "Satisfactory". The following were identified as key strengths:
 - Good personal support for learners
 - Strong internal and external partnerships to promote social inclusion
 - Strong commitment to improve the quality of provision
 - Good staff development
22. In addition to this, within the overall grades, the following areas were described as "Good".
 - Arts, media and publishing – good development of practical skills
 - Arts, media and publishing – good specialist advice offered by tutors

- English for speakers of other languages – good support for learners in learning sessions
 - Literacy and numeracy – good support for learners
 - Community learning – good standards of work
 - Community learning – good teaching for health and fitness courses
 - Family learning – good planning of courses and teaching to meet learners' needs
 - Family learning – good partnerships to support learners
23. Although these outcomes were insufficient to achieve an overall rating of “Good” in any of the areas inspected, it is a sound basis for further improvement and indicates the service’s capacity to improve. It is especially encouraging that support for learners was consistently identified as being of a “Good” standard, identifying progress against one of ALS’ key objectives of delivering a learner-centred service.

Outcomes – areas for improvement

24. As the service secured an overall rating of “Satisfactory”, the inspectors also identified key areas for improvement. These included:
- Quality of teaching and learning – the inspectors judged too much teaching and learning to be no better than satisfactory
 - Risk assessment of learners’ activities was assessed as requiring improvement
 - Quality assurance systems to be more fully implemented
 - Capture and use of management information required improvement
25. The service management had identified these areas as requiring further action prior to the inspection and were referred to in the self-assessment. The inspectors acknowledged the thoroughness and accuracy of the self-assessment process and report, and judged it to be a sound good.

Post-inspection action plan

26. A post inspection action plan was prepared by the ALS leadership and management team in consultation with tutors and administrative staff. Management and curriculum teams took account of the inspection findings and identified action for sustaining recognised strengths and correcting or addressing areas for improvement. The plan received Member approval through the IDM process.
27. The plan has been monitored, reviewed and evaluated as the work progresses and responsible officers were identified for each task.
28. There are two main areas of action required by OFSTED. These are to improve the quality of teaching and to effectively capture, use and learn from management information.
29. Key actions from the plan include:
- Implementing a quality assurance calendar of actions and conducting a programme of quality assurance briefings

- Raising tutor awareness of “excellent teaching” through observation and the publication of internal “Excellent Teaching” policy
- Reviewing the quality of learning materials
- Exploring work shadowing opportunities with “OFSTED Excellent” providers
- Revising the quality monitoring procedures for sub-contracted partners
- Strengthening the management information system (MIS) team and seeking financial resource to fund MIS improvement
- Recruiting more specialist tutors to sustain and develop the specialist advice already available within the service
- Identifying information and learning technology (ILT) needs and arranging training for Skills for Life (SFL) tutors
- Introduce evening ESOL classes and expand programme of ESOL generally
- Developing MIS to analyse SFL data and utilising this information to plan, deliver and evaluate provision

Improvements since Inspection

29. Significant action has been taken to implement the improvement plan. Some key areas of improvement are set out below.

- 50% more residents now take advantage of adult learning
- More evening provision
- Clearer contracts for subcontracted providers, replacing the previous service level agreements and implementing more rigorous controls on quality through more effective monitoring; we have also offered additional training opportunities to the organisations including in safeguarding issues
- A more systematic, rigorous lesson observation process, including making use of external HMI accredited observers to both observe and train our staff in more effective observation techniques
- Raised staff awareness of what constitutes good teaching and learning through working with OFSTED recognised Beacon providers, including securing time from another provider to support our staff and ALS management visiting and observing a Beacon service
- An improved selection process for the recruitment of tutors
- A bigger tutor pool allowing more flexibility in relation to staff management
- Regular collection and use of learner data
- Courses designed to increase the number of male learners who have historically been under-represented. Examples include cycling proficiency for “dads and lads” and family woodwork courses
- A wider marketing presence
- More use of ILT as an aid to enhance teaching and learning and identification of an ILT champion to promote ILT possibilities to other tutors
- Better quality and range of learning aids including provision of additional handouts, dictionaries and textbooks where appropriate and other basic learning equipment
- The benefit of specialist database expertise to better collate and manage management information
- Greater engagement with government recognised excellent providers
- Continuing strong commitment to staff development, including ensuring new qualification regulations are complied with locally, attendance at external training events offered free of charge by the SFA and other national and regional bodies

