

York and North Yorkshire's Adult Education Budget Community Learning Provision

A Report by Annabel Jelley and Tokos Solutions on behalf of
York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. In December 2020 York and North Yorkshire (YNY) LEP commissioned Annabel Jelley, working with Tokos Solutions, to undertake research into Community Learning (CL).
2. Our research involved:
 - a. 48 consultations with providers and stakeholders.
 - b. Analysis of CL data and findings from the consultations, identifying current levels of effectiveness (including considering the impact of COVID), and making recommendations for ways in which to enhance and support CL across the area of York and North Yorkshire.
 - c. Identification of guiding principles for future devolution of the Adult Education Budget (AEB), which includes CL.
3. Analysis of CL data highlighted several key issues:
 - a. 90% of CL provision is delivered by three providers, which has both positive and negative impact. Larger providers benefit from economies of scale but may not be able to be as innovative or flexible to meet learners' needs.
 - b. CL learner data collection is not robust making it difficult to measure outcomes effectively.
 - c. There has been a major change in the types of CL provision delivered with a substantial reduction in Family English, Maths and Language (FEML) and Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities provision (NLDC). This has resulted in a decrease in capacity building activity in the VCSE sector, which is seen as an issue by many providers and stakeholders.
4. Key findings were collated under headings including strategy, understanding and awareness of CL, delivery models, partnership working, target groups, infrastructure, accessibility, activities and interventions, funding and value for money, impact of COVID, and future opportunities and challenges.
5. There was a strong view, expressed by providers and stakeholders alike, that the benefits of CL are significant to the community and economy. It enables critical first steps provision for disadvantaged people and marginalised groups to support them engage in learning and move on. CL helps people progress towards employment and promotes community cohesion.
6. Whilst there was a clear picture from consultees about the target groups for CL, an overriding strategic intent was missing. Provision tended to be planned from a bottom-up approach rather than a vision for CL as a whole.
7. There was debate regarding the relative merits of provision that supports well-being versus that which helps people move towards employment, but the consensus was that priority should be given to economic benefits and provision that helps tackle poverty.
8. CL provision delivers a spectrum of learning opportunities and is responsive to emerging needs. Progression pathways, however, are not as clear as they might be' especially between providers.
9. The complexity of CL funding ultimately causes issues for learners. Many funding policy changes over the years coupled with local factors have resulted in a skew towards

Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL) at the expense of family learning and capacity building activity.

10. The role of the North Yorkshire Community Learning Partnership (NYCLP) is critical to the effectiveness of CL. Local partnerships, where they operate well, are highly beneficial to the alignment of CL with other local provision. The overarching strategic vision of the partnership, however, needs reinvigorating so that it can better support coherence for all CL provision.
11. Digital learning has become increasingly important in recent months as the measures required to comply with COVID-19 safety have been implemented and is an effective way to engage learners when face-to-face learning is not possible. However, poor digital connectivity and other aspects of digital poverty (lack of kit, lack of skills and lack of confidence) impact negatively on the most disadvantaged learners.
12. Effective Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) is critical to learner progression.
13. The negative impact on mental well-being of the COVID pandemic was cited repeatedly by consultees. They were keen to ensure that provision in future should prioritise this need.
14. Principles for a post-devolution framework for CL include:
 - a. Stability – The provider base must be consolidated but not destabilised. Quality, local providers should be at the heart of CL.
 - b. Innovation - In future, the LEP could use the opportunity of devolution to widen the provider base and promote innovative, alternative provision, which meets the needs of vulnerable people. There is a strong appetite among providers who do not currently deliver CL to start delivering it in future and a desire among colleges who have small allocations to deliver more.
 - c. Procurement - The LEP needs to provide clarity to the provider base regarding its plans for the way in which it intends to commission, procure and manage provision post-devolution.
15. In conclusion, we present recommendations to the LEP for it to consider when planning for CL provision. These include:
 - a. Create a clear strategic vision for CL to provide coherence for the sector.
 - b. Work needs to be undertaken to map wider provision, services and activities alongside CL provision, enabling it to be more joined up with other providers and to support progression pathways.
 - c. Improve data collection so that a baseline can be established, and impact assessed accurately.
 - d. More effective partnership working needs to be developed to channel resources where they are needed and deliver better value for money.
 - e. Capacity building for the VCSE sector should be reintroduced to boost the capability of the VCSE sector to support effective engagement with those that benefit from CL.

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1. KEY FINDINGS

In undertaking this research we were struck by the enthusiasm and passion for Community Learning (CL) amongst providers and stakeholders with whom we consulted. Their care and concern about the client groups that participate in CL was strongly in evidence, as was their desire to ensure the best possible outcomes for them.

Providers who participated in our research generally perceived that the £3m per annum spent on CL provided good value for money. This view was expressed both by providers who deliver CL and those who do not.

We have summarised other key findings from this research and consultation under a number of headings and themes as follows with further details in Sections 8 and 9:

1.1 Strategy

- An overarching, area-wide strategic intent is missing. Most CL is planned from the bottom up with priorities determined by the ESFA funding rules rather than the vision of strategic bodies. Providers who deliver CL tend to view it in iterative terms, building on an original plan based on internal priorities rather than on wider considerations.
- There is a lack of clarity both from provider and stakeholders about the preferred strategic outcomes for CL provision. There is also confusion about the relative merits of different types of provision e.g. public health orientated provision that helps to combat loneliness and supports positive mental health versus employability and maths, English and digital skills provision that builds a pathway towards employment.
- In weighing up the relative merits of provision that supports social cohesion and public health versus that which helps people get a job or a better job, the consensus was on the latter. The majority of consultees thought that CL funds should be spent on the most economically needy in society and therefore the primary focus for CL should be helping people towards employment.
- There is a lack of alignment between CL and the wider skills and employment support infrastructure. Providers and stakeholders agree that CL provides the gateway and initial stepping-stones for the journey towards work or further learning, particularly for those that face disadvantage and are further from the labour market. However, progression routes and pathways are not always clear, and it is common for progression to occur within the providers themselves to higher levels of learning, rather than to other providers.
- All three of the main CL providers who deliver across the LEP area plan provision with a bottom-up approach, responding to what learners ask for, rather than from a high-level strategy. This also tends to reflect the personal expertise of individuals in the delivery teams, rather than expressing a collective vision.

1.2 Understanding and Awareness of Community Learning

- Many of those we consulted were not fully aware of how the CL strand of Adult Education Budget (AEB) Community Learning (CL) was currently configured or delivered. This was also the case among stakeholders and providers without a CL allocation.

- The complexity of CL funding ultimately causes issues for learners. The many historical iterations of funding policy changes over the years coupled with a lack of strategic clarity, local political influence and changes to key personnel within providers have resulted in a skew towards PCDL at the expense of family learning and capacity building activity which was formerly delivered by the Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC) strand. This means that CL provision does not offer the breadth it once did.
- There is a wider interpretation of CL amongst stakeholders, i.e. community learning activity, which is not necessarily funding through AEB, but delivered at a community level, to address community needs.

1.3 Delivery Models and Partnership Working

- The majority of CL across YNY is delivered by two locally based organisations and a national organisation with a local base (City of York Council, North Yorkshire County Council and Worker’s Education Association account for 90% of CL delivery between them) using in-house delivery staff. Very little provision is sub-contracted. This contrasts with previous delivery, where significant levels of subcontracting took place, with community providers delivering learning to suit local needs, as identified through CL Partnerships.
- Third sector organisations are well placed to respond to specific community and target group needs but may lack the organisational structures to ensure that the quality of provision is compliant with inspection frameworks such as Ofsted. Capacity Building activities that helped to improve the capability of VCSE organisations and quality of provision were previously delivered through Neighbourhood Learning and Deprived Communities (NLDC) funding, but this has reduced significantly over recent years, thereby diminishing VCSE organisations’ ability to keep abreast of inspection requirements. This led to concerns from the lead providers about the adverse risk to their inspection outcomes of sub-contracting and a subsequent reduction in sub-contracting arrangements with VCSE organisations.
- The role of the North Yorkshire Community Learning Partnership (NYCLP) is critical to the effectiveness of CL and consultees cited this repeatedly as the key to setting an effective strategy and impact measures, aligning provision, providing support and reducing duplication. Section 5.4.6 provides more detailed information about the purpose and formation of the NY CLP.
- Currently, local CL partnerships vary in their effectiveness with some operating very successfully (e.g. Craven) and others not operating at all (e.g. Selby district). Where they work well, the results are beneficial not only to the CL providers themselves but to the wider sector. Where they are not operating, the opposite is true.
- The NYCLP Strategy Group has an overarching remit and recognised a need to review and reshape its vision and strategy some time ago and is still working towards this. There is a resultant lack of strategic direction for CL providers, which has caused a breakdown in the coherence of the offer across the area.
- The impact of CL appears to be more effective when providers actively involve community-based organisations in provision design, learner engagement and hosting the provision in community venues. However, there is a gap in terms of

information sharing about client needs as well as existing provision and complementary support.

- Where CL provision is embedded within other local support activity and provides a more holistic response to individual needs, it delivers greater value for money. However, the lack, in some instances, of alignment with other provision in some cases (e.g. with some ESF funded provision aimed at similar groups) was cited as causing unnecessary duplication.
- The quality and coverage of CL provision is patchy, especially in the more rural areas.

1.4 Markets and Target groups

- Consultees agreed that the focus of CL is to support people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate in learning, as well as those on low incomes with low skills. The data, however, shows that a significant percentage of learners have pre-existing high levels of attainment and this suggests that prioritisation of learners could be improved.
- Individuals with 'chaotic' lifestyles require flexible and less structured or rigidly timetabled provision, and so benefit from the informal non-accredited learning CL offers. Examples of such groups include carers, who are rarely able to plan their respite care to accommodate regular learning sessions.
- However, there was some concern among consultees that there is a bias in provision towards the older age group (and the data reflects this) which is not in keeping with a focus on employability and is unsustainable in the long term.
- There is a lack of consistency in providers' choice of priority groups, which is not an issue in itself if responsive to local need but can cause geographical variations and lack of opportunities for vulnerable learners.

1.5 Infrastructure and Accessibility.

- Premises are critical to the success of CL. First steps learning is most effective in an environment that is non-threatening to a learner, in their neighbourhood and easy to access. The key providers all use community venues, family and children's centres and other local spaces and venues.
- However, the high costs of such venues can impact negatively on the financial viability of CL delivery to smaller groups in the more remote areas thereby reducing the availability of appropriate provision for people in rural areas.
- Provision is concentrated in Scarborough and York, where there are pockets of increased deprivation.
- Digital learning has become increasingly important in recent months as the measures required to comply with COVID-19 safety have been implemented and is an effective way to engage learners when face-to-face learning is not possible. However, poor digital connectivity and other aspects of digital poverty (lack of kit, lack of skills and lack of confidence) impacts negatively on the most disadvantaged learners.

1.6 Activities and Interventions

- In recent years there has been a major change in the type of CL delivered. There has been a significant decrease in NLDC and Family English, Maths and Language (FEML), an increase in Wider Family Learning (WFL) and a marked rise in PCDL, which now accounts for 93% of all CL provision. The drop in FEML was due to the rise of academies and the resultant decrease in connection between the local authorities and schools. The decrease in NLDC was due to a combination of factors such as the expansion of academies, which is addressed later in the report.
- Consultees expressed a view that, despite the complexities of the four strands of funding, all the delivery streams (NLDC, PCDL, FEML and WFL) are perceived as valuable; their relevant importance depending on the customer group. Similarly, all types of learning e.g. employability, personal development, community development, are valued.
- Accredited learning accounts for only 1.5% of total CL provision, with demand focused on non-regulated, flexible and informal learning.
- Lifelong learning accounts for almost 36% of all CL provision and includes sector subject areas such as Arts, Media and Publishing and Language, Literature and Culture. 29% of provision is under functional /essential skills i.e. maths, English, IT; 28% is vocationally related learning; and the remainder (7%) is employability-focused learning.
- Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) is offered to all CL learners and makes a critical contribution to learner journeys and progression. Short taster courses and those that could be described as 'leisure learning' offer the least effective IAG.
- The potential for duplication of provision is high and consultees agree that CL should be focused on filling gaps.

1.7 Measuring Impact

- There are significant gaps in learner data. This means that we do not know the extent to which provision is effectively targeting those that it should. For example, employed/unemployed status is not collected or not known in 54% of all learning aims.
- There is no standardised approach to measuring impact across the CL allocation.
- Much of the provision focuses on addressing well-being as a positive outcome, and whilst it is less tangible as an output, the impact can be measured effectively. Many consultees were clear that CL is not just about progression into further learning or employment.

1.8 Funding and value for money

- Budgets for CL have not increased in many years and, have reduced in real terms as funding from CL can be vired into the Education and Training strand of the AEB but not the other way around.
- The flexibilities within the AEB have meant that providers have the choice to deliver in any one of the four CL strands and this may have led to a reduction in certain strands.

- Small CL budgets with a focus on local areas or sector specialisms have offered innovative provision with good value for money.
- There is confusion about eligibility of learners. Some disadvantaged learners or those with barriers have to pay for their provision.
- In broad terms the average cost per learner of CL provision is circa £428 in contrast to the Education and Training investment which equates to circa £824 per learner. It is not possible to make a realistic comparison in VFM terms as the two types of provision are different.

