

Item No.	Classification Open	Date: 18 April 2012	Decision Taker: Cabinet Member for Culture Leisure Sports and the Olympics
Report title:		Commissioning Plan for Adult Learning Services (2012/13)	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director of Environment & Leisure	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Cabinet Member agrees the strategy outlined in this report for the allocation of adult learning grants.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The Adult Learning Service (ALS) is funded entirely by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). The funding allocation is made on an annual basis and monies are paid for the achievement of contractual targets set out in the funding contract between the Council and the SFA.
3. Adult learning commissioned within the programme delivers to the funding expectations of the SFA, the Council's Plan and the Environment and Leisure Department's key aims and priorities.
4. The SFA is a partner organisation of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills with a mission to ensure that people can access the skills and training they need to succeed in playing their part in society and in growing the economy.
5. SFA priorities for the funding provided to Southwark Adult Learning include:
 - Design and deliver a wide range of high quality opportunities in every geographical area
 - Deliver family literacy, language and numeracy programmes for those with skills for life needs
 - Learner progression to further formal learning, including progression pathways with Foundation Learning
 - To encourage adult learners to participate in learning; to stay in learning and to progress and achieve their first full Level 2 qualification. It is targeted at low income, low skilled adults, aged 19 and over
 - The reach and impact of the funding must be evidenced through the collection of individualised learner data supplied to the SFA by "hard close" dates.
6. The contribution of commissioned services to delivering the priorities of Southwark Council is specifically through improving individual life chances, particularly the priorities of achieving economic well-being, achieving educational potential, enjoyment of culture and leisure opportunities and increasing residents' satisfaction with these programmes.

7. The Adult Learning Service also contributes to, and is based on the principles of the Council's Fairer Futures priorities:
- Being more transparent
 - Creating a fairer borough
 - Making Southwark a place to be proud of
 - Realising potential
 - Spending money as we would our own
 - Transforming public services

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

The Need

8. The ALS commissioning programme delivers a range of learning activities and courses to support SFA and Council priorities at a range of locations across the borough and particularly in areas with high levels of deprivation. It aims to ensure that people are not excluded from learning opportunities because of economic or other deprivation factors by working with Southwark's vibrant voluntary and community sector. The commissioning programme aims to build on the expertise of the sector, support their capacity to deliver high quality, OFSTED standard, first-step provision that promotes equality of access, participation across the borough, skills development and progression to work.
9. According to the Office for National Statistics, the official labour market figures for Southwark are:
- 9.8% of Southwark residents are unemployed
 - 23.2% are economically inactive, of whom 8.8% want a job
 - 10.3% of Southwark residents have no qualifications

Demographics and Diversity

10. Projects will be socially inclusive and recognise the diversity of Southwark's population which includes London's largest Black African community (16.1% of borough population) and significant Black Caribbean (8%), White other (8%) and Bangladeshi, Indian, Chinese and Latin-American communities.
11. The commissioning programme aims to have good geographical coverage across the borough.
12. There are contrasts of opportunity and different environment in the borough, with some of London's most deprived areas adjacent to thriving and affluent communities. The location of the highest levels of deprivation in the borough are located in a broad band across north and central Southwark from south of the riverside developments to the borders of Dulwich.
13. The commissioning programme will take into account learning opportunities and courses needed for unemployed people and socially excluded groups, with the aim of encouraging these learners back into education, training and employment.