Promotion and marketing

30. The service is promoted in a number of ways, including through the production and distribution of printed publicity, use of the Council's and other websites, taster sessions in the community, schools and in libraries. Some examples of promotional activity over the last year include:
- Brochure each term - distributed to a mailing list of libraries, schools, children's centre, local venues in Peckham and surrounds, Morley College
 - updated Course Directory Provider Portal
 - Hotcourses and Floodlight listings
 - Southwark Web pages
 - Family learning week brochure annually
 - Course information sheets provided
 - Articles in Southwark Life
 - Articles in Southwark News
 - Banners outside the building - various - enrol now
 - Telephone box ad campaign
 - Morrison's receipt discount offer
 - Banner opposite the Town Hall and on Elephant and Castle roundabout
 - Adult learners week brochure input
 - Listings in various Southwark Council events publications - such as Silver, Black History Month
 - Articles in Communiversity - publication from London South Bank University
31. The service continues to raise its profile regionally and nationally through active participation in conferences and events, such as those organised by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service. These events are offered to us free of charge.

Appendix 1.

Skills Funding Agency grant funding for the Southwark Adult Learning Service		
Funding stream	Amount	Notes
Further Education (FE)	£330,543	
Additional learning support	£29,810	
Discretionary learner support	£15,582	Consists of a 19+ hardship fund (£3 850) and a 20+ childcare support grant (£11 732)
Total FE related funding:	£375,935	
PCDL	£498,714	
NLDC	£205,369	
WFL	£28,616	
FLLN	£234,121	
Total Adult Learning Safeguarded funding:	£996,820	
First steps funding:	£449,189	
FLIF funding (Comes to an end on 31 March 2011):	£54,150	
Total funding from the SFA Aug 2010 to Jul 2011:	£1,876,094	



**Our Ref: Cllr PJ/H1365/jcm
17th February, 2011**

**Councillor Peter John
Leader of the Council**
Labour Member
for South Camberwell Ward

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Southwark Council
P.O. Box 64529
London SE1P 5LX

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Dear Nicola,

I am writing to explain why it has been necessary to change the fees policy for and amend the minimum learners policy for Southwark's Adult Learning Service. My colleague Cllr Veronica Ward, the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Sport and the Olympics, has asked scrutiny to look into the way adult learning is delivered in Southwark, and I hope that scrutiny will work with learners to identify improvements that can be made to the service.

After a number of years of decline, the 2009 OFSTED inspection of the service found that it had improved and was now "satisfactory" with many good features. At the core of the changes that have been made to the adult learning service is the aim of continuing this improvement and of keeping the service sustainable for the future.

Under the fees system that existed prior to September last year the adult learning service was overspending every year (see table 1 at the end of this letter). This was because the amount of funding that the council receives from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) is based upon the number of unique learners that attend courses and does not cover the extra costs placed on the council for returning learners, for whom the council receives no external funding. For this purpose "unique learners" are individual learners who are counted only once for any course they take in an academic year in our returns to the SFA, regardless of the number of courses they take.

While this has always been the case, in the past the council has failed to limit the number of subsidised courses that a learner can enrol on, leading to an overspend which has had to be covered from the council's central budget. In previous years some learners have taken as many as 9 or 10 courses per year, for which the council has only received one subsidy. Given the scale of the cuts being forced on the council by government we can no longer afford to subsidise this service from the council's budget; the previous fees regime was therefore unsustainable.

Cont/d

- 2 -

The council has also in previous years risked clawback of the funding that it receives for the adult learning service from the SFA by failing to meet its unique learner target. Funding clawback would place further pressure on the service and the council. While the service met its target last year, this was the first year in many years and it is not guaranteed that without change to the fees policy and minimum learner policy we would continue to meet this target.

Performance monitoring by the Learning and Skills Council (now replaced by the Skills Funding Agency) identified Southwark's service as one of the most expensive to run in London, based on the funding subsidy and learner numbers. The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) is the sole source of public funding for the Southwark Adult Learning Service and the service is therefore subject to the quality and funding requirements of that organisation.

Fees and concessionary charges policy

In order to make the service sustainable a new fee structure was introduced in the Adult Learning Service in line with the academic year, from September 2010. This was advertised in the autumn term brochure. Team leaders were also briefed extensively on the changes and tutors were briefed by team leaders. The new fee policy is as follows:

There are four fee categories: Standard (S), Concession (C), Nil (N) and Subsidised Cost Recovery (R)

- Standard fee: £3.60 per hour
- Concessionary fee: £1.55 per hour*
- Subsidised cost recovery fee: £5.50 per hour (for learners wishing to enrol on second and subsequent courses)
- Nil fee: no cost to the learner.