1.9 COVID Challenges and Opportunities

- The COVID response in local areas has been focussed on Community Anchors (explained in more detail in section 5.4.7) and this momentum is being used to springboard and coordinate more services including CL. Community Anchors are grass roots centres that have coordinated the COVID response and enabled services to be delivered very locally.
- Consultees commented that in their locality, CL provision has been noticeably responsive to the COVID crisis. Creative, family learning and first steps courses have recently been launched. The courses attract people by serving a need and are learner-centred e.g. cooking on a budget which incorporates skills such as financial literacy or English skills. This engages learners and encourages them to embark on a journey towards further learning or support.
- COVID - whilst this has negatively impacted on face-to-face learning, the online offer has drastically improved with a new and expanding range of online resources in evidence. These resources have enabled new learners to access learning as in the past not everyone was able to attend classroom or workshop-based provision. COVID restrictions will mean that smaller classes are the norm, and this is likely to impact on the funding model.
- The negative impact on mental well-being of the COVID pandemic was cited repeatedly by both stakeholders and providers. They were keen to ensure that provision in future should prioritise this need.

1.10 The Future – Achieving Greater Value for Money

- Consultees generally expressed the view that CL needs a more joined up approach with providers working more collaboratively to support better outcomes for individuals and communities. Many regretted the demise of local Community Learning Partnerships, which had proven to be highly beneficial in the past and they wished to see them reinstated and reinvigorated.
- There is a mix of views on targeting of resources. Some believed the focus should be on those most in need to help them to progress into employment through a progression pathway that begins with CL. Others supported prioritising wellbeing (particularly mental health) and social inclusion, as well as wider community needs.
- Employer engagement is important to shape provision and ultimately support any progression into employment.
- The pool of potential providers needs to broaden to include colleges who currently do not have CL provision, alongside third sector organisations who are

successfully delivering other learning to the most vulnerable and 'hard to reach' groups. CL should be delivered in the community by local organisations who have the relationship with their customers and know what they need.

- CL should be filling gaps in provision e.g. for those with mental health needs or struggling financially.
- More blended approaches are needed, combining face-to-face and on-line provision, but community infrastructure must be in place to support this (and address digital poverty and skills).

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2. RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRINCIPLES FOR THE FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 A clear LEP area-wide CL strategy is needed, setting out the focus for funding, whether it be economically or socially driven. It needs to align with associated LEP (and where relevant other strategic bodies) priorities and actively involve providers and stakeholders in its development. The contribution of CL to the green agenda and other key issues such as health inequalities and COVID recovery should also be considered.
- 2.2 The focus of any provision needs to be on providing learning to individuals (and families) which deliver positive outcomes, i.e. having a personal impact and helping individuals to move on.
- 2.3 Work needs to be undertaken to map wider provision, services and activities alongside CL provision, enabling it to be more joined up with other providers and supporting progression pathways.
- 2.4 Data collection needs to be improved with information about the learners (e.g. prior attainment, gender, age, employment status, disabilities or learning difficulties, ethnicity and aspirations for the support) to be collected from the outset, along with outcomes and impact of the support arrangements. This will improve understanding about the effectiveness of provision in meeting different needs.
- 2.5 More effective partnership working needs to be developed, building on the work of the NYCLP, successful CL Partnerships and recent COVID support activities delivered through local community hubs. This will help to channel resources where they are needed - increasing positive impact and delivering better value for money. A continued LEP presence on the NYCLP Strategy Group would support this, as would an incorporation of York providers. In this way, greater emphasis can be focused on creating effective progression routes from first steps learning to higher level courses.
- 2.6 Capacity building support for the VCSE to enhance CL provision should be reintroduced. This will support effective engagement with those that need CL, across the diverse resident groups including vulnerable people, and across the YNY geographic area, also ensuring that those living in rural areas are not excluded. Capacity building will also increase the readiness and capability of VCSE organisations to become CL deliverers and create a much needed boost to the sector.
- 2.7 There needs to be a clear focus on addressing digital exclusion and digital poverty, improving accessibility of learning and the quality of provision through digital channels, particularly for those living in rural areas and/or who are affected by mobility issues. This may include further investment in superfast broadband in remote areas.

Principles for the CL Framework

2.8 Strategic

- 2.8.1 The LEP needs to clarify its strategic intent, including a vision for CL. Consultees were predominantly in favour of prioritising vulnerable learners as COVID response planning gathers pace and the recession sets in. This work will be critical to get right prior to devolution. There is a willingness by providers and stakeholder alike to work with the LEP on this process over the next few years.
- 2.8.2 Devolution affords freedoms within the AEB to Combined Authorities (CAs) which means that CAs do not have to deliver CL if it does not fit with their strategic aims. LEPs need to consider this carefully and set out clearly what their aims are and what outcomes they expect if they continue with CL as part of the AEB.

2.9 Stability

2.9.1 The provider base in the first year of AEB devolution must be consolidated but not destabilised. Priority should focus on good quality, local providers. This should also include opportunities for colleges to secure CL funding. They are part of local networks and understand their communities very well. CL can be integrated into their offer and provide effective progression routes.

2.10 Innovation

2.10.1 In future, the LEP could use the opportunity of devolution to widen the provider base and seeking innovative, alternative provision that meets the needs of vulnerable people. There is a strong appetite among providers who do not currently deliver CL to start doing so in future and a desire among colleges who have small allocations to deliver more.

2.11 Flexibility

2.11.1 The flexibility afforded by CL is advantageous to the delivery of provision and would be welcomed in the Education and Training element of the AEB resources, enabling all providers to focus on addressing specific needs of learners and provision to be crafted to meet local needs.

2.12 Capacity building

2.12.1 Capacity building as a function of CL is quite different to standard provision and it may be advantageous to commission it separately post-devolution. It would ensure that the impact sought by the LEP is delivered and could be used for a variety of purposes to address social exclusion.

2.13 Procurement considerations

2.13.1 The LEP needs to provide clarity to the provider base regarding its plans for the way in which it intends to commission, procure and manage provision post-devolution. Prior to the YNY devolution deal there may be other devolution deals coming into effect in neighbouring areas which will affect the AEB of York and North Yorkshire providers and this may affect the total funding pot available to the LEP. National providers such as the WEA will have their total allocation diminished with each devolution deal and then may or may not be grant funded by the CA after devolution. This depends on whether the strategy includes the sort of provision that the WEA offers and whether the CA does 100% grant funding or procurement.

2.13.2 THE LEP also needs to set out to what extent it will manage delivery. Some CAs have micromanaged providers, others have set a strategic direction and adopted a hands-off approach.

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4. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Adult Education Budget (AEB)	AEB-funded learning aims to engage adults and provide the skills and learning they need to progress into work or equip them for an apprenticeship or other learning. It enables more flexible tailored programmes of learning to be made available, which may or may not require a qualification, to help eligible learners engage in learning, build confidence, and/or enhance their wellbeing.
Adult Learning and Skills Service (ALSS)	North Yorkshire County Council's service responsible for community learning provision.
Community Learning (CL)	Helps people of different ages and backgrounds gain a new skill, reconnect with learning, pursue an interest, and learn how to support their children better, or prepare for progression to more formal courses / employment.
Community Learning Partnership (CLP)	Local partnerships set up to provide both strategic and operational direction for the delivery of CL. Involved those providers with a direct CL allocation, third sector organisations and local FE providers.
COVID	Current pandemic, impacting on learning delivery, amongst other things. Sometimes abbreviated to C19.
Education, Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA)	Accountable for funding education and skills for children, young people and adults. ESFA is an executive agency, sponsored by the Department for Education.
Family English, Maths and Language (FEML)	Learning to improve the English, language and maths skills of parents, carers or guardians and their ability to help their children.
Functional Skills	Applied practical skills in English, maths and ICT that provide the learner with the essential knowledge, skills and understanding to enable them to operate effectively and independently in life and work.
Individual Learner Record (ILR)	The primary data collection requested from learning providers for further education and work-based learning in England. The government uses this data to monitor policy implementation and the performance of the sector. It is also used by organisations that allocate funding for further education.
Learning Aim	A single episode of learning which could be a regulated qualification, a component of a regulated qualification or non-regulated learning.
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC)	Supports local Voluntary and other third sector organisations to develop their capacity to deliver learning opportunities for the residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

Non-Regulated Learning	Learning which is not subject to awarding organisation external accreditation in the form of a regulated qualification. It may be designed, delivered and certificated by a provider or another organisation. Community learning typically falls into this category.
Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL)	Learning for personal and community development, cultural enrichment, intellectual or creative stimulation and for enjoyment.
Wider Family Learning (WFL)	Learning to help different generations of family members to learn together how to support their children's learning.

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5. INTRODUCTION

- 5.1 The York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (YNY LEP)'s local Skills Advisory Partnership (SAP) activities are coordinated by its Skills and Employability Board. The DfE is working closely with all LEP area SAPs to support them to develop their understanding of local skills issues based on robust evidence, formulate skills priorities and design and deliver action plans to address these.
- 5.2 With this in mind, in July 2020 the LEP commissioned a report to map the current local provision funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) through the Adult Education Budget (AEB)¹. The Report covered both the Education and Training and Community Learning (CL) strands of the AEB, with the CL in less depth. The LEP wish to obtain additional information to support the evidence base for future priority setting and action planning at SAP level.
- 5.3 To this effect this the LEP commissioned us (Annabel Jelley and Nada Tokos) to undertake research with the following objectives:
1. To develop a better understanding of Community Learning (CL) providers' perspectives on the effectiveness of the provision in terms of its impact on individuals, communities and the wider economy and how greater value for money might be achieved in the short to medium term.
 2. To gain a view from Stakeholders, particularly in the VCSE sector, of the value of CL to their client groups to support them engage and progress in learning and employment.
 3. To identify, with CL providers and stakeholders, the general principles to underpin a robust and coherent delivery framework any for post-devolution Community Learning provision funded by Government in order to maximise the benefit for individuals, local communities and the wider economy and to meet the priorities of the LEP.

5.4 Community Learning Background

- 5.4.1 Community Learning forms part of the AEB and is defined in the ESFA Funding Rules 2020-21 as follows:

The purpose of Community Learning is to develop the skills, confidence, motivation and resilience of adults of different ages and backgrounds in order to:

- progress towards formal learning or employment and/or
- improve their health and well-being, including mental health and/or
- develop stronger communities.

- 5.4.2 Provision takes place under the following four delivery strands:

Personal and Community Development Learning - learning for personal and community development, cultural enrichment, intellectual or creative stimulation and for enjoyment (in most cases not leading to a formal qualification).

Family English, Maths and Language - learning to improve the English, language and maths skills of parents, carers or guardians and their ability to help their children.

¹ Peter Glover, *Analysis of Adult Education (AEB) Funded Provision in York and North Yorkshire*, July 2020

Wider Family Learning - learning to help different generations of family members to learn together how to support their children's learning.

Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities - supports local Voluntary and other third sector organisations to develop their capacity to deliver learning opportunities for the residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

5.4.3 The analysis of the Adult Education Budget identified what in York and North Yorkshire the CL allocation for 2018/19 was. It also indicated that "Funding for Community Learning can only be roughly estimated; this is because it is block-funded at provider level. This means there is no simple way of attributing the funding to individual learners in order to assess the total value of funding associated with YNY residents."²

5.4.4 The analysis provides details on the scale of CL:

*6,630 individual learners started a community learning programme in the 2018/19 academic year, with total participation of 6,700. There were 11,480 enrolments on learning aims made by these learners.*³

5.4.5 In undertaking this research and consultation it is important to understand how CL has previously been managed and delivered across the LEP area, as several stakeholders refer to how it previously worked.

In 2011, the then Government set out its approach to adult and community learning in its 'New Challenges, New Chances' report which set out what the government would financially support and what reforms it sought in the sector. It gave fresh impetus to a focus on disadvantaged groups and people furthest from learning, an emphasis on progression through learning towards employment and the role of learning in developing stronger communities.

These priorities were set out in the funding rules and guidance published and administered by the funding body, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and remain as such to this day.

Prior to 2011, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) had reformed the provider base to consolidate funding for community learning into local authority contracts and colleges, in the main, either had their contracts for community learning removed or were subjected to a substantial reduction. It was understood that local authorities had a closer connection to disadvantaged groups through the provision of other services and were better placed to offer appropriate community provision. Colleges would offer progression pathways via their adult funding pot. At this time, the LSC created and funded Area Learning Partnerships that supported the alignment of provision and creation of progression pathways.

5.4.6 In 2012 the North Yorkshire Community Learning Partnership (NYCLP) was created to provide strategic direction and coherence to Community Learning provision in the county. It was in line with national funding policy at the time, which was encouraging a greater focus on the impact and quality of CL as well as a stronger emphasis on skills development and economic focus. In addition, there was recognition that the partnership would enable a more coordinated response to local needs. Nine

² Ibid, page 10

³ Ibid, page 12

organisations became members and made an annual contribution to the running of the partnership.

In the intervening years, the NYCLP has evolved and changed. It now has a Strategy Group that includes a wider membership and has localised Community Learning Partnerships, which operate across the county in various forms, although they have ceased to function in some districts.

In recent times, there has been a recognition by the partnership that it needed to review its purpose, structure and strategy and this process was launched in 2019. The process was paused when COVID19 occurred and is set to begin again shortly.

In 2015 the Government introduced its plans for 'Freedoms and Flexibilities' which resulted, in 2017, in the four strands of community learning being amalgamated into the adult budget, which was renamed the Adult Education Budget. This meant that providers who delivered community learning now had the freedom to switch delivery into the Education and Training stream (but not the other way around).

