

## Decision Report - Executive Decision

Forward Plan Reference: FP/24/01/14

Decision Date – 30<sup>th</sup> July 2024

Key Decision – Yes

Confidential Information – **YES**



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### Somerset Adult Community Learning (Tailored Learning) Programme 2024/25

Executive Member(s): Lead Member for Economic Development, Planning & Assets

Executive Member: Deputy Leader of The Council and Lead Member for Resources and Performance

Local Member(s) and Division: NA

Lead Officer: Mickey Green – Executive Director for Climate and Place; Jason Vaughan – Executive Director Resources and Corporate Services

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#### Summary

1. Somerset Council have been awarded £2.524m through the Adult Skills Fund from the Department for Education (DfE) to deliver an Adult Community (Tailored) Learning programme across Somerset during 2024/25 (1 August 2024 – 31 July 2025).
2. An open procurement process was undertaken to secure a strategic partner to deliver the core programme. Further procurements are underway to secure services of community-based organisations to deliver in harder-to-reach communities alongside the core offer.
3. Community Learning will be delivered via a range of formal and informal learning from entry level courses to professional qualifications, as well as interview support and confidence boosting programmes throughout a range of community settings.
4. Community Learning is important in place shaping, how it brings economic and social benefits to local communities, enhancing the lives of residents and contributing to the culture and cohesion of the places in which they live and work. A successful programme will play a significant role in supporting the Council to achieve the objectives of the Council Plan aligned to workforce and learning.

## **Recommendations**

The Section 151 Officer:

1. Approves the acceptance of £2,524,199 of DfE funding and the signing of the Grant Funding Agreement.

And: The Lead Member for Economic Development, Planning & Assets:

2. Approves the award of a 1-year contract, with the potential to extend for a further 36 months in 3 x 1 year increments, for the core delivery of the programme commencing 1 August 2024.
3. Approves Somerset Council's Subcontracting Policy and the Subcontractors Fees & Charges Policy for the programme.
4. Delegates approval to award lower value contracts to community-based organisations, once bids have been evaluated, to the Service Manager – Employment and Skills.

And:

5. That the Executive Director of Resources and Corporate Services and the Lead Member for Economic Development, Planning & Assets agree the case that Appendix 3 is regarded as exempt information and is to be treated in confidence, as the case for the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing that information.

Note: The Leader of the Council and the Chair of Scrutiny Committee, Climate and Place have agreed to waive the call-in period to enable immediate implementation of the decision to enable the delivery to commence on 1 August 2024.

## **Reasons for recommendations**

1. To enable Somerset Council to receive the funding, the DfE Grant Funding Agreement as detailed in Appendix 1, needs to be accepted and signed. DfE have set a deadline of 31 July 2024.
2. A compliant tender exercise has been conducted as detailed in Appendix 2 and following evaluation of the bid submissions the winning supplier has been identified. A confidential evaluation report is attached at Appendix 3.

Acceptance of funding will allow the Council to award a contract to the winning bidder for the core delivery of the programme for the year 1 August 2024 – 31 July 2025.

3. It is a requirement of the DfE that Somerset Council has an approved Sub-Contracting Policy and Fees & Charges Policy (attached at Appendix 4 and 5 respectively) published on the Council's website.
4. To enable the award of lower value contracts to community-based organisations to deliver learning to harder-to-reach communities alongside the core delivery. This delivery will commence from September 2024.

## **Main Report and Supporting Information**

### **The Purpose of Adult Community Learning**

1. Adult Community Learning is now referred to as Tailored Learning by the Department for Education (DfE). However, in Somerset we will continue to refer to it as Adult Community Learning as it is a known and established brand.
2. The purpose of Adult Community Learning is to develop the skills, confidence, motivation, and resilience of adults of different ages and backgrounds in order to:
  - a) Progress towards formal learning or employment and/or
  - b) Improve their health and well-being, including mental health and/or
  - c) Develop stronger communities
3. The objectives of Adult Community Learning are to:
  - a. focus public funding on people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate, including in rural communities, and people on low incomes with low skills.
  - b. collect fee income from people who can afford to pay and use, where possible, to extend provision to those who cannot.
  - c. widen participation and transform people's destinies by supporting progression relevant to personal circumstances.
  - d. develop stronger communities, with more self-sufficient, connected, and pro-active citizens.
  - e. commission, deliver and support learning in ways that contribute directly to these objectives.

4. The Adult Community Learning programme is targeted at groups of people who have barriers to reaching their learning and career aspirations. These include, but are not limited to:

People on a low income (less than £25,000 per annum)	Adults with low levels of English and Maths skills
Rurally isolated individuals	Adults with a below level 2 qualification
Residents living in deprived wards	People with a history of drug/alcohol abuse
Volunteers	Ex-offenders
Parents / families who need additional support	People who have experienced domestic abuse
People who have experience of mental ill health	Unemployed people
Travellers	Homeless people
Adults with learning difficulties	Adults with disabilities
Older isolated learners	Migrant workers
Refugee and asylum seekers	Individuals from black & minority ethnic groups

5. There are seven themes under which learning is delivered:
- (i) Engaging and/or building confidence
  - (ii) Preparation for further learning
  - (iii) Preparation for employment
  - (iv) Improving essential skills including English, ESOL, Maths and Digital
  - (v) Equipping parents/carers to support children's learning
  - (vi) Health and well-being
  - (vii) Developing stronger communities

The benefits to those participating in Adult Community Learning have been well documented and include an increase in self-confidence; meeting new people and making new friends and consequently understanding other people and cultures; a feeling of having more control of their life and enjoy learning more which will give more confidence at work as a result.