Children and young people

14. Southwark has a higher percentage of children aged 0-4 than the London average at 7.1% of the borough's population, whilst 5-19 year-olds make up a further 15.5%.
15. The number of children living in families that are poor or out of work is significant. These families are least likely to access learning opportunities out of school hours.
16. The ALS funding of family learning aims to improve the lives of local children and young people by supporting parents and carers to develop their own skills and their ability to support their school age children for greater economic prosperity.
17. Following local disturbances in August 2011, there is an additional need and aim to deliver programmes that support parents of older school age children in relation to issues of knife crime and gang culture.
18. National policy that influences the Council's programme are:
 - Every Child Matters and Every Citizen Matters, with their five priorities for children and people
 - Equality and Human Rights Act 2010
 - The Disability Discrimination Act which imposes obligations in terms of improving access to facilities and services
 - The Further Education and Skills Reform Plan (BIS) and Investing in Skills for Sustainable Growth for 2012/13 (BIS)
19. Council policies that particularly impact on the programme are:
 - Southwark 2016
 - Fairer Future priorities as set out at paragraph 7
 - Southwark Equalities and Human Rights Scheme
 - Young Southwark and Children and Young People's Plan

The Commissioning Priorities and Principles

20. The factors determining the commissioning priorities for the 2012/13 programme are drawn from both the SFA expectations and the Council's objectives.
21. A number of contracts will be let, none at a value of more than £120,000.
22. Applicants to the programme will be required to demonstrate how they intend to:
 - Meet the needs of Southwark's communities
 - Deliver high quality provision to meet these needs
 - Capture the outcomes of learning, the benefits to learners and progression information about learners as required by the SFA
23. The SFA produces guiding principles for commissioning learning. These include prospective partners being able to demonstrate their capacity and capability to deliver and manage learning as required by the Agency and by OFSTED.

24. Prospective partners also need to demonstrate that they are in sound financial health and have duly robust governance processes in place to expand and manage public money effectively and efficiently.
25. The process is underpinned by the published Southwark Council procurement regulations.
26. Organisations selected through the tender process will be recommended to the Strategic Director of Environment and Leisure for Approval.
27. Once prospective partners have been approved by the Council, the list of recommended organisations is submitted to the SFA for final approval.

Identification and management of risk

28. The SFA has stated that “Past experience that sub-contracting significant levels of provision is associated with higher levels of risk”. It is therefore essential that the commissioning and subsequent management of sub-contracted provision is carried out with due diligence.
29. It is not only good practice to undertake a due diligence process before entering into a new partnership, it is also an SFA requirement.
30. As the lead provider, ALS holds ultimate responsibility for all aspects of the provision that it is contracted to deliver, including any elements that it chooses to sub-contract.
31. The risks for the service as the lead provider include:
 - Achieving poor success rates, which reduces the lead provider’s overall performance
 - Risk to the reputation of and contract for the lead provider
 - Not achieving funding targets leading to lower than budgeted management fees and potential for reductions in future allocation
 - Underestimating the costs of administering the provision and contract
 - Further sub-contracting without the written approval of the Agency
 - Competing for employers and learners with other contracted provision
 - Failing to complete the contract period, leaving learners on-programme
32. ALS will manage these risks by assessing potential risk at the tender stage. Only applications with low risk and appropriate mitigation arrangements in place will be recommended for approval.
33. Once subcontracting arrangements are in place, partner performance is regularly monitored both through provision of data required for SFA reporting and by observation of quality and standards.
34. ALS also makes training available to partner organisations in order to raise and maintain service quality. Recent examples include safeguarding and observation training.

FUNDING 2012/13

Adult Safeguarded Learning (ASL)