At the same time, in North Yorkshire, there were some changes to the provider base, which had long-term but unforeseen impact. Your Consortium Ltd, for example, previously delivered a reasonably substantial NLDC contract and when it made the decision to pull away from ESFA funding to concentrate on other funding streams, that funding was vired to NYCC. As this coincided with the freedoms and flexibilities, the previously distinct NLDC strand was subsumed into the wider funding pot. It is evident from current data that this strand of provision has now almost disappeared.

- 5.4.7 Many consultees referred to Community Anchors (sometimes referred to as Community Hubs) as important drivers of social cohesion in local areas. These organisations existed prior to the COVID crisis but came into their own as trusted and liked local places or organisations that brigaded the emergency response in the initial lockdown phase and have gone from strength to strength ever since.

There is a strong view that these local Anchors can be the conduit for further services including a greater connection to community learning. Each one is different but is very effective in reaching disadvantaged groups at grass roots level.

- 5.4.8 In York and North Yorkshire CL is delivered primarily by 3 providers: North Yorkshire County Council (via the Adult Learning and Skills Service (ALSS)), City of York Council via York Learning and the Worker's Education Association - a national provider. Between them these providers account for 90% of the delivery.

There are 34 providers in total, most of whom deliver small amounts of provision in the area. The majority are local or operate from neighbouring districts.

There is a wide variety of provision delivered reflecting the flexible and responsive nature of CL. The courses tend, however, to be short, unaccredited and at or below level 2. Sector subject areas vary significantly between providers with some having a predominantly arts/creative based curriculum and others focussing on employability skills, maths, English and digital skills. Specialist provision is also offered where appropriate. Askham Bryan College, for example, offers a bushcraft taster course, which reflects the land-based specialism of the college, and learners progress from this on to employability provision with a view to working in the land-based sector.

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6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 We undertook the following to respond to the research objectives set out at 5.3:

- Context and background research to understand the complex history of CL funding, the iterations of national policy changes in recent years and how CL provision sits within AEB provision and other funding strands such as European Social Funding.
- Analysis of CL data to inform the consultation and provide a baseline for questioning.
- Telephone or online video interviews with people from circa 40 organisations.
- Collation and analysis of findings including the extent to which strategic aims exist and were met, the effectiveness of partnership working, curriculum planning, responsiveness to local needs, value for money, the effectiveness of provision for participants, the relevance to vulnerable groups, geographical variations and the impact of COVID19.
- Identification of best practice, issues, challenges and recommendations for CL in the future and identification of principles for the LEP to consider in its plans relating to post-devolution funded learning.

6.2 Our rationale for the selection of interviewees was to consult with organisations with clear relevance or connection to CL. In order to have as comprehensive as possible a set of consultees from a wide range of potential organisations our selection was narrowed down as follows:

- 50:50 split between providers and stakeholders.
- Providers with a direct Community Learning contract.
- Local providers without a direct Community Learning contract but with similar provision or progression pathways.
- Umbrella organisations or strategic bodies representing the VCSE sector.
- Primary stakeholders with direct responsibility for or are service providers for client groups that are the focus for Community Learning e.g. local authorities, JCP.
- Strategic organisations and funding bodies who commission, procure, allocate and performance manage CL providers.
- Organisations that provide referrals to CL provision or deliver similar provision in the VCSE sector.
- Mayoral Combined Authorities that are already administering the devolved Adult Education Budget.

6.3 We interviewed all consultees according to an agreed format with more in-depth questioning on funding methodology for providers. Interviews took place individually or in small groups.

6.4 In total we conducted interviews between 30 October 2020 and 30 November 2020 and consulted with 57 individuals from 48 organisations. These organisations provide a good geographical coverage, although some districts are not as well represented as others (e.g. Selby). There is a broad representation of residents of all ages, as well as with specific needs or vulnerable, e.g. carers, people with disabilities, and homeless young people. Providers and stakeholders operating across all YNY geographical locations were interviewed as well as consultees from out of area and with a national focus.

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7. DATA ANALYSIS

- 7.1 To better support our understanding of the provision, we undertook analysis of ESFA AEB provider data for the 2018/19 academic year. This also provided a context to the consultation interviews. Key points from this data analysis are set out below and further detail can be found in [Appendix 1](#).
- 7.2 The top 3 providers account for 90% of all CL delivery and all three have been assessed as 'Good' by Ofsted. The remaining 31 CL providers account for 10% of delivery with small allocations. ([Table 1](#))
- 7.3 Concentrating provision among three providers has positives and negatives. In positive terms, there is an economy of scale that enables the infrastructure needs, leadership and management, and back office requirements to be afforded more readily within the funding allocation and similarly, quality processes may be more robust and sophisticated.
- 7.4 There may be drawbacks, however, to having 90% of provision concentrated in a small number of providers especially in a large geography. Issues may include a lack of choice for learners and an unfair marketplace for learning as publicly funded courses price commercial courses (often offered by the VCSE sector) out of the market.
- 7.5 The data shows that 98% of CL is non-regulated learning which is in keeping with its focus on first steps learning and its flexible nature. ([Figure 1](#))
- 7.6 In recent years there has been a major change in the type of CL delivered. Since 2016/17 the Neighbourhood learning in deprived communities strand fell by 94%, whilst participation on Family English maths and language fell by 95%. Conversely, Wider family learning increased by 36%. The biggest area of growth in absolute terms was the largest category of PCDL, which increased its share of total learners from 74% to 93%. During the consultation we asked providers how they accounted for these changes and their views can be found in the findings section.
- 7.7 PCDL makes up 93% of all learning ([Figure 2](#)) and is concentrated in York and Scarborough ([Table 2](#)). This is unsurprising given the population densities in these urban areas and the policy focus on areas of deprivation which exist in both.
- 7.8 Lifelong learning accounts for the highest percentage share of all learning aims (35.89%) and, in general terms, accounts for provision that supports social inclusion, wellbeing and community development. The remaining 64.11% is split between employability, functional skills and vocational provision, which can be considered as building blocks towards employment. Both elements reflect different aspects of the LEP skills priorities. ([Figure 3](#))
- 7.9 For 54% of CL learners the employment status is not collected or not known ([Figure 4](#)). This means that it is not possible to determine the extent to which CL helps people into employment which is a key indicator of a positive outcome. Of the remaining learners with a known employment status the majority were unemployed or inactive and around 14% were employed.
- 7.10 The prior attainment of CL learners is not known in around a third of learners but among the remaining two thirds there is a skew towards existing higher attainment levels ([Figure 5](#)). This raises the question about the extent to which learners may have

the wherewithal to pay for classes as higher educational attainment tends to equate with higher earnings.

- 7.11 Around 21% of learners have no qualifications, which equates to national figures for attainment levels in the adult population ([Figure 5](#)). Further detail of prior attainment among learners in the top three providers shows distinct differences. The data ([Figure 6](#)) shows that the City of York Council supports a higher proportion of learners with no qualifications, North Yorkshire County Council has an even spread and the WEA supports a greater proportion of people with L4 and above.
- 7.12 Participation data shows that CL is predominantly taken up by women (73%) ([Figure 7](#)).
- 7.13 Learners with learning difficulties and disabilities (LLDD) and/or health problem account for around 14% of the total cohort ([Figure 8](#)) which is higher than the general population and make be a reflection of the older age groups and people who are farthest from employment.
- 7.14 Black and Ethnic Minority (BAME) learners account for 3.2% of learning aims ([Figure 9](#)). Compared to a BAME population of 5.2% across YNY, this group is under-represented in CL.
- 7.15 The age profile of CL learners shows that 26% of learners are 65+ and 57% are over 50 ([Figure 10](#)). Compared with adult education in general this shows a skew towards the older age groups. This reflects the public health, well-being and leisure learning focus for a significant proportion of CL but raises the question about the extent to which social inclusion should be prioritised by providers.
- 7.16 With a quarter of learners over 65 there is a likelihood that a large proportion of those learners are not active in the labour market and therefore not undertaking learning that is progressing them towards employment.

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8. PROVIDER CONSULTATIONS

8.1 We consulted with 20 prime providers consisting of those that had Community Learning (CL) allocations and those that were delivering other provision across YNY. The interview format used is set out in [Appendix 2](#).

8.2 The feedback from these providers is arranged under specific themes and headings for CL providers and for non-CL providers.

8.3 Community Learning Providers

8.3.1 Strategy

- The Adult Learning & Skills Service (ALSS) in North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) and York Learning in York have a joint head of service with the intention to align the provision across the York and North Yorkshire area. In practice, the two services run independently, have their own distinct contract from the ESFA, and each have a different offer. There is an acknowledgement of greater scope for both services to align their respective strategies and work more closely in partnership. Both services offer quality provision, which is graded Good by OFSTED in recent inspections.
- Due to a variety of factors (including changes to personnel, changes to funding rules, the introduction of flexibilities within the AEB, national policy changes, movement towards devolution and the local government review) the strategic direction of both services may benefit from greater clarity. Whilst there is a general understanding that CL is aimed at vulnerable groups and offers first steps learning in a number of contexts (from well-being and leisure learning to building blocks towards employment and progression in the workforce) we suggest that the main strategic aims could be more clearly defined.
- City of York Council's CL provision (run by York Learning) centres on its vision, aims and objectives, which are to:
 - Target disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and individuals.
 - Get people into work and support them whilst in work.
 - Contribute to positive health and well-being.
 - Help individuals to achieve their potential.
 - Give people a first step back into learning.

They plan provision with a bottom-up approach with an offer that is responsive to what learners ask for. This has a greater leaning toward public health and social cohesion than economic prosperity. Curriculum specialists ensure that the offer reflects emerging trends. Concerns have been raised in the past regarding people repeating courses year on year and not showing sufficient progress, but the view of some consultees was that there are good outcomes for these learners such as reduced loneliness and improved mental health.

- Curriculum planning in the North Yorkshire ALSS operates on more of bottom up approach rather than from a high-level strategy. Curriculum specialists research popular topics and design the curriculum to reflect them. They are also responsible for progression routes within the service. An area of focus for the service is to help people get jobs or progress towards employment. The service offers taster courses in various sectors e.g. accountancy as well as more general employability courses.

- The rationale Craven College applies to CL funding is that it must make an impact on individuals' lives and move them on. A great deal of work goes into designing courses that address known issues in the locality. These do not always have a qualification attached but there are no 'hobby' courses. All courses are focussed on specific needs e.g. Cookery for the Bereaved will be teaching cookery skills, but the outcome is to combat loneliness and help people process grief. Well-being is important but it is the view of Craven College that improving job prospects is a higher priority with greater impact in the long term.
- WEA deliver learning within 4 strategic strands: Community Engagement, Health and Well-being, Culture and Employability. CL is largely seen as an engagement tool, to support learners with the informal learning, then progression into more formal provision and progression pathways e.g. via York College and other local providers, or to the WEA's own regulated provision.
- There are a number of FE colleges with modest CL budgets and only one was clear on how its strategy for provision linked in with local need or a wider strategic framework. In some cases, the curriculum offered under CL was historical or shaped by other considerations such as the expertise of tutors available. All FE colleges interviewed were positive about exploring opportunities for alignment and partnerships with CL providers particularly with a view to improving progression pathways.
- In North Yorkshire three of the four distinct strands of CL (FEML, WFL and NLDC) have diminished over time for a number of reasons. Without a clear strategy the curriculum planning has become more bottom up than top down and more dependent on the personal expertise of individuals within the services than a collective vision. The impact of COVID, however, is starting to reignite a need for family learning as the education of children has been so badly affected by lockdown and the closure of schools.
- NLDC has effectively disappeared in North Yorkshire for a variety of historical reasons which involve the virement of allocations from external organisations and predate current personnel by some years. There does not seem to be an active reason for the reduction of this strand of CL provision, but rather it has fallen victim to the complexities of funding allocations over the years, changes to personnel and a focus on other agendas.

8.3.2 Delivery Models and partnership working

- The WEA model is about working in partnership with voluntary organisations and delivering appropriate courses where they are needed, and to meet local priorities. They very rarely subcontract provision. The partners and branches identify what is needed, provide venues and their volunteers promote the learning and engage the learners. WEA then deliver the learning.
- Craven College is an active member of the North Yorkshire Community Learning Partnership Strategy Group and also the local CL partnership. This CLP includes NYCC representatives, VCSE and Adult Learning from NYCC and works very well. A different focus is chosen each year e.g. people with disabilities, rural isolation or mental health. Members of the partnership collaborate effectively to ensure that provision aligns well in Craven. Courses that are organised by one organisation may be offered to others for learners to join e.g. unconscious bias training. As the College has a relatively small pot of funding (£75K) it works

extremely hard to maximise it by leveraging other funds (e.g. joint bidding with Age UK), aligning it with other activity (e.g. Drug and Alcohol Service) and understanding how other provision can be used to support it.

- York Learning operates alongside other projects with similar client groups and offers progression routes e.g. Action Towards Inclusion. There is no CLP in York and numerous consultees had the view that adult provision across the board would be improved by having one.
- The ALSS in North Yorkshire has increased its internal connections with service providers within NYCC to optimise referral mechanisms and tailor provision to the needs of vulnerable people who are receiving other forms of support. Partnerships with external providers and stakeholders are extremely good in some areas but not in others. Currently, the ALSS is a member of the NYCLP Strategy Group but has not been active in the last year or two.