6. The Adult Participation in Learning Study 2019 by the Learning and Work Institute ([Adult Participation in Learning Survey 2019 - Learning and Work Institute](#)) found that the most commonly cited barriers to learning for adults who have not taken part in learning for at least three years is a lack of interest, work or other time pressures and feeling too old and many confirm that nothing is preventing them from taking part in learning in the next three years. There is a need, not only removing barriers to learning, but actively promoting the benefits of learning and encouraging participation.

## **Background to Adult Community Learning in Somerset**

6. Up until 2015 Somerset County Council was funded via the DfE to directly deliver adult learning via its Somerset Skills & Learning Service (SS&L). In 2014, following the Cabinet Office's objectives to decentralise non-statutory services, it was agreed that this service would be externalised. SS&L were set up as a Community Interest Company and the funding was novated, in full, from the Council to them. Following a change in funding rules in 2017, the DfE have undertaken a nationally open procurement process each year for the ongoing delivery of Community Learning in Somerset and SS&L had to competitively tender for the funding.
7. In November 2022 Somerset Council were asked by the DfE to bring the Community Learning Grant (CLG) back under the management of the Council from August 2023. This would bring Somerset in line with other local authorities as we were the only area where community learning provision was directly procured by the DfE.
8. Somerset Council commissioned SS&L to continue delivery of the core programme in the current year (2023/24) and a range of community-based organisations were commissioned to deliver activity in our harder to reach communities.

## **Adult Community Learning Programme: 2024/25:**

9. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on behalf of the DfE have confirmed that Somerset Council will receive £2.524m in 2024/25 for the programme commencing 1 August 2024. The Council will engage a strategic delivery partner, to deliver the core programme, and a range of community-based organisations to deliver specific activities in local communities. All provision will need to be agile and flexible to meet the evolving needs of learners, our communities, and employers.
10. An open procurement process has been undertaken and a single strategic delivery partner has been selected to deliver the core programme across Somerset. The programme will meet the overarching objectives of Tailored (Community) Learning and the funding rules as defined by the ESFA. The partner will be expected to work with the Council, and its stakeholders, to develop an agile and responsive delivery programme that meets the needs of learners, communities, and employers in Somerset. They will also be expected to work closely with our community-based delivery partners to ensure a cohesive offer.
11. We are currently undertaking a procurement process to secure a number of community-based organisations who will deliver directly within our harder to reach communities. This provision will be based on evidence of need and will aim to target smaller cohorts of learners. We anticipate contracting with around 15 organisations for delivery to commence from September 2024; the delivery will be on a rolling programme throughout the funding period. A proportion of funding may be retained for a further process to be undertaken later in the delivery period which will allow the opportunity to respond to evolving need within our communities.

## **Links to Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan**

12. Adult Community Learning will connect with the following priorities of the Council Plan:
  - a) A Healthy and Caring Somerset
  - b) A Flourishing and Resilient Somerset
  - c) A Fairer, Ambitious Somerset
  
13. The following planned objectives of the Adult Community Learning Programme have been set to meet the priorities of the Council Plan:
  - a) Enrich the stability, prosperity, and social cohesion of our communities
  - b) Empower the personal responsibility of individuals to become independent, healthy and maintain their own social well-being
  - c) Increase social mobility and aspiration based on an ethos of lifelong learning
  - d) Support an inclusive, flourishing, and resilient economy.
  
13. Adult Community Learning will support and enhance the Council's strategic aims and objectives in the following ways:
  - a) Working with communities to attract and retain working age adults to ensure a skilled workforce is available within the County.
  - b) It will enhance the education sector to ensure that Somerset benefits economically, by improving education, skills, and vocational training at all levels.
  - c) Adult Community Learning will work closely with local partners who will raise aspirations and boost local opportunities.

## **Other options considered**

14. Other options that have been considered are:
  - a) Continuation of the arrangements via a grant funding agreement in place for this year (2023/24). This would not be compliant with procurement regulations and is therefore not a viable option.
  - b) Mixed delivery (in-house and sub-contracted). The council do not have the internal capacity for in-house delivery, nor is it appropriate to develop this capacity given there is an external market already delivering quality provision.
  - c) Fully sub-contracted delivery with in-house management. This is the preferred solution and is compliant with procurement regulations.

## Key considerations for the Council

### Consultations / Scrutiny comments / recommendations:

15. The proposed decision has not been considered by Scrutiny Committee.

### Financial and Risk Implications

16. Somerset Council has been awarded a grant of £2,524,199 for the academic year from 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025 to deliver an Adult Community Learning programme in accordance with the objectives of funding and in accordance with the funding rules as set by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). The funding will be transferred to the Council in twelve equal instalments commencing August 2024. The funding will be transferred under a Section 31 Local Government Act 2003 ring-fenced grant.