* those who are in receipt of a means tested benefit (including pension credit) are eligible for concessionary fees on their first course. We also give a concessionary fee for the first course to those whose sole source of income is the government state pension.

Means tested benefits that are eligible for a concessionary fee are:

- Jobseekers allowance
- Income support
- Housing benefit
- Council tax benefit
- Working tax credit
- Unwaged dependent on one of the above
- Pension credit

As part of the change in the fees policy the council has limited the number of subsidised courses that learners can take to one a year. This means both that learners are not able to take more than one subsidised course in one term and that learners are not able to take more than one subsidised course over an academic year, including in the same subject. For learners who attended one course in the autumn term the cost recovery fee came into effect when they enrolled for a further course in January as they would have paid a subsidised fee for the first course that they started in September.

Cont/d

- 3 -

There are some exceptions to this funding requirement, for example, an individual may take part in a subsidised family learning activity and remain eligible for another subsidised course in the same funding year.

As stated above, the reason for this change in fees policy is down to the sustainability and viability of the service. The full costs of courses are covered in table 2 at the end of this letter. Those costs are not met either solely by a full class of learners paying the concessionary fee, the standard fee or the subsidised cost recovery fee, without subsidy from the SFA. This is because even the highest fee, the subsidised cost recovery fee of £5.50, does not represent full cost recovery. Full cost recovery (i.e. for learners to attend courses without any subsidy from either the council or SFA) would be £9.50 per hour.

Furthermore, the costs of courses funded through the Personal Community Development Learning (PCDL) funding stream would not be met if the number of hours taught as part of that course were extended to last a full year, even with a full class of unique learners. This is because the level of subsidy that the council receives is fixed, based upon the number of learners, not the number of hours taught, while increasing the number of hours taught on a course would increase variable costs beyond that fixed income.

Courses funded through the PCDL funding stream are non-accredited courses (those that do not lead to a qualification – including art, ceramics, woodwork, upholstery and fashion).

8 Unique Learners Minimum

We have always had a minimum number of learners per course. This year the policy has been amended so that there is a minimum number of **unique** learners per course. We can accept repeat learners (on receipt of the subsidised cost recovery fee) onto a course as long as there are 8 new learners so that the course's costs are covered. Most classes have space for upwards of 10 learners – ceramics classes have space for 10, upholstery space for 14 and other classes have space for between 18 and 24. It is our intention is to deliver all courses as planned across the academic year but classes may close if they do not recruit enough new learners as they are not financially viable. However, they will be offered again in the following term. This is normal practice across the sector.

As above, the reason for this change is to make the service sustainable and viable. Classes which run with under eight unique learners do not meet their costs as they do not receive enough subsidy from the SFA and therefore place a financial burden on the council's central budget.

Other action to make the service sustainable

Changes to the fees and minimum learner policy needed to be made in order to make the service viable. However, this is only one of a number of changes that we are making or have made to the service to ensure the sustainability of the service. The council is also:

Cont/d

- 4 -

- Delivering courses within the guided learning hours recommended by Skills Funding Agency on the learning aim database (in previous years courses were delivered in too many hours, thereby reducing the number of learners who could be taught)
- More proactively promoting courses, including through our own brochure which is distributed widely across the borough, a presence on Hot Courses and Floodlight, an adshels campaign last year using telephone boxes at key locations in Southwark, improved presence on the Council's website, taster sessions during adult and family learning weeks and occasional special offers including one in co-operation with Morrisons super market.
- Continuing to pay a hardship fund to pay exam fees for students less able to afford them and significant subsidy of places in the nursery at the Thomas Calton Centre
- Refurbishing the Thomas Calton Centre having secured a capital grant of £750,000 from the Skills Funding Agency which is being matched with £250,000 of capital investment from the Council.
- We are in correspondence with the government to ascertain the certainty of the future role and existence of the SFA.

I hope that this clarifies the reasons for and rationale behind the current fees and charges for Southwark's Adult Learning Service, our amended minimum class size policy and the other action that we are taking to make this service sustainable.