8.3.3 Markets and Target groups

- There is a lack of consistency (which is borne out by the data as well as consultation feedback) in providers' choice of the beneficiaries of CL.
- The focus in North Yorkshire via the ALSS is vulnerable people, rural isolation, food and digital poverty, mental health issues, improving skill sets and self-esteem to move on. The service is promoted within NYCC's other services to reach marginalised groups. The courses are promoted to the general public too via a Facebook page and through partners.
- The ALSS service in North Yorkshire has a fee income policy and where possible it charges for classes. Income generated is used to support vulnerable people. There is also a policy to ensure that people on low incomes can get a discount. Similarly, the York Learning service has a full cost offer for classes such as pilates and offers a senior discount and reduced rates for people on low income.
- Overall, CL is perceived as a grass roots type of provision that should be delivered to meet a local need for local people in a place that works for them.
- Some providers view that CL should be focussed primarily on progress towards employment or progression for people already in work, and that careers advice is critically important for people in CL to ensure that their learning is aiming towards a goal identified by the individual.

8.3.4 Infrastructure and Accessibility

- City of York Council's CL provision operates using community venues across the city with accessibility as a key consideration. All sorts of venues are used including libraries, schools and community centres and all venues must be on a bus route. However, logistical challenges arise with the number and variety of venues in use. The organisation of the courses on a practical level is resource intensive and there is a view that a city centre venue owned and operated by York Learning would mitigate these issues.
- WEA's provision is mainly in the urban areas as this is where there is critical mass. They work with partners to reach those in the more remote areas and offer provision to smaller groups, in the partner's community-based venues.

- Colleges that deliver CL do so on their own premises for obvious reasons. Many interviewees expressed the commonly held view that people who have been out of education for a long time often do not want to attend courses in college venues as they can be daunting and/or hold bad memories of formalised learning from poor schooling in the past. However, College venues are equipped with high specification digital technology to support learning and this has been used to great effect in recent months. Scarborough TEC, for example, has state-of-the-art technology in the classroom that enables students to participate fully if they are either in the classroom itself or at home and there are opportunities for the utilisation of this to greater effect for CL.
- Digital learning has become increasingly important. Poor digital connectivity and other aspects of digital poverty (lack of kit, lack of skills and lack of confidence), however, impact on the most disadvantaged learners the most. WEA improve digital access by working on a one-to-one basis by telephone to help learners to set themselves up onto the digital portal. WEA are also developing a digital inclusion strategy for Yorkshire and Humber to enable learners to access online provision.

8.3.5 Activities and Interventions

- The focus of most CL provision is informal, unaccredited learning.
- The ALSS in North Yorkshire has increased its family learning offer and is looking to expand this further in the future. Courses on self-esteem for children, mental health and other such courses are offered for all age groups and the need for them has been intensified by COVID. These courses are available across the North Yorkshire geography but have been particularly popular in Scarborough. There is evidence (according to Amanda Spielman's recent OFSTED report which highlights that children have regressed in their learning during the COVID pandemic) that children's education has been adversely affected and in response the service has put on courses in school readiness.
- The offer through York Learning has altered in recent years with a steep decline in family learning and a rise in PCDL. This has been due to the increased academisation of schools in the city and reduced engagement with the local authority as a result. York Learning would like to increase family learning in the future as this provision is a priority and the need is still there, perhaps to a greater extent due to the months of schooling missed by children due to COVID.
- The majority of WEA's delivery is PCDL to diverse groups, however, they also deliver learning for volunteers in their partner organisations, which in the past would have been supported through NLDC.
- Scarborough TEC delivers PCDL only with a priority on employability, English, maths and digital with a small amount of creative provision.
- Careers Advice is critical as each course must be contributing to a learner journey and connect to a longer-term career purpose. Craven College has people with the right skills and accreditation to ensure that this happens.
- Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) is also robust through NYCC's ALSS and is offered to all learners via Guidance and Support Officers. They meet and speak to learners 1:2:1 to understand what learners want and put an individual learning

plan in place. They will identify if additional learning support is needed and support with further learning and progression.

8.3.6 Measuring Impact

- The provision offered in NY through NYCC is difficult to track due to its breadth and complexity and there are tentative plans to slim down the offer in future (NB this is subject to a future review).
- The type of outcomes that are sought by WEA in their delivery are dependent on the groups engaged. For some it will be learning to support progression into employment e.g. language for refugees; for others it will be learning as a form of social interaction and for learning's sake, to address isolation and loneliness e.g. retired people – they have significant numbers of learners from this group - reflecting the clear need of North Yorkshire's residents living in rural areas.
- WEA have a research department that collates information about the impact. They will contact learners on completion and talk about progression and how the learning has impacted, on themselves and their families. This informs their national impact report published annually. Learner achievement and impact information is also collected and collated by tutors as part of the learner experience at the end of each course. This evidences that CL is important in terms of progression, especially for those that are socially and economically excluded. The impact encompasses improved well-being – not just skills.

8.3.7 COVID Challenges and Opportunities

- It was the view of many consultees that as the fallout from COVID becomes more apparent there needs to be more targeting for vulnerable people in deprived communities.
- The impact of COVID on learner choice in recent months is that hands-on courses have dropped for obvious reasons. In York, there has been a significant increase in language courses and a continued rise in on-line classes that can be accessed remotely.

8.3.8 The Future

- WEA's views about the future are that:
 - CL needs to be more joined up with all providers aligned and supporting progression pathways.
 - It should be targeted at those that need it the most – those that are being left behind – and it should be holistic in nature, not just about skills and progression into work.
 - Young people and mental health needs should be supported with a focus on developing resilience and aspirations through CL including via family learning.

8.4 Non- Community Learning Providers

8.4.1 Understanding and awareness of Community Learning

- For some providers without a CL allocation there is limited awareness of the CL provision. Where there is an awareness, the perception is that CL funding largely supports hobbies and night-classes for a largely retired customer group.

- Other providers were well versed in the different strands of CL from their former experience or knowledge from other areas but were perplexed or unsure as to the rationale behind the current delivery. There was a view articulated that in order to improve progression from first steps and VCSE activity to more formalised learning, there needs to be more capacity building undertaken in the sector.
- Providers that have vulnerable learners understand CL in a wider context and see it as a mechanism to enable people to access to a full life regardless of the physical and mental barriers they may have. Family learning for families with children who have profound disabilities and learning difficulties may be focussed, for example, on learning sign language to facilitate communication with their child.

8.4.2 Strategy

- CL is important in terms of developing softer personal skills that are not addressed through other mainstream provision. i.e. CL needs to fill the gaps.
- Most consultees were not aware of a strategy for CL beyond a general emphasis on first steps learning, supporting social inclusion and delivering leisure learning.

8.4.3 Delivery Models and partnership working

- CL providers must have an understanding of the needs of the communities and deliver within them.
- Consultees highlighted a lack of partnership working between CL provision and ESF funded provision aimed at employment and increased economic prosperity. Opportunities for progression pathways from CL are missed and some obvious gaps could be filled e.g. Volunteers are not eligible on some ESF funded projects but could be funded via CL.
- A number of providers who offer general FE or specialised adult provision highlighted a lack of effective partnership work over recent years and a need to improve on this for the benefit of learners. This is not the case everywhere (Craven was cited by several interviewees as demonstrating effective partnership working over a sustained period) but most areas have underdeveloped arrangements for partnership working.
- Communication in real time about vacancies on upcoming courses was effective in some areas and less so in others. Methods of communication such as weekly emails were welcomed by some respondents but not by others who regarded them as insufficiently targeted either geographically or by subject area.
- Aspire-IGEN delivers ESF-funded activity to single parents and vulnerable families in the Scarborough area. There is effective communication between other providers regarding upcoming courses and there has been success when courses are delivered in the same venues.

8.4.4 Markets and Target groups

- There is a general view from providers not currently delivering CL that it needs to be tailored to specific communities and target groups – rather than a generic offer.
- Consultees felt that the current strategy of focussing on the older age group was not sustainable and there was a need for re-balancing to serve the employability needs of younger people.

- The view of colleges is that CL should be targeted on deprived communities and disadvantaged groups with a view to getting people into work as the end goal.

8.4.5 Infrastructure and Accessibility

- Access to learning for those living in the more rural areas is a significant issue.
- Premises are critical to success of CL. First steps learning must be in an environment that is non-threatening to a learner, in their neighbourhood and easy to access such as family and children's centres.

8.4.6 Activities and Interventions

- CL with its in-built flexibility can tailor provision to meet the needs of diverse learners effectively, and providers need to continue to offer responsive, informal learning for those that are excluded and not ready for formal provision and qualifications.
- Innovation and the ability to develop courses to reflect changes in society or deal with new evidence of need is important e.g. more courses have been offered that target men at risk of loneliness as this has been highlighted as a mental health and suicide risk. 'Men in Sheds' and 'Walk and Talk' groups are examples of these.
- There are significant gaps in digital skills – especially amongst those that are unemployed – delivery of CL (and the Digital Skills entitlement) in the communities would help to address this.
- Colleges that offer provision for vulnerable learners have continued to offer face-to-face learning in a blended model during COVID demonstrating that they can adapt quickly to the needs of all learners and have the skills to offer CL provision.

8.4.7 COVID Challenges and Opportunities

- As online learning is here to stay and has advanced significantly during the COVID crisis, innovation in learning could be further enhanced by looking at learners who use assisted technology for everyday life and adapting it for CL.
- The College Principals suggest that post-COVID funding should be focussed on getting the economy going.

8.4.8 The Future

- CL should support progression pathways – i.e. starting with CL for those that are further away from the labour market and/or vulnerable, leading into apprenticeships and other learning.
- Employers need to be more engaged to help to identify skills needs and help to inform the learning at the start of the progression pathway, as well as for those that are seeking career changes. Employers can contribute to learning that can help to raise aspirations and awareness of where the opportunities are.
- The opportunity to support the green agenda and a green economy with CL should not be overlooked.

- As capacity building is not provision per se and has different activities and outcomes, it was thought by some consultees that it should be tendered for separately post-devolution.
- If the ultimate aim of CL is to move people closer to the world of work, more capacity building needs to be done with businesses to support and train them to employ people (in a voluntary or paid role) who have additional needs or barriers.
- There is a strong appetite among colleges who currently do not have CL provision to start delivering it in the future, enabling them to support a pipeline and progression pathways from engagement through to higher level learning and employment. Some colleges have an existing, full cost 'evening class' offer which could be adapted and they also have well-developed ESOL, maths, English and digital skills provision which offers progression.

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9. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

9.1 We consulted with 28 stakeholders across a diverse range of activities and customer bases. Several of these stakeholders had had previous experience of CL delivery (with some delivering other forms of community-based learning). We were therefore able to learn about previous successful approaches and good practice. The interview format used is set out in [Appendix 3](#).

9.2 The feedback from these stakeholders is set out against specific themes and headings for those that have experience as CL providers and for non-provider stakeholders.

9.3 Stakeholders with Community Learning Provider Experience

9.3.1 Understanding and awareness of Community Learning

- Many of the stakeholder organisations that are involved in delivering learning to their customers (funded through a range of other resources), have some knowledge, and usually previous experience, of CL. However, several are not aware of what constitutes CL and how it is currently organised and delivered.
- A number of the stakeholders interviewed that work with specific groups have previously been involved in delivering CL themselves, primarily through the NLDC strand, focusing on the specific needs of their customers. With changes to the contracting and the submergence of the resource into the wider CL funding pot, they no longer had any involvement in shaping and delivering CL.
- Stakeholders reported that, in some cases, the funded CL provision directly duplicated their own charged-for courses and caused unnecessary and unfair competition.

9.3.2 Strategy

- Wellbeing as a strategic priority and outcome, is as important as progression into employment. CL can offer a holistic and sustainable approach to achieving both wellbeing and positive economic progression.
- CL aligns well with support provided to many customer groups and can often contribute to a holistic response to their needs, where stakeholders (and community organisations) are involved in identifying needs and the types of courses that would be useful.
- If there is a strategy for CL overall, there is limited awareness and alignment with other activities and infrastructure. Stakeholders do not know what the priorities are, nor what the intended outcomes for the overall provision are.

9.3.3 Delivery Models and Partnership Working

- Several stakeholders indicated that they work with the CL providers to support customer referrals and engagement, helping to identify specific topics that their customers needed, as well as offering venues for delivery. e.g. the Carer's Resource refer into NYCC's provision in the libraries for IT, Maths and English; and they have provided venues for delivery by NYCC, WEA and Craven College for courses to support their customers in their caring role, including cooking and dementia awareness.

- There is a gap in terms of sharing information amongst providers. Increasing information sharing would increase awareness of provision, reduce duplication and support more effective referrals.
- There is a view that better partnership working is needed, where provision plays to the strengths of individual organisations. This more effectively addresses the needs of specific target groups, rather than a single organisation trying to do everything and as a result provision is generic, rather than tailored, and therefore has less impact in terms of outcomes.
- CL previously supported very effective partnership working via the Community Learning Partnerships and other groups sharing good practice and identifying needs. In some areas this is now missing, and as a result much of the CL provision was viewed as directionless.