35. Organisations can apply for one or more of the following funding streams. Where an application is made to more than one stream, the course delivery for each stream must explicitly meet the specific objectives. The combined funding bid must not exceed £100,000.
36. Learning programmes must meet at least one of the following objectives:
- Learning to improve essential skills and employability for learners to progress to further learning, paid/ unpaid work and involvement in the community (NLDC)
 - Learning in local communities that is innovative and accessible (NLDC)
 - Developing new ways of delivering relevant curricula to attract excluded and under-represented groups into learning (including those from deprived communities) (NLDC)
 - Delivering training and education, including skills for life, in the broadest possible range of settings (NLDC)
 - Learning for personal development, cultural enrichment, intellectual or creative stimulation and for enjoyment (PCDL)
 - Providing opportunities for parents and children to learn together (WFL, FLLN)
 - Improving the literacy, language and numeracy skills of parents (FLLN)
 - Improving parents ability to help their children learn (FLLN)
 - Improving children's acquisition of literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN)
 - Developing the skills or knowledge of both the adult and child participants (WFL)
 - Helping parents to be more active in the support of their children's learning and development, and to understand the impact of that support (WFL)
37. The principles underpinning ASL are as follows:
- Those who have benefited least from the education system and are in most financial need should have greatest access to public funding for ASL provision
 - There should be a wide range of ASL programmes which are of high quality, challenging and above all, inspiring
 - Where programmes do not lead to formal outcomes (i.e. accreditation), progress and achievement must be measured and recorded through a sector-recognised process such as "Recognising and recording progress and achievement" (RARPA).
38. Projects will be funded using a per-learner formula of £250.00 for at least 10 hours of learning.
39. For courses of less than 10 hours, the funding will be on a pro-rata basis (i.e. £25 per hour per learner), for example:
- 2 hours course: £50 per learner
 - 4 hours course: £100 per learner
 - 6 hours course: £150 per learner
 - 8 hours course: £200 per learner

40. Funding for family learning programmes 2012/13

FLLN	Per adult learner cost 2010/11	Funding for class of 10 adults	Funding for class of 12 adults
2 hours workshop	£50	£500	£600
3 hours workshop	£75	£750	£900
4 hours workshop	£100	£1,000	£1,200
9 hours introductory programme	£225	£2,250	£2,700
10 hours and above (introductory, short or standard)	£250	£2,500	£3,000
WFL	Per adult learner cost 2010/11	Funding for class of 10 adults	Funding for class of 12 adults
2 hours taster	£50	£500	£600
3 hours taster	£75	£750	£900
4 hours taster	£100	£1,000	£1,200
5 hours taster	£125	£1,250	£1,500
9 hours introductory programme	£225	£2,250	£2,700
10 hours and above (introductory, short or long)	£250	£2,500	£3,000

Formal First Steps

41. The purpose of Formal First Steps provision is to promote progression to formal learning or jobs.
42. Formal First Steps must aim to and demonstrably support:
 - Return to learning (particularly at entry and level 1) and progression to skills for life, level 2 and level 3.
 - Continue to support the re-engagement of learners within a context of social inclusion
43. Provision must be planned within a framework that has explicit progression to further learning.
44. There remains an expectation that the vast majority of First Steps provision can and should be accredited.
45. Projects will be funded using a per-learner formula of £350.00 for at least 10 guided learning hours.

Our expectation of learning provision

46. All learners should have a learning experience which meets the expectations of the SFA and Common Inspection Framework (Ofsted), including:
- Access to initial and diagnostic treatment
 - An individual learning plan (ILP) setting out learning aims, goals and the smaller steps that the learner will take in order to achieve their goals
 - Tutors who give regular, positive and recorded feedback and who are able to use a range of teaching opportunities
 - Opportunities to take national qualifications at the appropriate level
 - Guidance to help plan their progression into other learning, training or employment opportunities
47. Non accredited provision must make use of RARPA processes to identify goals and objectives, record progress and achievement, and define learners' next steps.

Safeguarding learners

48. All SFA funded providers are required to provide a safe, healthy and supportive environment and comply with SFA funding terms and conditions.
49. SFA terms and conditions generally require providers to adopt recruitment processes that comply with the law and will ensure that young and vulnerable learners are protected.
50. Providers must register with the Criminal Records Bureau where their employees or volunteers may have regular contact with learners under 18 or other vulnerable learners. They must ensure that appropriate checks are made to ensure employment that involves regular contact with young people aged under 18 is not offered to, or held by, anyone who has been convicted of certain specified offences, or whose name is included on lists of people considered unsuitable for such work held by the Department of Children, Schools and Families and the Department of Health.