Yours sincerely,



**COUNCILLOR PETER JOHN
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

Table 1: Adult learning service's overspend – covered from the council's budget

Academic year	09/10	08/09
Service overspend	£114 698	£155 405

Table 2: Funding generated from Skills Funding Agency compared with funding generated by subsidised cost recovery fees**Note in the table below:**

- The amount of funding generated by 8 repeating learners paying subsidised cost recovery fees (row 6) is considerably less than for 8 unique learners generating funding from the Skills Funding Agency (row 4)
- In order to generate as much funding from subsidised repeat learners as we get from 8 unique learners the class size of repeat learners would need to be considerably larger than 8 (see row 7)
- Costing per class calculations, based on 8 unique learners for set number of hours (as defined in row 3) start at row 15.

1	funding stream	First steps	PCDL	PCDL	PCDL
2	per unique learner generated from SFA	£525.37	£374.97	£374.97	£374.97
3	no. hours teaching	72	30	20	90 (3 terms of 3hrs / week x 10 weeks)
4	amount of funding generated from SFA by 8 unique learners – is not dependent on number of teaching hours but allocated on a per learner cost	£4,202.96	£2,999.76	£2,999.76	£2,999.76
5	subsidised cost recovery fees collected for 1 learner (£5.50 per hour) x no. teaching hours	£396.00	£165.00	£110.00	£495
6	subsidised cost recovery fees collected for a class of 8 (£5.50 per hour) x number of teaching hours	£3,168.00	£1,320.00	£880.00	£3,960
7	Course is only viable with what number of learners? - i.e. how many learners paying subsidised cost recovery fees to generate as much funding as we would earn from SFA	11	18	27	Course is not viable at 90 hours SFA funded or paid for by subsidised cost recovery fees as class size is too
8		£4,356.00	£2,970.00	£2,970.00	

					large
9	14 unique learners generate from SFA	£7,355.18	£5,249.58	£5,249.58	£5,249.58
10	Funding we can generate if we have some new, some returning, in one class				
11	e.g. Upholstery (14 learners can attend),				
	10 unique (new) learners	£5,253.70	£3,749.70	£3,749.70	£3,749.70
	4 repeat learners	£1584.00	£660.00	£440.00	£1,980.00
	total generated	£6,837.70	£4,409.70	£4,189.70	£5,729.70
12	e.g. Upholstery (14 learners can attend),				
	8 unique (new) learners	£4,202.96	£2,999.76	£2,999.76	£2,999.76
	6 repeat learners	£2,376.00	£990.00	£660.00	£2,970.00
	total generated	£6,578.96	£3,989.76	£3,659.76	£5,969.76
13	Course costing based on 8 unique learners generating funding from SFA				
14	Funding generated from SFA by 8 unique learners	£4,202.96	£2,999.76	£2,999.76	£2,999.76
15	course costing				
16	Tutor cost - £40/hr (to include their hourly rate of £25 plus management of them, payroll, admin, support etc)	£2,880.00	£1,200.00	£800.00	£3600.00
17	15% management (includes head of service, quality management, building management)	£630.44	£449.96	£449.96	£1,349.88
	total	£3,510.44	£1,649.96	£1,249.96	£4,949.88
18	Remaining - to cover course materials provided*, initial assessment costs, and contribution to building overheads**, photocopying, telephone, admin support, reception staff.	£692.52	£1,349.80	£1,749.80	- £1,950.12
<p>* as an example: in skills for life this includes dictionaries, books, worksheets; in ceramics this includes clay, tools, glazes, firing the kilns, repairs to equipment such as pottery wheels, extractors, sink drainer etc</p> <p>** including gas, electricity, water, rates, premises officer, repairs and maintenance</p>					

Statement to the Southwark Education and Children's Services scrutiny committee from the Southwark Save Adult Learning campaign

The Adult Learning service has already seen significant class closures since the introduction of the new pricing and 'unique learner' recruitment targets this academic year. Our campaign warned management and the council of this effect when the new structure was introduced - and our predictions turned out to be true - much to our dismay.

We do not accept the draconian economic logic of those explanations and we believe they are not acceptable on a social level. Our responses and comments (and indeed our entire campaign) arise from a commitment to the survival of accessible and affordable arts, crafts, dance, movement and other 'non-basic skills' courses within Southwark's Adult Learning service.

We believe that the service under the new rules is not viable and will wither. Given the thriving arts community in Southwark, this is a significant withdrawal of a much-needed service within the borough. We have at every juncture offered our services as volunteers to promote the service on stalls at festivals and local events, and taster days, and we reiterate that commitment now. We believe that positive action is required to ensure that these courses are available, accessible and affordable to the people of Southwark.