9.3.4 Markets and Target groups

- Target groups with 'chaotic' lifestyles require flexibility in provision, as a result CL, with its informal, unaccredited provision, better suits these groups, who cannot commit to structured learning that may require regular sessions once or twice a week. Examples of such groups include carers, who are rarely able to plan their respite care to accommodate regular learning sessions.
- Tutors must have a good understanding of the needs of different groups of learners and be able to tailor their delivery to maximise positive outcomes. E.g. ensuring that learning is fun and engaging, especially where the main outcome is social inclusion but adopting an appropriate tone and content where needed such as for a Suicide Awareness and Prevention course.
- There is a misunderstanding that people with barriers to inclusion (e.g. disabilities, mental health issues, caring responsibilities) all have low levels of prior attainment and seek low level courses. In fact, people have as wide a spectrum of likes and interests as the general population and CL should reflect this. The important factor is to enable inclusion no matter what the level.

9.3.5 Infrastructure and Accessibility

- Geography is an issue in terms of accessing CL, especially for those living in the more remote areas, which are under-served by provision. There is often not the critical mass of learners to deliver a financially viable offer.
- Whilst face-to-face delivery is preferred by some groups e.g. carers, who use it as an opportunity for respite from their caring role, delivery of on-line learning can significantly increase access to courses, thus, addressing geographical barriers. Disability Action Yorkshire (sub-contractor to NYCC) have developed an e-learning portal tailored to their customers' needs, covering a diverse range of topics and themes (functional skills, personal development, independence, employability and vocational pathways). Customers do, however, need practical support to initially engage and then progress.
- Several stakeholders suggested that investment is needed to address the access to on-line learning – ensuring digital inclusion.
- There are many local providers that have developed extensive knowledge and experience of working with specific client groups and communities and are

currently delivering provision through other funding sources (e.g. ESIF). They are embedded into the local infrastructure and market, so that there is local capacity and capability to deliver CL to meet local needs and support positive outcomes for individuals and the wider communities. However, these providers are not currently involved in delivering CL to any great extent and they often do not know what is actually on offer, so that they can refer their customers to it.

9.3.6 Activities and Interventions

- All the delivery strands are seen as valuable although some have more importance than others, depending on the customer group. Similarly, the types of learning e.g. employability, personal development, community development, have different values according to the groups of learners supported. For customers of Disability Action Yorkshire their focus is actively encouraging their customers into work – therefore, provision needs to be tailored according to the individual needs, but typically covers a combination of personal and social development, employability and functional skills.
- The learning that is most needed by disadvantaged, socially excluded or vulnerable residents and communities is that which can be tailored to address their needs. CL's ability to provide learning that is customer-centred, responsive and holistic is the most valued aspect.
- The potential for duplication of provision is high – and there are some examples of CL provision competing with income generating provision delivered by third sector providers.
- Depending on the needs of the client groups, consultees were concerned about the level that the CL was pitched at. For example, first steps digital skills training for people who have never picked up a device before was pitched too high and learners were confused and demoralised from the outset. In mental health training, the opposite occurred where tutors were ill equipped to deal with complex mental health issues that arose in the class.

9.3.7 Measuring Impact

- Given the unaccredited nature of provision, there is a view that using Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement (RARPA) to support progression and ensure quality and impact, would be valuable.
- Outcomes data is not collected at a subcontract level – their focus is on the individual learner journey – not necessarily the wider socio-economic impact, nor the impact of provision on the community or target groups as a whole.
- Consultees raised concerns about the relevance and impact of some provision for their client groups and noted that attendance dropped off significantly. There was a lack of opportunity to feedback other than non-attendance and no follow up.

9.3.8 Funding

- The cost of learning may be a barrier to take-up – especially where a learner is disadvantaged or has barriers but is not in receipt of Universal Credit. E.g. carers.
- There is confusion about funding and eligibility of learners to access more than one type of CL provision – i.e. those receiving CL linked to for example a

Healthcare Plan are not able to access e.g. an IT course delivered through CL by another provider.

- Funding and eligibility create barriers and people with disabilities, in particular are falling between the gaps in terms of employability support. Disability Action Yorkshire are approached by many of this target group, who cannot access support elsewhere (or are unaware of it), and they could delivery CL to much larger numbers, if they had the funds to do so.

9.3.9 The Future

- There is a view that CL need to be offering progression accredited and more formal learning i.e. all learners should be clear and have an expectation about what their ultimate outcomes should be and that the learning they undertake will help them on their journey towards that outcome.
- Some stakeholders suggest that CL could be more targeted to specific groups and providing learning that has much more impact on people's lives.
- CL should be delivered in the community, by local organisations who have the relationships with their customers and know what is needed. The funding should be distributed across these groups and build on previous good practice delivered through NLDC and more recently through ESIF Community Grants.
- There are gaps in provision that could be addressed through CL. These include support for those with mental health needs and those struggling financially.

9.4 Stakeholders without learning provision

9.4.1 Understanding and awareness of Community Learning

- JobCentre Plus (JCP) have a good understanding of CL related to referrals into family learning for their customers. In York they refer to York Learning's Family Learning Maths and English provision.
- CL is not well-embedded in wider economic development infrastructure at District levels, and this leads to a lack of awareness of how it is constituted, how much CL takes place in each locality and what the wider impact of this learning is.
- Some service providers who deliver support to vulnerable groups have little or no connection to CL provision and a lack of understanding about how the provision operates.
- There is a wider interpretation of community learning among stakeholders. In Ryedale for example, there is a partnership approach among public sector services and the VCSE to training in subjects that help the community such as modern slavery awareness, dementia training, mental health training and digital skills support but this is not linked in with funded CL.
- Since the community learning strand of ESFA funding has been absorbed into the AEB there has been less visibility of what it is being used for. Prior to that there was a great deal of work done on the provision from a quality, value for money and planning perspective. AEB providers were encouraged to generate income from CL that could be charged for and this extra income could be recycled back to support more provision for disadvantaged groups, known as 'pound plus'. CL

providers would be part of a community learning partnership in their local area and work with other CL providers to offer provision that met local needs.

9.4.2 Strategy

- The strategic intent of CL needs to be clarified for the benefit of funders, providers, stakeholders and learners.
- CL can and should support a customer-centred approach, helping them to progress and achieve positive outcomes.
- CL works well as a stepping-stone in an engagement and progression pathway for groups that are further from the labour market. However, there is also a recognition that some of these groups need a holistic package of support, which not only addresses employability, but also wellbeing.
- OFSTED is barrier to delivery by third sector organisations that are well-placed to respond to specific community and target group needs. Capacity Building activities that helped to improve the quality of provision were previously delivered through NLDC, but changes in the funding and contracting has reduced this significantly. This has meant that the largest providers have taken delivery in-house, and the group and community-specific expertise and knowledge has been lost.
- There is a lack of clarity among some consultees regarding which outcomes should be the highest priority for CL and there is some confusion about the relative merits of different types of provision e.g. public health orientated provision that helps to combat loneliness and supports positive mental health versus employability and maths, English and digital skills provision that builds a pathway towards employment.
- If CL is to be used to help people get into work and then progress within it, more needs to be done on progression routes and how to help people within sectors advance within them. There is quite a lot known about how to help people to get into work and in the first stages but not so much about how to support progress after that. An advice service may help with this and there is research being undertaken currently that is looking at this.
- Harrogate does not have an active Community Learning Partnership and more could be done to bring providers together. It is not clear what the strategic priorities of the Adult Learning Service are for the district and it would be helpful if this was known and communicated to local stakeholders.
- Where the strategy is focusing on social inclusion an effective way to support this is to use services that are in demand and reach out to people while they are there, e.g. the Food Network in Skipton. People are using food banks in greater numbers and many, for the first time. They are unlikely to be thinking about engaging in learning at that point but can be connected to other services via the Food Network. Once engaged, other services such as CL can be introduced.

9.4.3 Delivery Models and Partnership Working

- Quality and coverage of CL provision is patchy, especially in the more rural areas.
- Over the years the CLPs in each area have developed. Some have worked successfully for years, ensuring that local residents access the CL that they need;

some have evolved; and others have lost momentum. In some places, as people move on or local challenges arise the partnerships have ceased to exist.

- In some districts there are networks of Area Partnerships that provide community hubs. It is unclear the extent that CL is part of this infrastructure. It would clearly be beneficial to local communities if it were, helping to provide a holistic response to local needs.
- In areas where active partnership working takes place in a wider context (e.g. Community Anchors coordinating COVID response support services) and is actively championed by other key stakeholders, the CL offer is responsive and offers provision that supports and adds value to the locality. This is the case in Harrogate and Craven Districts but is not in evidence to the same extent elsewhere.
- Strategic organisations such as Community First Yorkshire exist to capacity build in the VSCE sector. They have resources that are aimed at and utilised effectively by CL learners e.g. Community First Yorkshire has a suite of on-line resources on its website that is updated regularly. It also provides promotion for CL courses on its website, thus supporting the uptake of CL and improving referral mechanisms.
- There is concern from some stakeholders about organisations that are not locally based, and have limited knowledge and understanding of local communities and their needs coming into the area and offering distance learning courses that are often generic and not driven by need. These tend to lack any local collaboration and rarely add value to the local infrastructure.
- Action Towards Inclusion (ESF contract to help unemployed and inactive people who are hard to reach or a long way from being able to work) operates effectively in the Harrogate area and serves as a referral mechanism for CL.

9.4.4 Markets and Target groups

- Learning that is seamlessly linked to other services is the preferred option for vulnerable client groups especially when linked to current circumstances e.g. tenancy training, managing money. Helping people in the environments where they already are such as hostels or supported accommodation ensures that first steps learning takes place. Once people have confidence they can progress to other settings.
- There is a disconnect between the operation of some local authority or nationally funded support for vulnerable groups (e.g. Troubled Families activity) and CL provision. This means that referral mechanisms do not exist as they should, and provision is not tailored sufficiently to support them.
- In Harrogate District, Community Learning (CL) provision does not reflect the focus and aims of the council's 'Skills for Growth Action Plan' but that is not to say the provision does not help people progress. CL is more about first steps learning and giving people the building blocks and confidence to move towards work.
- Local authority service providers in Ryedale had the view that leisure learning is not as important for clients and colleagues as family learning, English, maths and ICT and vocationally related training. Training and qualifications that help people progress into work or within work are most wanted and needed by client groups.

- From a poverty perspective, the priority for CL should be focussed on people from disadvantaged backgrounds and on learning that helps people of working age to either get good jobs or progress within existing jobs. Courses that give the building blocks for employment including English, maths and ICT as well as ESOL are a higher priority from a poverty point of view, than leisure learning.

9.4.5 Infrastructure and Accessibility

- Learning needs to be accessible and fit into the lives of residents - flexibility is essential – however, it also needs to integrate into and align with other available support.
- There is frustration that within some providers the tutors change every year, impacting on continuity of both provision and relationships with referral organisations.
- Provision needs to be delivered in suitable and appropriate places, with suitable resources, and accessible in the communities where the target groups are – especially those that face disadvantage, but it also includes those living in rural communities, that may face social exclusion and struggle with their wellbeing.
- Rural transport is still an obstacle particularly for people on low income in rural areas like Ryedale and even the semi-rural areas such as Harrogate, where two buses may be needed to get to provision.
- On-line learning is one solution to rurality (and also for those with mobility challenges) but disadvantaged people who have poor IT equipment, a lack of affordable internet access and poor digital skills can give up on trying to access digital support when they have more pressing needs in the family.
- Harrogate Borough Council did a piece of work last year to establish the digital needs of the area alongside the charity Citizens On Line ('Harrogate District- Get Digital') that is now rolling out a digital champion scheme across the district as a means to share digital skills and North Yorkshire is conducting a similar exercise now. This is critical as the need for digital literacy, good broadband and the appropriate ICT kit has been intensified significantly by COVID. Inequalities of digital access have been heightened by COVID and community funding must be used to address these issues.

9.4.6 Activities and Interventions

- Most stakeholders advocate a balance across all 4 CL delivery strands, rather than favouring one particular strand.
- For JCP customers Maths, English, IT and ESOL delivered through the family learning strand are most valued. However, activities that contribute to customer wellbeing are also valued, particularly now that they are working with more people with health conditions.
- Leisure learning can be a political hot potato as there has been strong criticism in the past of local authority measures to cut evening classes. This can weaken the resolve of providers who are concerned about local community reaction to proposed reductions in leisure learning. However, this type of learning e.g. crafting and art, is viewed by some stakeholders as a good way to engage people that would otherwise not undertake learning, and this helps to reduce social exclusion

and increase both motivation and personal skills. Some stakeholders suggest that where people can pay, they should be encouraged to do so.

- Provision for softer skills, for example confidence building and development of resilience, is needed and should continue to be delivered through CL.
- IT skills are increasingly essential to be able to access a range of services and support.
- There are different priorities for types of learning in different parts of YNY. For example, basic maths and English courses are needed in Ryedale as there can be hidden literacy and numeracy problems that have gone unnoticed and unaddressed for a long time. This can be problematic as the right course at the right level at the right time might not be available. Furthermore, ESOL is also important in Ryedale where there are groups of people from Eastern Europe, for example, who live and work in the area but do not have a good command of the English language.
- The adult workforce nationally still has a problem with a lack of basic skills and CL is well placed to address this. It can be used for non-accredited provision to help people get their first steps and then progress to qualifications. However, qualifications are not always the best option for some learners and the flexibility of CL reflects this.
- Blended provision tends to be the most useful, with a combination of face-to-face and virtual – especially for those groups that are socially excluded.
- IAG is key, progression pathways must be clear and linked to employment or to the next phase of learning.
- For very vulnerable people, active support is needed at every stage of the learning journey to ensure that learners stay on track and achieve what they set out to do.
- NLDC funding was used very successfully for capacity building and small-scale delivery with learners with specific needs in the VCSE sector. Over the last few years, due to a combination of factors, the ring-fenced funding for NLDC was absorbed into the AEB budget in NYCC and subsequently this provision has ceased. This is unfortunate as capacity building is important to enable the VCSE sector to strengthen, improve business practices, train staff and volunteers and support public sector services, which have reduced significantly in the last decade. Small grants for flexible delivery achieved notable outcomes for individuals, which attracted national recognition at the time.
- Community First Yorkshire has a strand of activity to support entrepreneurship in a social basis. This helps people with a good idea to find appropriate business structure e.g. community interest company, social enterprise, self-employment. More could be done to connect this activity with CL as routes to employment tend to focus on becoming employed by a business rather than starting a business.