17. The table below sets out how this funding will be allocated / used:

Amount	Purpose	Recipient
£1,500,000	Delivery of the core Adult Community Learning programme (contract award pending this decision)	To be Advised (see confidential appendix)
Approx £500,000	Delivery of provision via community-based organisations (low value procurement processes underway)	Various – to be advised.
Approx £524,199	Retention by Somerset Council for the management and administration of the programme.	Somerset Council

18. There is negligible risk to Somerset Council in accepting this funding from the DfE.

#### **Risk**

The Council (and /or the supplier) does not deliver an Adult Community Learning programme that meets community needs, is not in accordance with the funding rules and obligations and is negatively assessed by OfSTED. Any breach of the funding rules and/or legislation may result in the DfE demanding some or all of the funding for the Adult Community Learning Programme

returned. SC would be liable for the return of the money regardless of whether SC is able to recover any losses in turn from the supplier(s).

<b>Likelihood</b>	3	<b>Impact</b>	4	<b>Risk Score</b>	<b>12</b>
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**Mitigations**

- We have sought a review from the FE Commissioners Team who set out their observations and suggestions to enable the Council to develop the delivery of the programme effectively. Reference was made to the importance of developing strong leadership, and a vision to set strategic priorities for community Learning in Somerset. It was suggested that the Council should draw on existing expertise and resources from related areas of Council provision which will maximise effectiveness, pool knowledge and identify scope to streamline processes and systems.
- We have sought advice and guidance from an ex-OfSTED inspector to develop our internal systems and processes in accordance with the funding requirements. We will continue to ensure the funding obligations are met and will seek to continuously improve our processes.
- A post TUPE'd across from SS&L will provide in-house knowledge and experience to manage the programme in accordance with the funding rules and OfSTED recommendations.
- Working with Education colleagues, who are transferring across to the Programme, will support the in-house delivery and management of the programme.
- A Governance Board will be established to oversee the delivery of the programme and ensure that its objectives are being achieved.
- The contract with the supplier requires that they comply with all applicable legislation and avoid putting SC in breach of DfE's funding rules and that any losses resulting to SC as a result of a supplier's breach are recoverable by SC, including indemnities in the event of a breach of applicable legislation. The contract requires the supplier takes out appropriate insurance to cover such losses.

**Legal and Procurement Implications**

19. With reference to recommendation number 1 above, Legal Services have reviewed the DfE ESFA Grant Funding Agreement and have confirmed that we are able to sign given there is negligible risk associated solely with accepting grant funds.



20. Legal Services have prepared a service contract for the core and community-based delivery of the programme which ensures flow down of the DfE obligations to our sub-contractor(s). The risk to SC and mitigation is identified above.
21. In compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 Somerset Council have undertaken an open procurement process for a contractor to provide the core delivery of the Adult Community Learning programme. The award of the contract to the successful bidder is pending this decision together with the acceptance of the Grant funding. This process has been undertaken by Commercial and Procurement and is detailed in the Tender Evaluation Report (Appendix 2) and a Confidential Tender Evaluation Report (Appendix 3). Community-based providers are being sought via a compliant three quote process.

### **HR / Workforce Implications**

22. As a result of bringing the management and administration (M&A) of the programme, which has previously been undertaken by Somerset Skills & Learning, there are TUPE implications.
23. There were two full-time equivalent posts identified for transfer under TUPE as they exclusively worked on M&A activity. Of these posts, one is vacant, and one individual is transferring. Other tasks within the M&A activity are distributed among other posts in SS&L and, as these posts were performing other tasks not related to the M&A, they could not be in scope for TUPE. TUPE legislation stipulates that only those employees that are "an organised grouping of employees that has as its principal purpose the carrying out of the activities concerned" are in scope for transfer.
24. Colleagues from the Children and Young People Directorate (Somerset Centre of Integrated Learning - SCIL) will support the management and administration function of the Community Learning programme from September 2024. Officers have relevant skills and experience and will support the programme to meet its obligations in respect of quality assurance, self-assessment processes and implementation of a Management Information System for future years (2025/26 onwards).
25. This additional capacity will be required to develop, monitor, and implement the SAR (Self-Assessment Review) and QIP (Quality Improvement Plan)

including lesson observations. Capacity will also be required for curriculum design for and the development of an outline curriculum to support the delivery of the programme.

26. In addition, the Senior Expert Advisor for ITT and SCIL will undertake the responsibilities around Ofsted inspection and oversight and act as the Council Ofsted nominee.

27. The following posts are included in this arrangement:

- 0.8 FTE G11 Project Manager
- 1.0 FTE G13 Admin Project Leader
- 1.0 FTE G15 Admin Assistant
- 1.0 FTE G 12 Lead Tutor
- 0.2 FTE Senior Expert Advisor

### **Equalities Implications**

28. An Equalities Impact Assessment identifies that there are potential barriers to someone successfully taking part in Adult Community Learning courses / workshops. We have undertaken comprehensive equalities review and identified actions to be taken to mitigate any risks. An Equalities Impact Assessment is attached to this document. The core provider and the Community Learning Partners will be expected to support the implementation of the actions listed in the Equalities Impact Assessment.

### **Community Safety Implications**

29. There are no direct community safety implications associated with this decision.

### **Climate Change and Sustainability Implications**

30. The delivery of the programme will be provided on-line to support those learners with transport and accessibility issues as well as being provided in smaller local community groups therefore reducing the requirement for significant travel within Somerset.

### **Health and Safety Implications**

31. The delivery providers will ensure that a compliant Safeguarding Policy is in place. It will be a criteria for each sub-contractor that they have an approved

Safeguarding and Health and Safety policy that meets the requirements set out in the Common Inspection Handbook for Further Education and Skills Inspections.