Southwark Save Adult Learning campaign 3/3/11

Submission to the Southwark Education and Children's Services scrutiny committee meeting from Southwark Save Adult Learning, 3/3/11

A low or high price strategy for Adult Learning?

1. From Peter John's letter of 17th February it would seem that the two key issues for Southwark Council are that income should more or less cover costs and that the number of unique learners per academic year satisfies SFA requirements. Restricting the consideration here to Personal Community Development Learning, the contention of this submission is that the new pricing policy is far from optimal and is likely to result in neither of the two aims being met.
2. Currently a learner receives a SFA subsidy which, counting over one term, amounts to £18.75 per hour for a 20 hour course and £12.50 for 30 hours, and for that first term pays an additional £1.55 or £3.60 per hour in fees. For any subsequent class all learners pay fees of £5.50 per hour. A high price fee system by any standard.
3. Southwark reject allowing the SFA subsidy to run over the whole academic year judging it to be unaffordable. Calculating the SFA money per learner over three terms yields hourly subsidies of £6.25 and £4.17 respectively for a course lasting 60 and 90 hours. It is hard to see why any more than a moderate charge should be added to this subsidy in order to cover costs, unless the costs are excessively high or the classes are attracting only a few learners. Southwark's new pricing policy charges a premium fee for learners taking a second course or staying a second term, but a high price policy does not tackle the first problem and exacerbates the second.
4. Given the paucity of data made publicly available this submission cannot make any detailed comments on these issues, but it does make some comments based on the data that is provided in Peter John's letter. The conclusion is reached that Southwark's high price policy is based on rather faulty logic and a seemingly tenuous appreciation of the data. An alternative strategy is suggested, that is, a return to a sensible pricing policy commensurate to other local providers and a concerted effort to increase student numbers.

The data provided

5. There is an assumption in Peter John's letter that the cost of a three term course could not be covered by a class of unique learners, but this is not justified by argument or by the figures given in the annexed table 2. In fact, a rather odd logic has been applied throughout. This logic seems to be based on an appreciation of average rather than marginal cost, misses the distinction between the marginal cost of additional classes and additional students, and implicitly assumes a crowding out problem. Whereas the likely problem isn't too many but not enough students. Moreover, it appears to be assumed that higher prices necessarily generate greater income or at least greater income over costs.

6. Particularly puzzling is the claim that the 'full cost recovery' is £9.50 per hour per student, but this claim does not seem justified by the figures given. The number of students on which the calculation is based is not given, but taking, for example, a full year (3 x ten week term x 3 hours) course of 18 students, the total cost would be £15, 390, of which teaching costs would make up only 15%, leaving 85% taken up by management, admin and building costs (contrary to Peter John's letter course materials are not generally provided). This seems far from realistic. Moreover, in order to calculate an average cost the third category of costs in the given table would have to be known. But these costs: initial assessment, building assessments &c, are not shown in the table, rather a residual is given as a contribution to covering these costs.
7. Also puzzling is the second item of costs: non-teaching staff management. This is calculated as 15% of the money received from the SFA for a one term course and 3 x 15% (45%) of the money received from the SFA for a year course. This seems rather odd and no justification for this is given. One has to wonder if this should have been 15% of the first row of costs, teaching plus teaching staff management costs? If so, this would significantly reduce the estimate of total cost.
8. Returning to the question of the £9.50 per hour per student 'full cost recovery': looking at the final column (the figures for a three hour course run over three terms of 10 weeks), one can't help but notice that if the residual figure: initial assessment, building assessments &c, was mistaken for an estimate of actual costs and added to the teaching/supervision and other management costs then the total cost per student per hour works out to £9.58. A mere coincidence?, perhaps, but if so, it still begs the question of what were the costs and the number of students per class on which the average cost figure was calculated and why was this information not given in the table presented.

Marginal cost

9. This is somewhat beside the point, however, without an estimate of the marginal cost per student. This is vital, particularly if the average cost has been based on only a low take up of places, because a pricing policy based on average rather than marginal costs may well increase not reduce an historic shortfall in income over cost. If the cost per additional student to a class is low compared to the fixed costs of a class then a high pricing policy is likely to drive away revenue with little compensation in cost saving. Far better in this case to have a low price policy to attract more learners. This would be true whether the student takes a second term of the same course or takes a completely separate course. Only if classes are likely to fill up and those intending to take only one course for one term are 'crowded out' could this be an issue. This seems unlikely for the moment, too few students is surely the main problem faced. Besides which, if this is or were to become an issue, the problem could be solved by giving preference to those taking only one course.