9.4.7 Measuring Impact

- The lack of availability of accurate data is an issue for the strategic partners as it is hard to establish a baseline from which to progress.

- Progression routes are not as they should be, and learners are not tracked through. More effective local partnerships between CL providers and colleges could address this issue.
- The impact of CL can be measured in a variety of ways that are well documented e.g. Warwick Edinburgh scale for Mental Health, but it is not clear whether this occurs in YNY.

9.4.8 Funding

- Funding complexity can have a negative impact on learners' experience and they would benefit from efforts to simplify the system.
- CL is part of the AEB, and the funding can be vired into the Education and Training strand but not the other way around. In real terms, the budgets for CL have not increased in many years.
- The flexibilities within the AEB and the lack of visibility has meant that providers have the choice to deliver in any one of the four CL strands (PCDL, NLDC, FFL & WFL) and this may have led to a reduction in some strands. Nationally, the picture reflects this.

9.4.9 COVID Challenges and Opportunities

- COVID is having a profound impact on the economy across the area creating a deep recession with a huge increase in people seeking work after many years of (more or less) full employment. People with barriers to work will have to compete with people who have higher skills and have re-entered the employment market and this poses an extra barrier to them. Also, it is simply harder to get a job when there are more people completing for it. This means that funding will need to be targeted on getting the economy going and helping people into secure employment.
- COVID has also exposed existing inequalities in society and is widening the gap between people with access to the support and services they want or need and those that do not. In future, providers must focus more on those who are the most disadvantaged as a priority.
- The COVID response in local areas has been focussed on Community Anchors and this momentum is being used to springboard more services including CL. The Community Anchors are grass roots centres that have coordinated the COVID response and have enabled services to be delivered very locally.
- Consultees commented that in their locality, CL provision has been noticeably responsive in the COVID crisis. Creative, family learning and first steps courses have recently been launched. The courses attract people by serving a need and are learner-centred e.g. cooking on a budget which incorporates skills such as financial literacy or English skills during the course. This engages learners and helps them embark on a journey towards further learning or support.
- COVID - whilst this has negatively impacted on face-to-face learning, the online offer has drastically improved, and a new range of online resources has been developed. These resources have enabled new learners to access learning as in the past not everyone was able to attend face-to-face classes. COVID restrictions

will mean that smaller classes are the norm, and this is likely to impact on the funding model.

9.4.10 The Future

- Provision mapping is a necessity to understand current provision and identify where there are duplications, gaps and opportunities for improvements.
- More blended approaches are needed, combining face-to-face and on-line provision, but community infrastructure must be in place to support this.
- CL could support those looking to change their careers – in terms of helping to develop the softer skills they need.
- In develop the strategy and commissioning CL, for those target groups that wish to focus on progression into employment, provision needs to consider what the employers need. E.g. COVID awareness.
- The CL approach in terms of unaccredited and informal courses may support e.g. those that will be required to work from home (i.e. addressing isolation and mental health).
- CL should be an essential element of recovery planning in most Districts. There is a need for a strong strategic leadership to enable this to happen.
- CL should reflect wider policies such as the Green agenda, the circular economy and more effectively support the social economy, helping to address issues associated with, for example, a low skills, low wage economy.
- CL should be embedded into Community Hubs, contributing to a holistic approach to community and individual needs.
- Some stakeholders identified gaps in provision that could be addressed through CL. These include delivery of courses focused on managing money, developing resilience to support lifestyle changes and improve wellbeing.
- Digital poverty is a critical issue and the divide between those with the appropriate physical resources (ICT kit and reliable internet access) and digital skills (as well as confidence) has become very apparent during COVID.
- The Digital Entitlement is being introduced and must be paid for out of AEB (potentially CL) which could impact on other learning and must be managed. However, digital skills are paramount.

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10. CASE STUDIES AND GOOD PRACTICE

10.1 Our consultations included providers and stakeholders that have managed or commissioned CL provision both inside and outside YNY and wanted to share their learning and good practice. Examples are set out below.

10.2 Lancashire Adult Learning (LAL)

LAL delivers CL provision that is embedded into wider County/LEP strategies such as Health and Wellbeing (addressing health inequalities) and Family learning (giving all children a good start in life). This enables a longer-term holistic response to need, and greater impact, with stakeholders all working together to achieve the required outcomes, for individuals, families and communities. Their approach incorporates the following:

- Utilising CL to fill gaps and deliver courses that are not supported through existing resources. They take a ground-up approach to curriculum so that they deliver to address local needs. Recognising that there are differences in socio-economic conditions and learning needs in, for example, Fleetwood and in Preston.
- Using the flexibility of CL to ensure that all learning is holistic and person (and family) centred, i.e. assessments of need are undertaken and support is provided tailored to individual needs and aspirations.
- Partnership work (with over 300 organisations) and capacity building support to third sector organisations, which contribute to a robust and effective delivery infrastructure and successful achievement of strategic objectives. This includes training up volunteers to run community centres and supporting a self-sustaining approach in terms of community development.
- Delivering learning to all ages and to address diverse circumstances i.e. they do not just target those that ultimately seek progression into employment. They support older learners aiming for wellbeing outcomes, as they believe that if this group is excluded from community learning, then there are likely to be additional costs to public services in the longer term.
- Investing in a permanent delivery team with the right skills and based in Nelson and Colne FE College. This arrangement means that all provision and delivery processes comply with OFTES quality standards and requirements. It results in a higher profile, value for money and a higher impact for the available CL resources, and where relevant, easy progression into mainstream learning.

Their most recent OFSTED report stated the following:

'The large majority of learners progress to further learning, employment and other positive destinations such as volunteering. Currently just over a third of those learners surveyed for their destinations have progressed into employment.'

10.3 Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA)

Tees Valley MCA has a devolved AEB and undertook commissioning for combined Education and Training and CL provision in January 2019, adopting the following approaches:

- The commissioning framework in the first twelve months was intended to minimise instability and enable the setting of a baseline for data capture. A key aim in the first

year was to reduce the number of providers to a more manageable number and this has been achieved. In future years regarding CL provision there are plans to reduce duplication, improve planning and understand impact better.

- Enabling similar flexibilities in the whole of the AEB as exists currently in CL therefore enabling all providers with an AEB budget to shape provision to meet local needs. Delivery so far shows that increased flexibility in the Education and Training part of the AEB works very well to address specific needs of learners.
- Reducing leisure learning and increasing CL that directly meets local labour market priorities. (It has mooted a plan to set a cap on the amount of 'leisure learning' that can be delivered but this has not been agreed).
- Encouraging the enhancement of a commercial offer for those who can pay for leisure learning.

They aim to respond to changing and emerging needs, supported by evaluation of the first year of delivery currently being undertaken, with reporting in December 2020. To date, whilst capacity building in VSCE has not been a focus thus far, they are considering it for the future to make more of ladder of learning from first steps, CL and FE.

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APPENDIX 1: KEY DATA

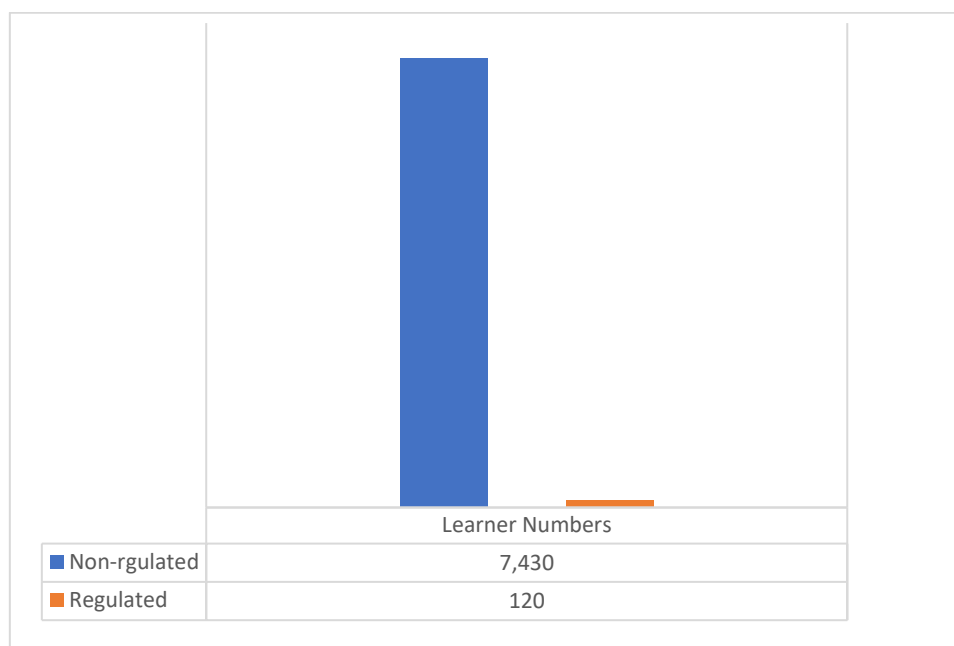
1. To better support our understanding of the provision, we undertook analysis of ESFA AEB provider data for the 2018/19 academic year. This also provided a context to the consultation interviews. Key points from this data analysis are set out below:
2. The top 3 providers account for 90% of all CL delivery (NB Approx. 24,290 aims in total):

Table 1: Key Community Learning Providers

Provider	% of total delivery
City of York Council	38
North Yorkshire County Council	33
Worker's Education Association	19
Remaining providers	10

3. The majority of CL provision is non-regulated learning:

Figure 1: Breakdown of Non-regulated and Regulated Learning



4. Over the last few years, Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities Funding and (NLDC) and Family English, Maths and Language (FEML) have significantly diminished whilst Personal & Community Development Learning (PCDL) and Wider Family Learning (WFL) have increased. PCDL now makes up 93% of all learning (Figure 2) and is concentrated in York and Scarborough, as can be seen in table 2:

Figure 2: Community Learning Delivery Strands

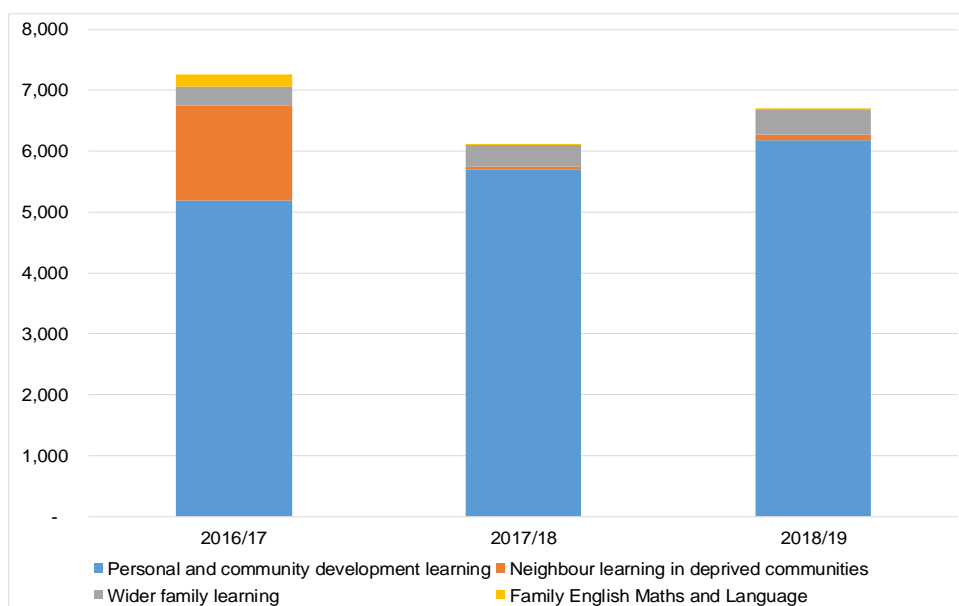
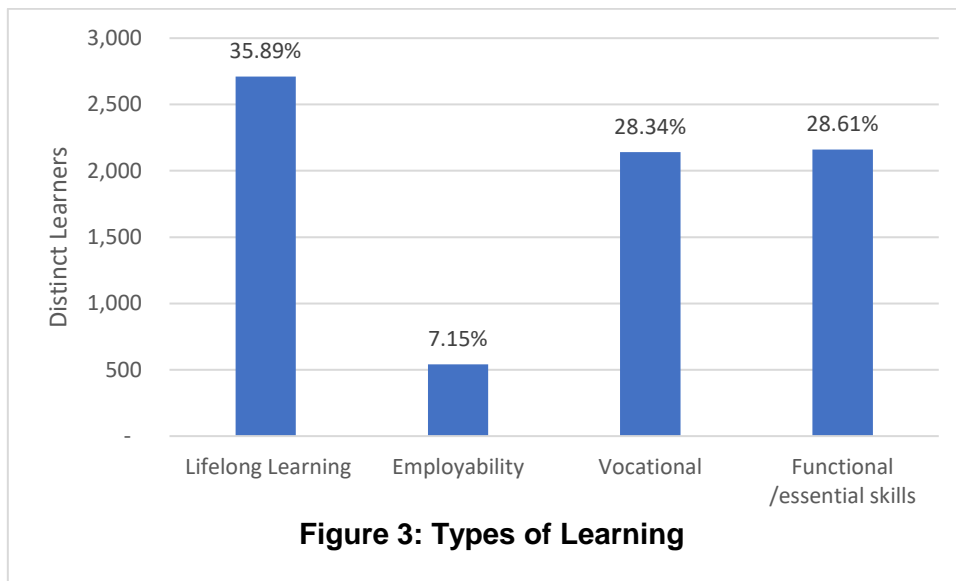