### **Health and Wellbeing Implications**

32. Adult Community Learning will offer benefits to those participating in learning, widen participation and transform people's destinies by supporting progression relevant to personal circumstances such as:

- a) Improved confidence and willingness to engage in learning
- b) Acquisition of skills preparing people for training, employment, or self-employment
- c) Improved digital, financial literacy and / or communication skills
- d) Parents / carers better equipped to support and encourage their children's learning
- e) Improved and / or maintained health and / or social well-being including mental health as learning can be offered in 'bite-size' courses.
- f) Increasing awareness of having more control of life and enjoying learning which results in building confidence at work and in the community
- g) Adult Community Learning tutors will encourage progression as appropriate to the individual

A complete list of purposes set out for the delivery of Adult Community Learning can be found on the Education and Skills Funding (ESFA) website here: [Adult skills fund: funding rules 2024 to 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/adult-skills-fund-funding-rules-2024-to-2025)

33. Adult Community Learning will engage with experienced community-based partners throughout Somerset, the benefits will be:

- a) Community partners already work with local communities in all areas of Somerset and will reach out to those people in hard to reach and rural areas. This will include people on low incomes, with low skills and little or no social mobility.
- b) Community partners have the experience and knowledge of local areas, cultures, and specific needs of local people.
- c) Community Partners will support local people to build confidence and engage in learning to suit their lifestyle to prepare for further learning and / or employment.

### **Social Value**

34. The Adult Community Learning programme will develop skills, confidence, motivation, and resilience for adults of all ages and backgrounds throughout

Somerset. The focus points of the programme are to improve the health and wellbeing including mental health of adults in Somerset, progress towards formal learning or employment and develop stronger communities.

35. Adult Community Learning will be working towards the following social value priority areas:

- a) Developing employment, skills, and training opportunities, particularly for hard to reach / disabled / target groups
- b) Deliver the programme to people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate in rural areas by way of outreach activities
- c) Improving health and wellbeing, maintaining independence, and reducing inequalities of local residents and employees
- d) Helping build community capacity and playing an active role in the local community, especially in those areas and communities with the greatest need
- e) Working with local partners with expertise and knowledge of the needs in local rural areas

## **Background Papers**

See appendices below.

## **Appendices**




1. DfE ESFA Grant Funding Agreement for Adult Community Education 2024/25
2. Tender Evaluation Report
3. Confidential Tender Evaluation Report (not to be published)
4. Somerset Council's Sub-contracting Policy
5. Somerset Council's Sub-contractors Fees & Charges Policy
6. Equalities Impact Assessment
7. Non-Key Decision to commence Procurement
8. Non-Key Decision to approve the Community Learning Accountability Statement

## Consultation and feedback

	Officer Name	Date Completed
Legal & Governance Implications	David Clark	18/07/2024
Finance & Procurement	Nicola Hix	9/07/2024
Workforce	Dawn Bettridge	10/07/2024
Asset Management	Oliver Woodhams	N/A
Executive Director / Senior Manager	Mickey Green Jason Vaughan - Executive Director, Resources & Corporate Services (Section 151 Officer)	18/07/2024 18/07/2024
Executive Lead Member	Cllr Ros Wyke - Lead Member for Economic Development, Planning and Assets  Cllr Liz Leyshon - Deputy Leader of The Council & Lead member for Resources and Performance	16/07/2024  19/07/2024
<b>Consulted:</b>		
Local Division Members	N/A	
Opposition Spokesperson	Cllr Mandy Chilcott - Deputy Leader of Opposition group and Lead Member for Resources and Performance	10/07/2024
Scrutiny Chair	Cllr Martin Dimery - Chair of Scrutiny Committee - Climate & Place	10/07/2024

# Somerset Equality Impact Assessment

Before completing this EIA please ensure you have read the EIA guidance notes – available from your Equality Officer or [www.somerset.gov.uk/impactassessment](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/impactassessment)

<b>Organisation prepared for (mark as appropriate)</b>	 <b>Somerset Council</b>	✓	 <b>NHS Somerset</b>	 <b>NHS Somerset NHS Foundation Trust</b>	
<b>Version</b>	<b>1.0</b>		<b>Date Completed</b>	<b>17/01/2024</b>	
<b>Description of what is being impact assessed</b>					
<p>Impact of the Adult Community Education (ACE) Programme (otherwise known as Community Learning (CL) and referenced in this document) to be delivered across Somerset and designed to develop the skills, confidence, motivation, and resilience of adults of all ages and backgrounds to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress towards formal learning or employment</li> <li>• Improve health and well-being, including mental health</li> <li>• Develop stronger communities with more self-sufficient, connected, and pro-active citizens</li> <li>• Focus public funding on people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate in learning, including people in rural areas, people on low income with low skills</li> <li>• Widen participation and transform people’s destinies by supporting progression relevant to personal circumstances</li> </ul> <p>Adult Community Learning (ACE) is delivered under 7 strands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging and building confidence</li> </ul>					

- preparation for further learning
- Preparation for employment
- Improving essential skills (English, English for Speakers of Other Languages, maths and digital support)
- Equipping parents/carers to support children's learning
- Health and well-being
- Developing stronger communities.

## Evidence

**What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service might impact on protected groups?** Sources such as the [Office of National Statistics](#), [Somerset Intelligence Partnership](#), [Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis \(JSNA\)](#), [Somerset Trends](#) [www.somersettrends.org.uk](http://www.somersettrends.org.uk)

Office of National Statistics for data and information such as unemployment based on age, ethnicity, and geographical area.  
Somerset Trends for information on qualification status based on geographical area.