10. The data provided in the annexed table is rather scant and does not distinguish clearly between fixed and variable costs so one can only guess at the marginal cost of additional students. Bearing this shortcoming in mind, the last column of the annexed table is of some interest to our submission. This column gives the figures for a three hour course run over three terms of 10 weeks. This works out at a total staffing cost of £4,949. Of this, the cost of teaching makes up less than half (£2,250), whilst 55% is taken up with management and admin (£2,700). Leaving aside the issue of why management costs should be so high, as Southwark receive £375 from the Skill Funding Agency per student, this cost would be fully recovered (and with a surplus of £300) by 14 learners¹.
11. That is, if a three hour course attracted 14 learners then from day one it could be offered completely free for the whole year and still cover teaching and management costs. Any charge levied or SFA income from additional learners would contribute to the upkeep of equipment, building overheads and other admin &c. These last costs are not likely to increase greatly by adding students to an already running course, but it is of course a great pity the figures or estimates for these costs aren't given. It is hard to believe, however, that any reasonable estimate would require a large fee from students as long as there are at least a dozen or more students on the course and surely only a very small fee if the course were full or nearly full.

Demand

12. So why has Southwark had a problem in the past? It is highly likely that Southwark has lost money in the past because it didn't attract enough learners to anywhere near fill classes. What is Southwark's answer to this? Put up prices and risk driving students away.
13. This highlights the problem of the apparent lack of consideration given to demand. The issue of the effect of a price rise on demand isn't tackled in Peter John's letter, but there is an implicit assumption that raising a fee from £1.55/£3.60 per hour to £5.50 will generate significant extra income. There is a great danger, however, that not only will this rise in price not generate much extra income, but rather, the almost inevitable reduction in demand that will follow, may well lead to a fall in income and with very little saving in cost to compensate. Average cost would soar, endangering the continued running of the course. For, apart from the fact that those on low incomes are likely not to be able to afford the higher fees, even those on a reasonable income will surely notice that they can get the same product considerably cheaper elsewhere, or (to be frank) a better product at Morley or City Lit for much the same price or less.

¹ This takes the other management costs in the table for eight new learners as given for all numbers of learners. Because it is such an odd way of calculating this cost, it is hard to know what to do when considering 14 learners. If one took this cost to be 15% of the money from the SFA then just 12 students would cover the total course costs with a surplus of £112. At 45% for the year it would take 16 learners. If, however, one calculated this cost as 15% of the teaching and teaching management costs then just 11 learners would cover the total costs of the course with a small shortfall of £15.

14. Without access to the figures one can't say for certain, but one can only guess that PCDL student numbers are significantly down this term compared to last term or compared to the second term last year, and that to balance the books classes have been closed. If the current pricing policy continues into the third term matters could well be worse with even fewer returners and not enough new learners to compensate.

Conclusion

15. In short, a high price strategy can only mean fewer students, which is likely to mean static or even reduced income despite higher prices, with little compensation in reduced costs unless fewer classes are run. If too many students are driven away by high prices so many classes will close that the system may not be viable at all.
16. There is an alternative, one based on increasing student numbers not prices. That is, a return to a sensible pricing policy commensurate to other local providers coupled to a concerted marketing effort to increase student numbers.

ADULT EDUCATION – REPRESENTATIONS FROM SERVICE USERS

Emails sent directly to scrutiny

From: Jane Booth
Sent: 01 March 2011 23:10
To: Timbrell, Julie
Subject: Submission to scrutiny committee

Dear Julie

I have attended various art classes at Thomas Calton for the past 5 years. This term when I went to enrol I was told that because I was not a unique learner I was required to pay double - a jump from £70 a term to £165. I couldn't afford it and so have had to stop. That art class was the one little bit of time I had in the week when I could learn something new and socialise with a wide range of people, all coming together for the simple purpose of expressing themselves through making something. I feel that something very important has gone in my life. I could enrol in Lambeth or Lewisham or City Lit or Morley - they all provide cheaper comparable courses with far better facilities and, more importantly, with a far more welcoming atmosphere. But I want to study near where I live, where I meet people who live near me in a centre that wants me to use it, not tries every way it can to keep me from enrolling - which other establishment refuses to enrol online, only accepts cheques or cash and requires a passport or driver's licence before you can enrol?