Table 2: Community Learning Delivery Strands across Districts

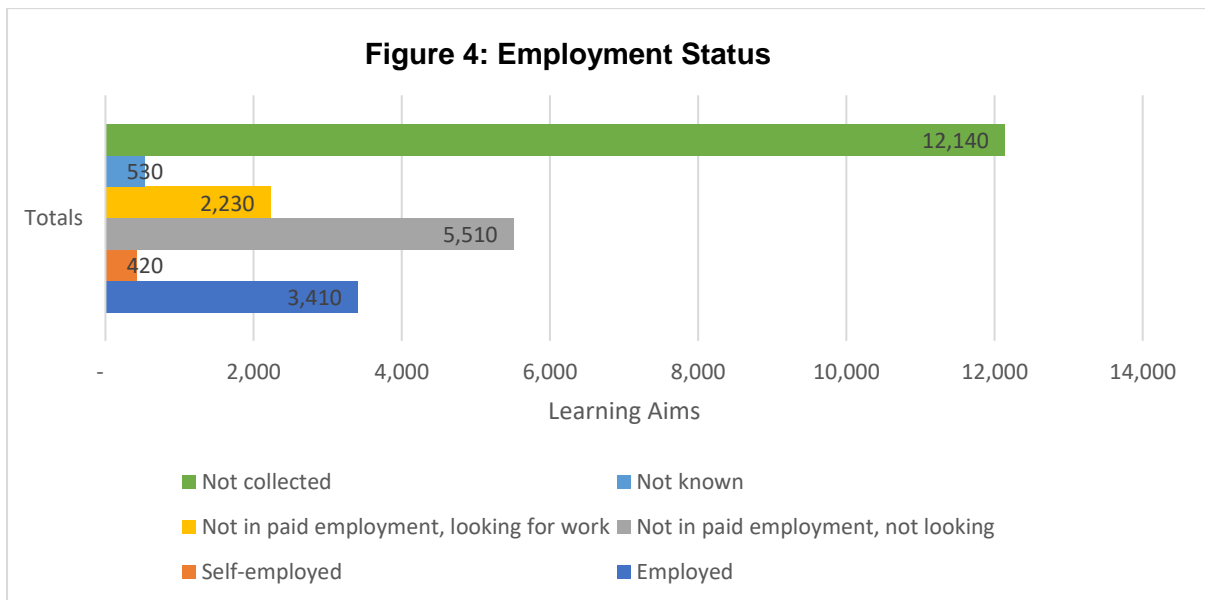
District	Family English Maths and Language	Neighbourhood learning in deprived communities	Personal and community development learning	Wider family learning	Grand Total
Craven	-	-	550	20	560
Hambleton	-	70	570	60	690
Harrogate	-	10	700	10	720
Richmondshire	-	-	190	-	200
Ryedale	-	-	430	10	430
Scarborough	-	10	1,070	100	1,150
Selby	-	-	430	30	460
York	-	-	2,300	190	2,480
Grand Total	10	90	6,240	420	6,690

Note: Rounding up/down in units of 10 means that the totals may not add up.

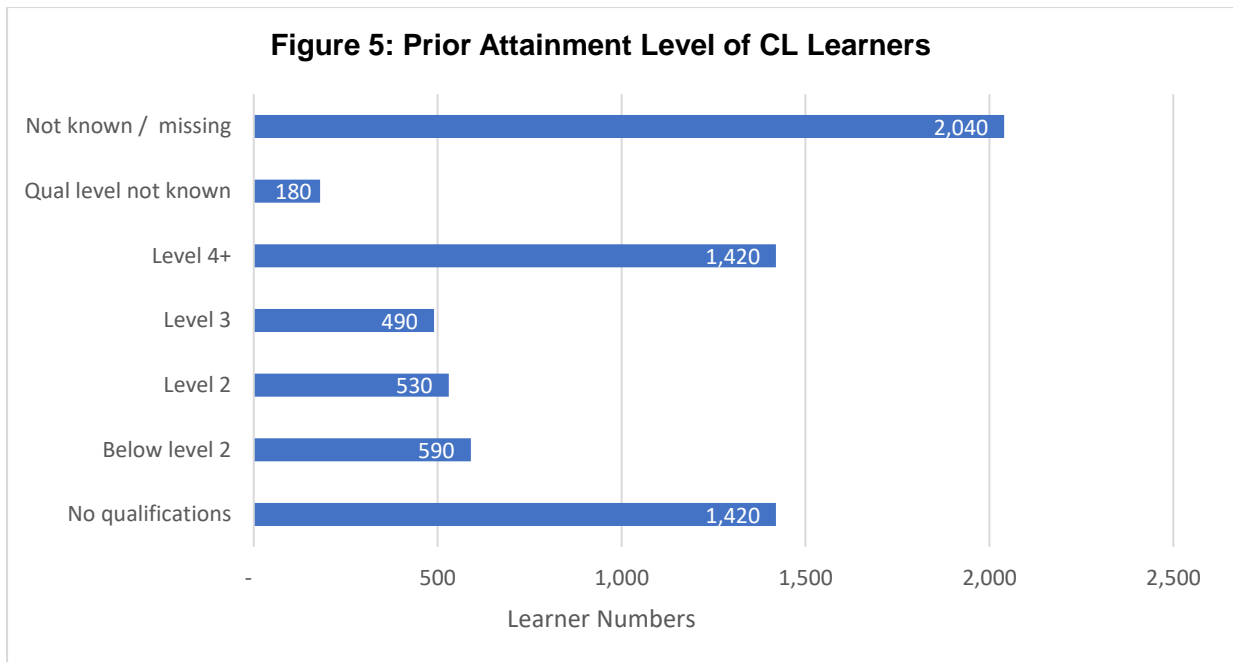
- Figure 3 shows that lifelong learning accounts for the highest percentage share of all learning aims (35.89%) and, in general terms, accounts for provision that supports social inclusion, wellbeing and stronger community development. The remaining 64.11% is split between employability, functional skills and vocational provision, which can be considered as building blocks towards employment. Both elements reflect different aspects of the LEP skills priorities.



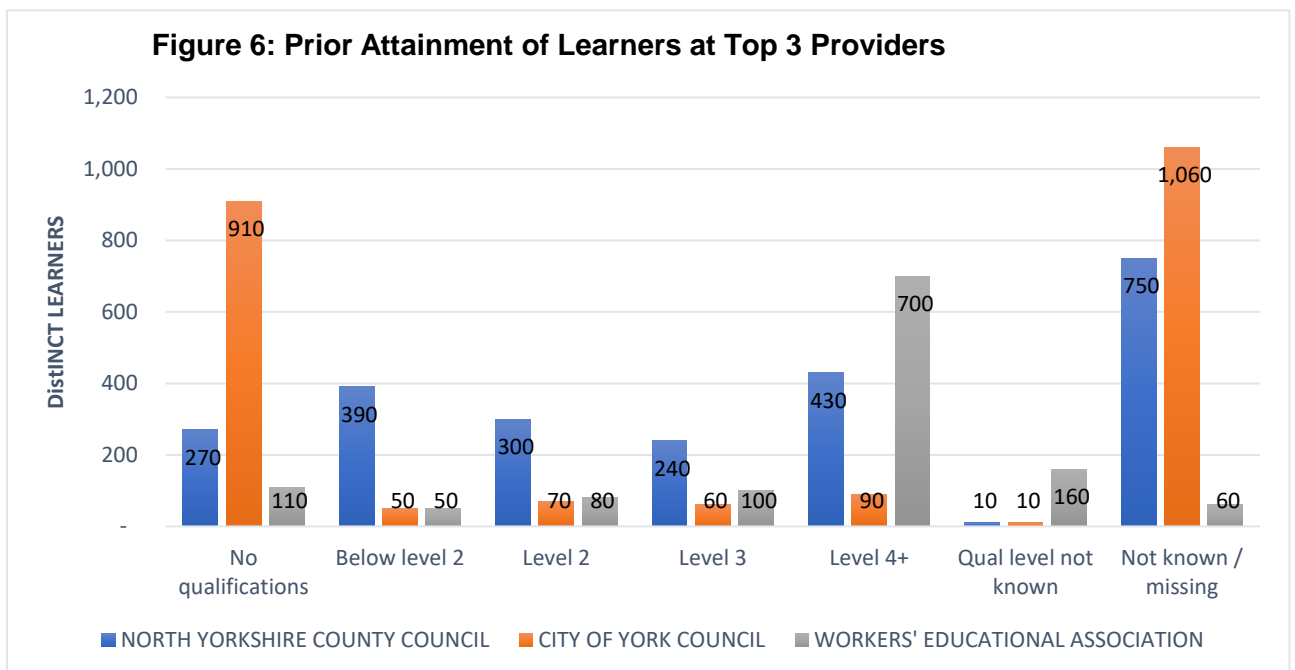
6. Figure 4 sets out the employment status of CL learners and shows that for around half (54%) of learners the data is not collected or not known. This means that it is not possible to determine the extent to which CL helps people into employment, which is a key indicator of a positive outcome.
7. Of the remaining learners with a known employment status the majority were unemployed or inactive and around 14% were employed.



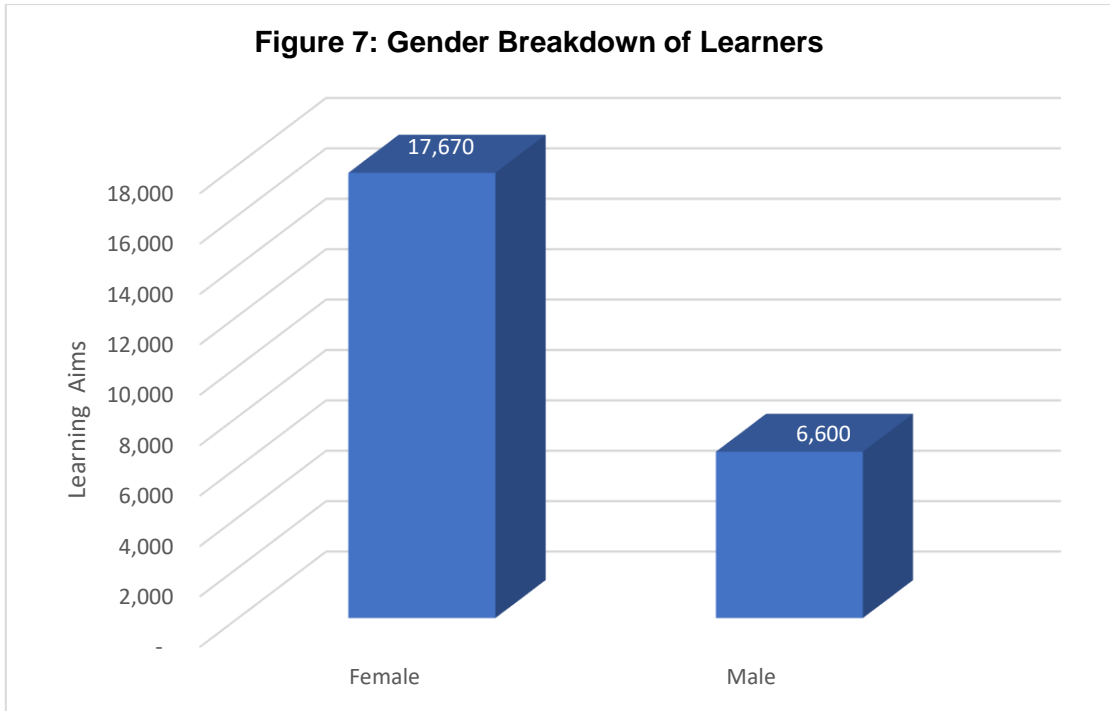
8. Figure 5 shows a breakdown of the prior attainment of CL learners. This indicates the existing level of education achieved by learners at the point of enrolment. In around a third of cases the prior attainment level is not collected or not known. In the remainder, there is a skew towards high levels of prior attainment and more than 20% have level 4 or above. Around 21% of learners have no qualifications, which equates to national figures for attainment levels in the adult population.



9. Figure 6 gives further detail of prior attainment among learners in the top three providers and this shows distinct differences. It demonstrates that City of York Council supports a higher proportion of learners with no qualifications, North Yorkshire County Council has an even spread and the WEA supports a greater proportion of people with L4 and above.