The Adult Learning Service project grants programme criteria checklist

51. Organisations applying for funding under the Adult Learning Service programme must address the following:
- Experience the organisation has in delivering high quality successful learning programmes
 - Courses that will be delivered within which funding streams
 - How the delivery will meet the fund criteria
 - Who the expected course beneficiaries are, how their specific needs will be met
 - What are the possible progression routes for learners at the end of the course (named further courses or jobs) and how do the proposed courses prepare the learners for this
 - Financial viability of the project and auditable evidence of good value for money
 - Evidence of procedures for monitoring and evaluation, including collection of learner feedback and learner satisfaction

- Evidence of commitment to equal opportunities (including the new equality duty), health and safety and safeguarding
- Evidence of record keeping, including learner enrolment, attendance, progress and achievement

52. Evaluation criteria will be shared with bidders in the application papers. The maximum annual project grant award will be £100,000 and we will only consider applications requesting an amount at that level and below.

Financial implications

53. The Skills Funding Agency have issued an initial funding statement for 2012/13 allocating an amount of £1.78m to the Southwark Adult Learning Service. This amount is slightly less than the award for 2011/12, which was just under £1.8m. This amount comprises the full budget of the service, as it is wholly funded by the SFA. As the amount awarded has been reducing annually for the past few years, this will be taken into consideration when determining the total amount of contract commissioning. In 2010/11 the total amount commissioned and paid out was £647k.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Finance Director (NR/F&R/30/3/12)

54. This report recommends that the Cabinet Member for culture, leisure, sports and the Olympics agrees the Adult Learning Service Commissioning Strategy.

The Finance Director notes the financial implications contained within the report. Officer time to effect the recommendation will be contained within existing approved revenue budgets.

Strategic Director of Communities, Law and Governance

55. The Strategic Director of Communities, Law and Governance notes the content of this report. The report author should ensure that any contracts that are let pursuant to the strategy that is set out in this report are let in accordance with Contract Standing Orders. Advice should, where appropriate, be sought from the Contracts Section of Legal Services in relation to the letting of these contracts.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Skills Funding Agency Guidance documents; national and local learning policy documents;. Adult Learning Service project grants programme strategy and criteria checklist	160 Tooley Street 3 rd floor, London SE1P 5LX	Dolly Naeem 020 7 525 3294 Harriet Duncan 020 7 525 1718

APPENDICES

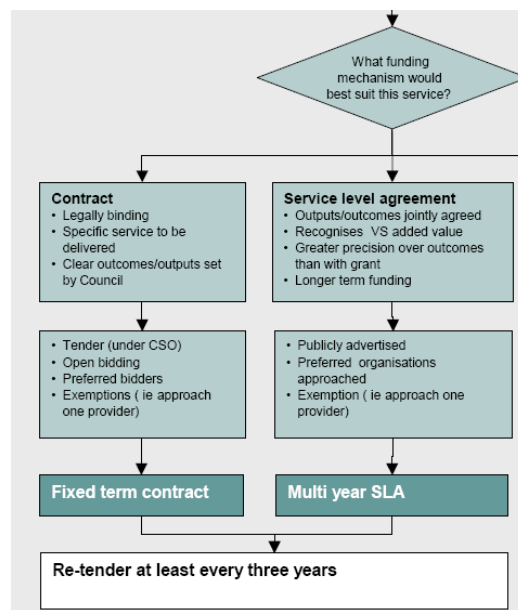
No.	Title
1	Process for commissioning Adult Learning

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Gill Davies, Strategic Director Environment & Leisure	
Report Author	Adrian Whittle, Head of Culture Libraries Learning and Leisure	
Version	Final	
Dated	18 April 2012	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	Yes	
Finance Director	Yes	
Cabinet Member	Yes	
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	18 April 2012	

Appendix 1 Proposed process / protocol for Adult Learning Service commissioning

Following Council Guidelines for Commissioning



- Mechanism is a Contract
- Through open bidding process once every three years
- A number of delivery partners will be approved to meet the funding criteria and priorities
- Fixed term Contract offered on an annual basis dependent on funding from SFA and subject to the partner provider demonstrating their capacity and capability to deliver