I have two friends who are concessionary rated who were devastated to find that when they too came to enrol this term their fee had gone up from £37 to £167. They have been unable to return, their classes have closed and one is suffering from depression. In times of recession and increasing unemployment, local authorities should be providing opportunities for people to increase their skills, employability and confidence, not taking these vital services away. This fee increases make no sense. My class has closed because no-one could afford to go back and the class was not adequately advertised to get new members to join. The fewer classes there are taking place in the building, the less money is generated and the running costs are spread amongst the few remaining classes, making them more expensive to run.

Southwark needs adult education now more than ever. What happened to Life Long Learning? Or was it just another slogan? You can't learn a meaningful skill in just one term. It doesn't work. You need time to develop a skill. It just indicates that the service is run for the benefit the funders targets, not for the people it is supposed to serve.

Please save our service so we can get back to learning.

Jane Booth

From: Joan Byrne
Sent: 02 March 2011 17:30
To: Timbrell, Julie
Subject: adult classes

Dear Ms Timbrell:

My art class is an absolute highlight. Every single pupil enjoys it. All are growing in abilities, confidence, etc. Please do not put unnecessary hurdles in the way of this happening. If a person qualifies for a reduced-fee for one term, that person cannot be expected to pay triple the fee for the next term. A course is for one academic year, usually. Southwark needs its artists and healthy citizens. Do not make it so difficult and ridiculously bureaucratic, with the result that courses will close.

Thank you,

Joan

www.joanbyrnesnaps.blogspot.com

A selection of email representations sent to Veronica Ward and Peter John from adult learners

Kali Oliver to peter.john
details Feb 10

Dear Peter

Please could you let me know what action you have taken further to your promise made in the council chamber to act urgently to reduce fees back to a sensible level and save classes from closing? I am very disappointed that this issue is still ongoing and not yet resolved. FYI - I did a course last term at the centre but could not afford the fee hike this term.

Kali Oliver

Ooooooooooooooooooooo

clare chester to Veronica
Jan 30

Dear Veronica

I attended the drawing and painting evening classes last year with Rebecca Allen as teacher.

I was very sad to see this course finish and was told this was because there was a lack of funding.

I heard last week that Councilors are considering re-introducing some of the courses and am hoping one of these will be the evening art course. In fact there are a number of us who previously attended this course who are hoping it will be re-introduced.

If you have any influence at all I am asking for this course to be funded due to the interest of individuals who are keen to attend again and further their skills.

Yours Sincerely
Clare Chester

Ooooooooooooooooooooo

Thu, Feb 3, 2011 at 1:07 PM, Jan Dryden wrote:

Dear Veronica,

Further to my previous letter where I expressed my outrage at the changes in the criteria for adult education classes at the Thomas Carlton Centre I would like to let you know the effect these are already making for Southwark residents. A number of people at the art class I attended at Dulwich have been unable to register for the class this term because of the ludicrous 8 new learner rule and/or because the full price is now payable £165 instead of the concessionary fee of £45. This has directly affected older members of the community for whom this class was a highlight of their week.

I understand the council gave a sympathetic response to the deputation at the council meeting last week and I urge you to take this forward and support the demands to change these discriminatory and damaging rules before Adult Education is dessimated.

Yours sincerely,
Jan Dryden

Ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

Tue, Feb 1, 2011 at 1:20 PM, Cynthia Balfour wrote:

I currently attend a knitting class on Mondays at the Thomas Calton centre which is under threat of closure. There are 6 people in this class, 4 of which have never attended the centre before. With the threats of closure looming, I feel that this would be a harsh decision to make when all of us are thoroughly enjoying this craft class.

The centre is currently been renovated and still with all the noise and dust each week we make a conscious effort to attend. The centre is barely occupied as a result of other courses having to close and I feel that Southwark Adult Education should do whatever they can to keep their current learners.

I am one of 3 who live outside the borough and would be extremely disappointed if this class were not able to continue. Furthermore, I would be reluctant to attend any further courses if the future of adult education is to increase prices and cut courses.

Please save our course from closing.

Regards,
Cynthia Balfour

Ooooooooooooooooooooo

Dear Veronica,
Re Thursday afternoon ceramic workshop at Thomas Carlton 1.30--3.30 has not started as 5 new learners are required to start the course. This course is designed for experienced students, there being no teacher provided, This obviously saves the council money as the fees are the same as for the courses with tutors. (the ceramic technician works in the class room at the same time for health and safety reasons.)

having signed up for this course in good faith I am very disappointed that not is running
yours Trevor Dolan.