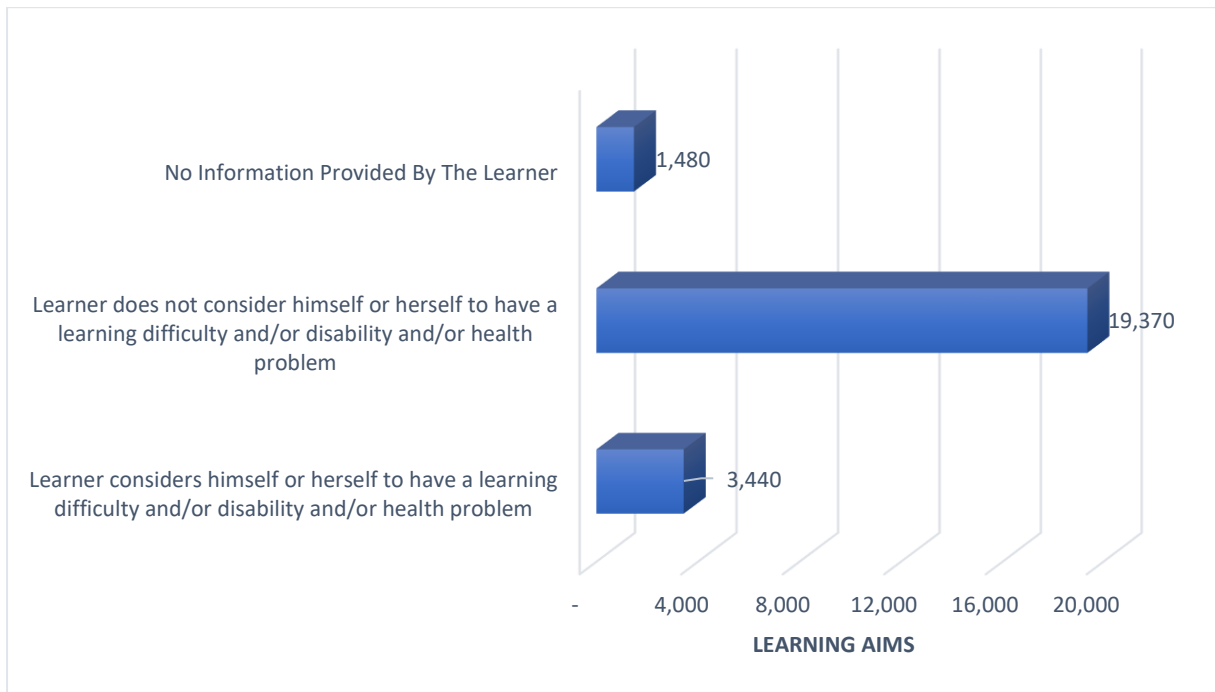


10. It is important to understand learner characteristics to enable us to the current market for learning – i.e. who is participating.
11. Figure 7 indicates that CL is predominantly taken up by women with 17,670 (73%) learners.

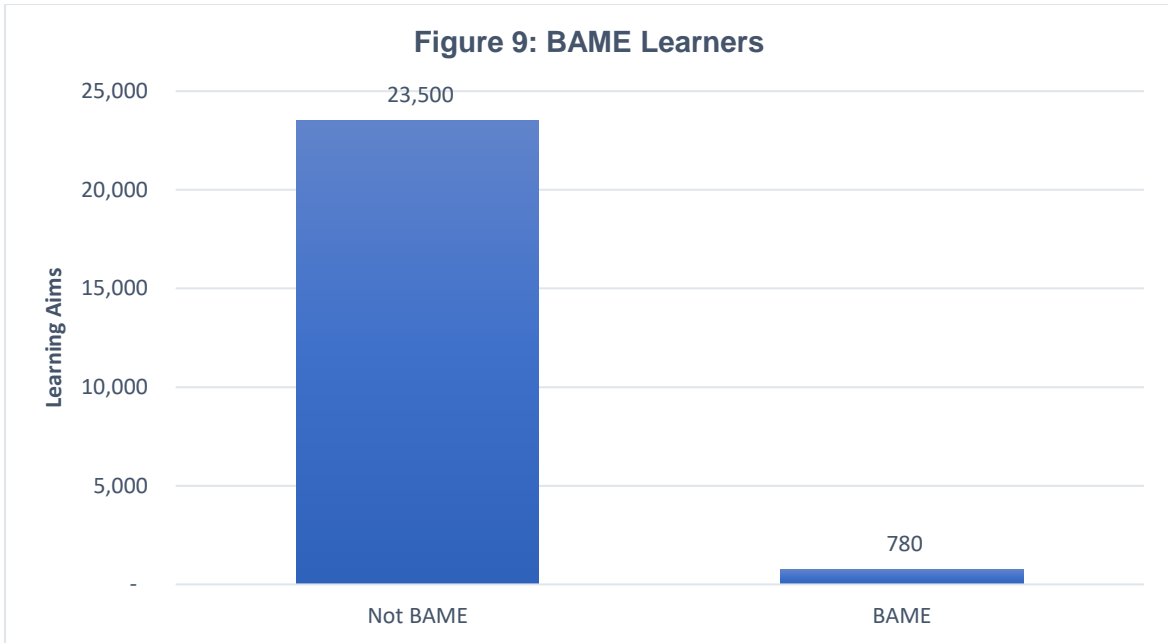


12. Learners with learning difficulties and disabilities (LLDD) and/or health problem account for 3,440 (14%) of the learning aims as seen in Figure 8:

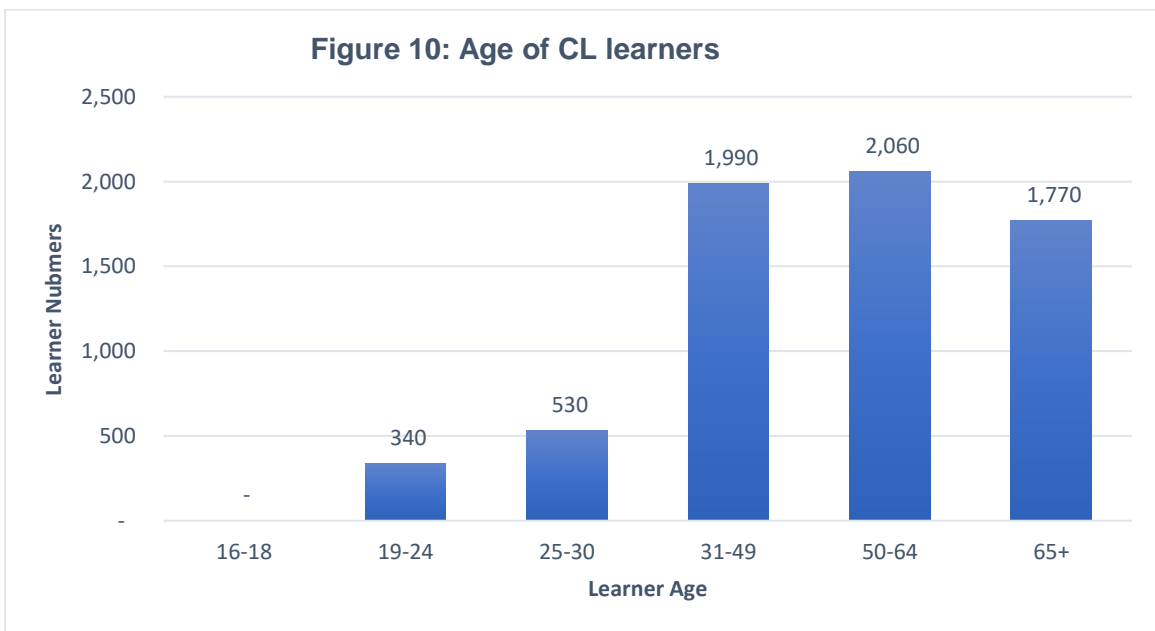
Figure 8: LLDD Learners



13. Black and Ethnic Minority (BAME) learners account for 780 (3.2%) learning aims, as can be seen in Figure 9. Compared to BAME population of 5.2% across YNY, this group is under-represented in CL.



14. Figure 10 shows the age profile of CL learners and shows that 1770 (26%) of learners are 65+ and 3,830 (57%) are over 50. Compared with adult education in general this shows a skew towards the older age groups. This reflects the public health, well-being and leisure learning focus for a significant proportion of CL but raises the question about the extent to which social inclusion should be prioritised by providers.
15. With a quarter of learners over 65 there is a likelihood that a large proportion of those learners are not active in the labour market and therefore not undertaking learning that is progressing them towards employment.



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APPENDIX 2: PROVIDER CONSULTATION FORMAT

A: Overview and Purpose of Research:

1. Focus of research is:
 - To develop a better understanding of Community Learning (CL) providers' perspectives on the effectiveness of the provision in terms of its impact on individuals, communities and the wider economy and how greater value for money might be achieved in the short to medium term.
 - To gain a view from stakeholders, particularly in the VCSE sector, of the value of CL to their client groups to support them engage and progress in learning and employment.
 - To identify with CL providers and stakeholders the general principles to underpin a robust and coherent delivery framework any for post-devolution Community Learning provision funded by Government in order to maximise the benefit for individuals, local communities and the wider economy and to meet the priorities of the LEP.
2. Seeking provider perspectives including those that directly deliver, have similar provision or progression routes.
3. Research will be conducted by Nada Tokos and Annabel Jelley.
4. Report will be published by LEP with recommendations in the New Year.

B: Outline Questions:

Community Learning Providers - Currently

1. Understanding of CL as part of AEB, and what it is intended to achieve, including 4 delivery strands.

- Personal and Community Development Learning - learning for personal and community development, cultural enrichment, intellectual or creative stimulation and for enjoyment (in most cases not leading to a formal qualification)
- Family English, Maths and Language - learning to improve the English, language and maths skills of parents, carers or guardians and their ability to help their children
- Wider Family Learning - learning to help different generations of family members to learn together how to support their children's learning
- Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities - supports local Voluntary and other third sector organisations to develop their capacity to deliver learning opportunities for the residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods

2. Strategy or rationale behind the type of CL delivered.
3. Views on current four strands and their relative merits.
4. Recent changes to CL delivery and reasons why.
5. Alignment of CL provision with other provision offered by provider or other providers & how to improve it.

6. Extent to which the complexity of CL funding & allocation affects uptake and outcomes for learners
7. Progression pathways into provision offered by provider or another provider
8. Views on:
 - Impact of CL on individuals, community and local economy & how to improve.
 - Wider issues within the skills infrastructure that impact on CL.
 - Most needed and highly rated provision for learners.
 - CL provision alignment with VCSE services.
 - Geographical variation of CL provision.
 - Issues and challenges in delivering CL (including COVID).
 - Impact on wider socio-economic issues and challenges.

Providers (non-delivery of CL) - Currently

As above excluding specific CL provision questions and including the following:

1. Extent of alignment of provision with CL offer.
2. Extent of progression routes offered and how to improve.
3. Views on current four strands and their relative merits.

Community Learning – The future

1. Community learning and social inclusion.
2. Local issues potentially to be addressed by CL.
3. Contribution to good and fair employment.
4. LEP Priorities.
5. Value of learning for well-being, family cohesion, social connection and how can this be enhanced.
6. Strategy for potential CL delivery if offered in future.
7. Lessons learned to be incorporated into CL delivery strategies.

C: Mop Up:

1. Main points.
2. Any areas that the interviewee would like to raise that haven't been covered.
3. Permission to contact interviewee again should clarification be required.

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APPENDIX 3: STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION FORMAT

A: Overview and Purpose of Research:

1. Focus of research is:
 - a. To develop a better understanding of Community Learning (CL) providers' perspectives on the effectiveness of the provision in terms of its impact on individuals, communities and the wider economy and how greater value for money might be achieved in the short to medium term.
 - b. To gain a view from Stakeholders, particularly in the VCSE sector, of the value of CL to their client groups to support them engage and progress in learning and employment.
 - c. To identify with CL providers and stakeholders the general principles to underpin a robust and coherent delivery framework any for post-devolution Community Learning provision funded by Government in order to maximise the benefit for individuals, local communities and the wider economy and to meet the priorities of the LEP.
2. Seeking the stakeholder perspectives and that of their client groups.
3. Research will be conducted by Nada Tokos and Annabel Jelley.
4. Report will be published by LEP with recommendations in the New Year.

B: Outline Questions:

1. Community Learning - Currently

- 1.1 Understanding of CL as part of AEB, and what it is intended to achieve, including 4 delivery strands.

- Personal and Community Development Learning - learning for personal and community development, cultural enrichment, intellectual or creative stimulation and for enjoyment (in most cases not leading to a formal qualification)
- Family English, Maths and Language - learning to improve the English, language and maths skills of parents, carers or guardians and their ability to help their children
- Wider Family Learning - learning to help different generations of family members to learn together how to support their children's learning
- Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities - supports local Voluntary and other third sector organisations to develop their capacity to deliver learning opportunities for the residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods

- 1.2 Engagement in CL.
- 1.3 Awareness & impact of clients being supported through CL.
- 1.4 Most needed and highly rated provision.
- 1.5 CL provision alignment with VCSE services.
- 1.6 Geographical variation of CL provision.
- 1.7 Extent to which the complexity of CL funding affects uptake and outcomes for learners.

- 1.8 Issues and challenges in delivering CL.
- 1.9 Wider issues within the skills infrastructure that impact on CL and ensuring an impact on client groups.

2. Community Learning – The future

- 2.1 Community learning and social inclusion.
- 2.2 Local issues potentially to be addressed by CL.
- 2.3 Contribution to good and fair employment.
- 2.4 Priorities.
- 2.5 Value of learning for well-being, family cohesion, social connection and how can this be enhanced.
- 2.6 Lessons learned to be incorporated into CL delivery strategies.

C: Mop Up:

Main points.

Any areas that the interviewee would like to raise that haven't been covered.

Permission to contact interviewee again should clarification be required.

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