[How your area has changed in 10 years: Census 2021 - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

Somerset Intelligence for data/information on ward profiles, travel and access, age, etc.

Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 for data on area profiles

[Deprivation - Somerset Trends](#)

Census 2021 for data on demographics

[Census 2021](#)

Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis for data/information on people and groups

[Joint Strategic Needs Assessment \(JSNA\) - Somerset Intelligence - The home of information and insight on and for Somerset - Run by a partnership of public sector organisations](#)

The Learning and Work Institute for data relating to barriers that prevent people from learning

[Adult Participation in Learning Survey 2019 - Learning and Work Institute](#)

Numerous reports have highlighted the connection between education and the reduction to re-offending [The factors associated with proven re-offending following release from prison: findings from Waves 1 to 3 of SPCR \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Lighthouse Data analysis [Lightcast - A Global Leader in Labour Market Analy... | Lightcast.](#)

[Learning for Life: the role of adult community education in developing thriving local communities - A handbook for councillors | Local Government Association](#)

Data on learner profiles accessed via the Individual Learning Record including wards, age, gender, disability, retention, learner support needs, ethnicity, completion, and destination.

Information from Somerset Skills and Learning Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plans including location and type of provision, community learning partners, feedback from Learner Voice surveys, lesson observations, learner initial assessment, and Individual Learning Plans and quality improvement recommendations.

The information gathered from the sources above will inform the Mission and Intent of SC's ACE provision, identify priorities, SC's Accountability Statement, and the curriculum plan, ensuring it meets the needs of both local residents, employers, and local community groups. It also informs how the provision will be marketed, ensuring that all learning is accessible to all who can benefit, particularly those with multiple needs, rural areas, and social deprivation. Somerset Council want to ensure that its' learner demographic is a true representation of the requirements of Somerset's citizens.

Additionally, our research helps to identify where smaller local partners will be best placed to engage with a particular target group, to include local requirements and specialism.

Regular reviews and learner activity will be observed to ensure that the provision constantly meets all target groups, and if required additional outreach activity and / or marketing will be put in place. This is an ongoing process, forming part of the quality improvement cycle and will be monitored regularly during each academic year.

As Somerset Council rolls out the ACE programme throughout the County, we will engage with as many priority groups as possible so that we provide learning to all cohorts of people in all areas of Somerset. Somerset Council will proactively engage with a well-established network of community-based organisations throughout the year. Additional partnerships will be identified when appropriate to ensure all efforts are made to attract and engage all the intended priority groups.



**Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups and what have they told you?** If you have not consulted other people, please explain why?

- We have consulted with Somerset's Community Learning Partnership (CLP), which is made up of a range of community-based organisations embedded within Somerset's communities across the county. We contact these partners regularly to understand how regional and national themes are met in local areas as well as gaining an understanding of micro-localised areas across Somerset. Through their work with specific target groups, the CLP highlights the range of need and identified gaps in existing provision. This helps us to understand the impact of inequality of access to ACE, which groups of people are most marginalised (considering age, black and minority ethnic groups, those experiencing poor mental health, those with physical and or learning disability, low levels of literacy and numeracy, carers, low income, living in rural areas/isolation, refugees etc).  
The information helps us to inform our EIA, our intent and the mitigation actions we need to take as set out in the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). These include identifying where and what provision needs to be delivered locally, that the SC QIP is current and regularly updated, ensuring initial assessment is conducted, differentiation of resources and publicity material, tutor training to highlight the importance of many areas including respect, behaviour, citizenship and equality and diversity and to challenge opinions of other learners in the same cohort that could impact on the individuals experience and their wellbeing etc.
- Somerset Council are members of the [Holex](#) group who disseminate information regularly on the impact of ACE and are a resource of innovative ideas, research and data on inclusion and widening participation information from providers throughout the country.
- The DWP: The effect on individuals poor mental health and people with learning difficulties/disabilities preventing access to learning if significant travelling is involved to larger centralised locations. The need for skills improvement and re-engagement with learning to help some people move away from economic inactivity and progress towards employment and economic independence.

- Alliance Intervention (part of Seetec group) which formerly delivered rehabilitation services including education, training, and employment in the Southwest to ex-offenders. The contract has now ceased leaving only 1 dedicated centralised Activity Hub located in Bristol. Greater access to educational opportunities in localised areas has been highlighted as an urgent requirement in ex-offenders' journey towards employment.
- Citizens Advice: Increasing issues connected to the rise in cost of living including debt, housing and mental health has seen a sharp increase in people referred to and accessing Citizens Advice service especially those on low incomes and/or living in rural locations. The necessity for referrals to initial engagement in community learning to support their progression towards better mental health, literacy, numeracy, and digital inclusion is becoming increasingly important as demand rises.
- Homestart: Helping families to support their children to engage, enjoy and progress at school delivered under the Community Learning strand of Equipping parents/carers to support children's learning. Homestart provides a lot of information on the need of young families and how, where and when they may be best supported through ACE to enable the removal of the many barriers this group faces including, time, childcare and access.
- CHARIS (Somerset based charity which settles families in the Southwest through the Home Office Community Resettlement programme) have advised on the requirement for outreach provision (ESOL) for people who are non-native English speakers. The need for community learning involving improving their English, social interaction and culture awareness to help them improve their opportunities in gaining employment, housing and reducing the risk of debt and financial hardship.
- Connect Somerset Champions. Identification of need in localised areas based on their knowledge and work within their geographical area, data, and feedback from engaged individuals.
- Jeff Brown. Partnership and engagement including VSCE and Local Community Network, Citizen Advice, Spark Somerset, Armed Forces Covenant Partnership. Identified need for financial stability via financial literacy to make households financially resilient, confident and can respond to the challenges of change in their circumstances.

- Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership working with people referred under social prescribing and have identified the ways activity can remove some barriers people face including poor mental health, isolation, and low aspirations.
- Abri Social Housing. Feedback and data on engagement project funded from previous Community Renewal Fund project to establish the impact of an intervention programme of education, training, job search or employment on families with young children living in social housing in one of the lowest 20% most deprived areas in the country. Feedback has evidenced the requirement for local first step engagement into ACE for families to help support progress out of worklessness and poor health and wellbeing.

**Analysis of impact on protected groups**

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service will achieve these aims. In the table below, using the evidence outlined above and your own understanding, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Based on this information, assess the likely outcome, before you have implemented any mitigation.

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing an accessible range of community learning to people aged 19 and upwards (no limit) via virtual and face to face interactions. Research has shown the value of lifelong learning in keeping minds active, reducing isolation, improving mental health enriching the stability, prosperity, and social cohesion of our communities. In turn this will empower the personal responsibility of individuals to become independent, healthy and maintain their own social well-</li> </ul>	□	□	☒

	<p>being; increase social mobility and aspirations and build stronger communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of appreciation of the potential CL audience would result in reduced awareness of the CL offer.</li> <li>• Reduced positive learning experience and potential lower retention and achievement figures if individual curriculum and resource adjustments requirements are not identified.</li> <li>• People under 19 are not eligible for CL</li> </ul>			
<b>Disability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk and health and safety assessments to identify and mitigate disability access barriers will increase engagement of learners</li> <li>• Restricted access to CL opportunities due to disabilities.</li> <li>• Reduced positive learning experience and potential lower retention and achievement of individuals if individual curriculum and resource adjustments requirements are not identified.</li> <li>• Lack of information points and enrolment opportunities for CL provision.</li> <li>• Reduced engagement if marketing/publicity materials do not consider communication disability barriers.</li> </ul>	□	⊗	□
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of respect, expression of negative views on gender reassignment and inappropriate behaviour from other learners impacting on learner experience, low attendance, retention, and achievement of intended outcomes.</li> <li>• Reduced attendance and retention if gender reassignments requirements are not considered during initial assessment or at any time during the programme.</li> </ul>	□	⊗	□

<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of respect, expression of negative views on same sex marriage and inappropriate behaviour from other learners impacting on learner experience, low attendance, retention, and achievement of intended outcomes.</li> </ul>	□	⊗	□
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locally based provision will support pregnant women or parents with young children to access services without having to travel too far.</li> <li>• Some provision will be aimed specifically at parents to support them with issues around finance, care, and mental health.</li> <li>• Reduced attendance and retention if pregnancy and maternity requirements (breast feeding/baby changing) are not considered during initial assessment or at any time during the programme.</li> </ul>	□	□	⊗
<b>Race and ethnicity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some classes designed to support people improve their English increasing ease of integration, cultural awareness, employment opportunities and financial security and reducing mental health issues due to isolation and marginalisation.</li> <li>• People who are non-native English speakers may experience a language barrier in some classes.</li> <li>• Lack of respect, expression of negative views on race and ethnicity and inappropriate behaviour from other learners impacting on learner experience, low attendance, retention, and achievement of intended outcomes.</li> </ul>	□	□	⊗
<b>Religion or belief</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of respect, expression of negative views on religion or belief and inappropriate behaviour from other learners impacting on learner experience, low attendance, retention, and achievement of intended outcomes.</li> </ul>	□	⊗	□

<b>Sex</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low percentage rates of men accessing CL (25% of all learners are men).</li> <li>• CL outreach projects designed in partnership with experienced partners (Men’s Shed etc) to encourage more participation in CL by men</li> </ul>	□	□	☒
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of respect, expression of negative views on sexual orientation and inappropriate behaviour from other learners impacting on learner experience, low attendance, retention, and achievement of intended outcomes.</li> <li>• Sexual orientation requirements identified during initial assessment and considered where practicable when planning sessions</li> </ul>	□	☒	□
<b>Armed Forces (including serving personnel, families, and veterans)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues of accessibility due to timing of courses conflicting with other commitments within the armed forces will have an impact on attendance and retention.</li> <li>• Tutors will make reasonable adjustments to support learners in completion of their course due to armed forces movements.</li> </ul>	□	□	☒
<b>☒ther - e.g. carers, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater access to CL for people living in rural isolated areas, those who are digitally excluded, those with caring responsibilities, on low income.</li> </ul>	□	□	☒

### Negative outcomes action plan

Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.

Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
<p><b>1.Disability</b></p> <p>1.1 Delivery locations for CL provision identified in communities to increase localised provision. Risk, health and safety and disability assessments will be carried out at each venue and reasonable adjustments will be made to enhance accessibility (i.e., ramp and hearing loop). Lack of disability access will be identified in course information.</p> <p>1.2 Tutors to conduct an initial assessment with all learners to identify any curriculum design adjustments including hard copies of handouts, suitable size and font, use of language (reduced use of abbreviations).</p> <p>1.3 Learning support plans written up for all learners who have or feel they have, a learning support need including literacy and or numeracy. The relevant adjustments will be made, and support provided by way of additional or adjusted learning resources. Learning Support Worker to be assigned to each learner as appropriate. On-going support need assessed.</p>	01/08/2024	Quality Officer Curriculum Officer	<p>A. Quarterly review meeting with CLPs to encompass: Review of IA's. Learner support plans monitored against progress targets and learner aims. Safeguarding issues.</p> <p>B. Retention data. Learner voice activity such as facilitated question and answer sessions, surveys to highlight areas requiring improvement etc. Risk assessments.</p> <p>C. Quarterly review of data on trends and barriers to learning opportunities and destination data. Continuing research and place-based projects will identify ways of overcoming the challenges.</p>	

<p>1.4 Plans and types of support to be made available and accessible. For example, support with travel expenses, childcare, wi-fi access, digital devices, interpreter, sign language support worker, hearing loops, wheelchair access etc.</p> <p>1.5 Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEPs) will be set up for all learners who identify as having a disability.</p> <p>1.6 The remodelled Somerset County employment, education and skills portal will increase access to ACE information by providing a point of information and enrolment opportunity.</p> <p>1.7 We will consult on developing an accessible communication format strategy to include anticipating the needs of disabled people, and the minimum standards to put in place, type of information to be prioritised. This will include visual impairments, hearing loss, learning disabilities, neurodiversity, and co-ordination difficulties.</p> <p>1.8 A significant percentage of the CL provision will be based in communities and developed and delivered by organisations local people know and trust removing some of the barriers connected with travel and attendance for people with learning and or physical disabilities.</p> <p>1.9 Personal development and behaviour and attitudes form part of the Ofsted Inspection Framework and groups are encouraged to agree to acceptable codes of conduct</p>			<p>D. Monitoring of SC's Quality Improvement Plan.</p> <p>E. The continuing research and data analysis will identify gaps and make recommendations to support equality of access to face to face and online learning opportunities across Somerset.</p> <p>F. Monitoring of tutor training on codes of conduct</p>	
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<p>within the learning environment. To this end, tutors are trained to highlight the importance of many areas including respect, behaviour, citizenship and equality and diversity and to challenge opinions of other learners in the same cohort that could impact on the individuals experience and their wellbeing.</p> <p>1.10 Learner Behaviour Policy, Equality &amp; Diversity Policy and Safeguarding Policy implemented to mitigate against inappropriate behaviour impacting on others.</p> <p>1.11 Equality &amp; Diversity, Safeguarding and Prevent posters will be displayed in all classrooms.</p> <p>1.12 Regular safeguarding meetings and issues, actions and outcomes monitored at review meetings</p>				
<p><b>2.Gender reassignment. Sexual Orientation.</b></p> <p>2.1 Toilet and changing facilities to accommodate gender reassignment requirements will be managed. Locations of nearby toilet facilities will be identified and signposted.</p> <p>Actions 1.9-1.12 (as above) will apply.</p>	01/08/2024	Quality Officer	<p>A. Regular learner voice activity such as facilitated question and answer sessions, surveys. To include regular safeguarding meetings to consider any further action required.</p> <p>B. Monitoring of tutor training on codes of conduct</p> <p>C. Monitored through management structure. Equality &amp;</p>	

			<p>Diversity, Safeguarding and Prevent posters to be displayed in all classrooms.</p> <p>D. Quarterly review meeting with CLPs</p> <p>E. Monitoring of SC's Quality Improvement Plan.</p> <p>F. Lesson Observations</p>	
<p><b>3. Pregnancy and maternity</b></p> <p>3.1 Reasonable adjustments will be made to provide childcare facilities via partnerships (community venues) allowing parents to access CL uninterrupted.</p> <p>3.2 Risk assessment will be carried out at each venue and reasonable adjustments will be made to enhance sufficient facilities for baby changing.</p> <p>3.3 Regular safeguarding meetings</p>	01/08/2024	Quality Officer	<p>A. Regular learner voice activity such as facilitated question and answer sessions, surveys carried out to identify areas that can be improved.</p> <p>B. Risk assessment reviewed termly.</p> <p>C Quarterly review meeting with CLPs</p> <p>D. Lesson observations</p> <p>E. Monitoring of SC's Quality Improvement Plan.</p>	

<p><b>4. Armed Forces</b> 4.1 Tutors will make reasonable adjustments to support learners in completion of their course due to armed forces movements / restrictions through one-to-one sessions online and journals.</p>	01/08/2024	Quality Officer	<p>A. Quality review meetings with CLP. ILPs. Attendance, retention, and destination data.</p> <p>B. Monitoring of SC's Quality Improvement Plan</p> <p>C. Regular learner voice activity such as facilitated question and answer sessions, surveys to consider any further action required.</p>	
<p><b>5. Sex.</b> 5.1 Local based projects will be developed to help understand why numbers of men participating in CL are 75% lower than women and how more men can be encouraged into learning.</p>	01/08/2024	Quality Officer	<p>A. Learner data. Feedback from learner voice activities.</p> <p>B. Feedback from local providers of CL giving identified reasons for low participation rates.</p> <p>C. Quarterly review meeting with CLPs and project managers</p>	
<p><b>6. Race and Ethnicity</b> 6.1 Information both verbal and written will be managed to accommodate a person's needs (identified at initial assessment) to avoid language discrimination.</p>	01/08/2024	Quality Officer	<p>A. Regular learner voice activity such as facilitated question and answer sessions, surveys carried out to identify areas that can be improved with regular safeguarding meetings to</p>	