Ooooooooooooooooooooo

Dear Veronica Ward
Thank you your support at the Council meeting. I was the one who read the statement. I am a sculptor and have studied wood carving at Thomas Carlton Centre for 18 months with Mathalie Da Silva who was also in our deputation, The 2 Friday woodcarving classes have close due to lack of numbers but the Thursday evening class is just surviving, The Friday morning class was a lively class but those on benefits have left due to the increase of fees. 2 members had children who also used the crèche. so there is double loss for them. The sculpture that I made in the class I am entering for the V@A museum competition "Inspired by the V@A.I have stated that it was made through the

Thomas Calton Centre so if I am successful the centre will get some publicity which it desperately needs.

Best wishes
Dorothy Love

Ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

hi veronica

thank you for looking into this matter.

i did the wednesday evening art class with rebecca allen before christmas.

i initially wanted to do the tuesday morning art class but there were not enough people. the tuesday morning course would have been ideal for me so that i could put my one year old boy in the creche at the thomas carlton centre. i had my creche place all booked and my little boy had a settling in session, so we were all ready to start. but then the course had to be cancelled due to the council's almost complete failure to advertise the course and their rule that the course tutors were not allowed to advertise either.

in addition, i was not able to get any info on what courses were due to run until approx 2 weeks before the autumn 2010 term started. this was very poorly organised, as if the council wanted the adult learning centre to fail.

this term i cannot afford the wednesday evening art class repeat fee. instead i am attending another art class at dulwich picture gallery which, as always, is fully subscribed with 14 people and they have had to turn a few people away (as is usually the case). how come dulwich picture gallery can run a success adult education programme but the council can't? i think the answer is that d.p gallery advertise and are committed to providing the courses they know people want to do. however, for people like me with young babies and children, places like d.p gallery cannot provide a creche.

i had been hoping that i would be able to do a variety of courses at the thomas carlton centre, eg the garden sculpture course and the upholstring courses look very interesting. but the repeat fees are too expensive.

Thanks
kali

Ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

Dear Veronica

I have been an Adult Learner with Southwark for 5 years, learning Ceramics. I attended the purpose built centre at Peckham Rye School, and helped fight for its survival when the centre was demolished and the Upholstery, Woodwork and Ceramics departments were under threat of being scrapped.

As you know, they were saved at greatly reduced capacity and reinstated at Thomas Calton.

We are now in a situation where the fees have jumped so high in one go, along with the concessions being scrapped and students wishing to return being charged a higher rate, that the service will only be able to be used by the rich and well-off in Southwark.

More seriously, the new funding criteria for running courses is that each term must start with 8 new names on the register, before any others can enrol. This means that students who started a course and wish to continue their studies/learning are unable to do so unless 8 new students are found first. This raises several points:

- a) where are these 8 new recruits each term coming from?
- b) Why are keen, existing students effectively barred from continuing ?
- c) what quality of course is being offered that only requires 10 lessons to achieve?
- d) practical subjects, by their very nature, require practice of each new skill learned
[in the case of the Arts, famous artists spend their life-time striving]
- e) realistically, it is not viable to find 8 new students every time a new term starts

In reality, what this actually means is that this criteria successfully and decisively KILLS the courses.

Evidence: The recent Portrait Sculpture course, which is always very popular, with a highly qualified and inspirational tutor, has been scrapped due to this new criteria. There was a queue of students who would loved to have attended but could not. There was 1 new recruit and lesson One was inspected by an Ofsted Inspector, giving the impression that there was no interest in this class. How appalling for the Arts and for how Southwark presents its Adult Learning provision.

Please will you explain this devastating state of affairs and respond to points a-e.

Regards
Jenny Yeo

**Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee
Work Programme – /11/12**

11 April
1. Adult education spotlight: review report
2. Review of parenting support – part 1: School admissions: review report
3. Childhood obesity and sport provision : review report
4. Children and Young Peoples Plan with Southwark Youth Council
5. Rotherhithe secondary school

Next administrative year
1. Free school meal pilot
2. Annual Safeguarding report – January 2012
3. Children and Young Peoples Plan with Southwark Youth Council – quarterly
4. Review of parenting support – part 2: support for parents

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