<p>6.2 The employment, education and skills portal to be designed to encompass access to language translation and language services.</p> <p>6.3 ACE will work with Diversity Voice and Charis (charity supporting refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers to settle into communities).</p> <p>6.4 One member of SC employment and education team service is a qualified Ukrainian translator and will assist people experiencing language barriers at enrolment</p> <p>6.5 Outreach provision in communities will provide support to refugees, (predominantly from Ukraine) who have sought sanctuary in Somerset including Chard and Watchet with the aim of meeting the need for essential English language skills and to facilitate social and wellbeing opportunities, to build confidence, resilience, support integration and build stronger communities.</p> <p>Actions 1.9-1.12 will also apply.</p>			<p>consider any further action required.</p> <p>B. Review meetings with Diversity Voice and Charis to highlight issues of concern and need.</p> <p>C Quarterly review meeting with CLPs</p> <p>D. Lesson observations</p> <p>E. Monitoring of SC's Quality Improvement Plan.</p> <p>F. Teaching observation. Scheme of work, initial assessment review and retention, achievement and destination data review quarterly</p>	
<p><b>7. Age</b></p> <p>7.1 Marketing and publicity will be designed and delivered to consider the different access points of people within different age brackets such as social media, website promotion, and awareness raising through partners and hard copy magazines.</p>	01/08/2024	Quality Officer	<p>A. Success of marketing activity monitored quarterly via learner profiles to include postcode distribution, unique learners, age.</p> <p>Referrals of under 19 to other organisations monitored.</p>	

<p>7.2 People under 19 will be advised at enrolment of other training support available (Skill Up and apprenticeships, Somerset Works etc). Referral to Somerset Works other suitable support for people under 19 National Careers Service <a href="#">Careers advice - job profiles, information and resources   National Careers Service</a>. The Education Hub <a href="#">Free courses and qualification for adults to boost their skills - The Education Hub (blog.gov.uk)</a> Skill Up <a href="#">Home - Skill Up Somerset</a></p>				
<p><b>8. Others: carers, low income, rurality, isolation etc</b></p> <p>8.1 Confirmation on public transport services will need to be made to increase an individual's ability to access the service – reasonable adjustments being made allowing provision being held in a location and at a time that fits with public transport services.</p> <p>8.2 A range of learning opportunities will be made available, which include face-to-face, remote/online, and blended options. This will provide those who are unable to travel or attend a face-to-face session due to time commitments, access a range of learning options. Recorded sessions made available online to further support accessibility.</p> <p>8.3 Connect Somerset (partnership between Somerset Council, Somerset NHS, Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprises, Schools, Colleges, and Early Years settings) aims to improve early help in the community. ACE will form part of the outreach service to help families</p>			<p>A. Regular learner voice activity such as facilitated question and answer sessions, surveys carried out to identify areas that can be improved with regular safeguarding meetings to consider any further action required.</p> <p>B. Monitoring of SC's Quality Improvement Plan.</p> <p>C. Teaching observation. Scheme of work, initial assessment review and retention, achievement and destination data review quarterly.</p> <p>D. Termly review learner profiles to include postcode distribution, unique learners (widening</p>	

<p>and older people in the communities receive holistic support and information on learning opportunities.</p> <p>8.4 Enrolment will identify anyone on a low income to be excluded from paying fees in accordance with the DfE Adult Education Budget and fee policy.</p> <p>8.5 Locally delivered and/or online learning will support carers to access provision at times and locations that co-ordinate with caring responsibilities.</p> <p>8.6 ACE will provide learning opportunities for people on probation and ex-offenders to support their progression towards employment and reducing the likelihood of re-offending.</p> <p>8.7 Digitally excluded people (without a device or lack of knowledge to use IT) will be supported via the library iPad loan scheme and Spark IT programme. Digital devices will be made available for the duration of the course if required.</p> <p>8.8 Paper based enrolment forms will be made available to those with limited/no digital access.</p>			<p>participation) age, sex, additional needs support requirement, fee paying exempt.</p> <p>E. Quarterly review meeting with CLPs</p>	
<p><b>9. Religion or belief</b></p>	<p>01/08/2024</p>	<p>Quality Officer</p>	<p>A. Regular learner voice activity such as facilitated question and answer sessions, surveys carried</p>	

<p>Religious requirements identified during initial assessment and considered where practicable when planning lessons (pray room, time of class etc).</p> <p>Actions 1.9-1.12 will also apply.</p>			<p>out to identify areas that can be improved with regular safeguarding meetings to consider any further action required.</p> <p>B. Monitoring of SC's Quality Improvement Plan.</p> <p>C. Quarterly review meeting with CLPs</p>	
<p>There are no further negative outcomes to consider. This will be regularly reviewed and updated if necessary, via the quality improvement plan</p>	01/08/2024	Programme manager	Regular quarterly reviews of reports, feedback, and meetings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.</b></p>				
<p> </p>				
<b>Completed by:</b>	Beccy Brown & Sue Taylor			
<b>Date</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> January 2024			
<b>Signed off by:</b>				
<b>Date</b>				

<b>Equality Lead sign off name:</b>	<b>Tom Rutland</b>
<b>Equality Lead sign off date:</b>	<b>8<sup>th</sup> March 2024</b>
<b>To be reviewed by:</b> (officer name)	
<b>Review date:</b>	



