

**Meeting of the Cabinet - 10<sup>th</sup> September 2008**

**Report of the Director of Adult Community and Housing Services**

**Draft Post 19 Learning and Skills Strategy**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To seek approval from Cabinet for the draft Post 19 Learning and Skills Strategy – a full copy of which is available in the Members Room and on the Committee Management Information System on the Council’s website.
2. The strategy has been produced on behalf of the Dudley Community Partnership and implementation will be led by the Economic Development and Regeneration Partnership.
3. The purpose of the Strategy is to ensure that good quality learning and skills are fully embedded in the work of the partnership, including in the implementation of the Next Generation Local Area Agreement.

**Background**

4. Currently, as well as the Local Area Agreement, there are Post 19 Learning and Skills elements to nine other strategies. This strategy is an overarching pulling together of the learning and skills elements of these strategies.
5. The Post 19 Learning and Skills Strategy sets out the vision and direction for the Borough to ensure that all of the strands of learning and skills work carried out in the borough are strategically managed to benefit all residents and stakeholders.
6. The Community Strategy vision for the Promoting individual and community learning challenge is *‘a borough where everyone, irrespective of background, or personal circumstance, has the opportunity to realise their full potential, and one where our children and young people in particular, aspire to realise their full potential and are supported in doing so’*. (Community Strategy, 2005).
7. The strategy is informed by the outcomes of the consultation carried out to create the Community Strategy 2005 – 2020 which *‘has clearly shown that the community want Dudley to be a borough with opportunities for learning open to everyone, and one where recognition is given equally to academic and vocational attainment’*.
8. The Learning and Skills Council, as a main provider of funds for learning and skills in the borough, have contributed learner survey information to inform the content of the strategy.
9. The Adult and Community Learning Team work with the Community Renewal Team to create annual Area Learning Plans for the borough. These are based on learning needs identified through working with communities. In the five City

Strategy areas they have been used as the basis for more detailed Neighbourhood Employment and Skill's Plans (NESPS). The NESPS are being implemented with strong community involvement in neighbourhood boards. The information gained from learners in this work has informed the content of this strategy.

10. The strategy has been developed taking into account issues raised by statutory, voluntary, business and community sectors and, most importantly, adult learners themselves.
11. The Strategy aims to be simple, achievable, ambitious and aspirational, with the primary aim of creating a learning borough in which all individuals can realise their potential through learning.

### **Post 19 Learning and Skills**

12. Post 19 learning embraces different degrees and types of learning engagement, all of which focus on the learner at the centre of learning: formal, informal and work-based. Over 7,000 learners benefited from the service provided by the Adult and Community Learning Team in the last year
13. The strategy uses the **Inspiring Learning for All** framework definition of learning as a *'process of active engagement with experience. It is what people do when they want to make sense of the world. It may involve the development or deepening of skills, knowledge, understanding, awareness, values, ideas and feelings, or an increase in the capacity to reflect. Effective learning leads to change, development and the desire to learn more.'*
14. The development of a strong skills base is fundamental for the future success of the borough for the reasons stated in The National Skills Strategy 2005 *'Skills are fundamental to achieving our ambitions, as individuals, for our families, their learning needs and for our communities' future. They help businesses create wealth, and they help people realise their potential. So they serve the twin goals of social justice and economic success."*
15. Learning and skills in the borough should be provided as part of a clear and coherent learning offer. This learning offer must provide clear routes for residents of the borough to move between the different types of learning as part of their own personal Learning Journey.
16. Dudley's economy generally reflects that of the wider sub-region with a low level of earnings relative to the UK average, as shown in the Borough's Economic Strategy *'There are some major economic issues and challenges for the Borough including reducing worklessness and developing and improving the skills of local people through quality training and achievement of qualifications, to equip them with the appropriate skills to meet the current and future needs of the local jobs market. Integral to this is the focus required on narrowing the gap between the most deprived wards and the rest of the borough in terms of worklessness and skills levels'.*
17. The provision of learning opportunities in the most deprived wards in the borough, which attract people back into learning, is essential if the ambitious skills agenda in the Next Generation Local Area Agreement is to be achieved
18. In addition to developing the skills of the borough it is, therefore, vital to develop Personal, Community and Development Learning (PCDL), which is not based on prior educational attainment, in the borough. This provision is defined by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) as *'learning for personal development, cultural enrichment, intellectual or creative stimulation and enjoyment. It is also learning developed with local residents and other learners to build the skills, knowledge and understanding for social and community action. There is no requirement that*

*learners must necessarily progress to other learning or achieve accreditation...This approach also recognises the wider benefits of learning in the community; including its contribution to broader government policies such as health (mental and physical well-being) and community cohesion)*'. This area of learning is also referred to nationally as Adult Safeguarded Learning because the funding for it has been safeguarded by the Learning and Skills Council until 2010.

19. In the case of PCDL, learners are expected to contribute some or all of the costs of this type of learning, depending on their income and ability to pay. Public funding for PCDL work in the borough is targeted at those learners in most financial need who have benefited the least from education in the past.
20. The Learning and Skills Council have a requirement for each authority to have a PCDL strategy group to enable effective coordination of the provision in the borough. The Dudley PCDL group was initiated in February 2008.

### **Key Impacts of the Post 19 Learning and Skills Strategy**

21. The ambition for Dudley is that programmes for all areas of learning and skills in the borough are of high quality and have challenging and inspiring programmes which are accessible to everyone.
22. The strategy lists a series of key impacts for the four areas of learning and quality and benchmarking.

1. *Promoting well being and personal enrichment including Personal, Community and Development Learning (PCDL)*

Key impact 1: Improved coordination and availability of learning opportunities in the borough

Key impact 2: Improved access to learning about physical activity and healthy eating leading to reduced levels of obesity

2. *Supporting families including Family Learning and support for parents*

Key Impact 3: Increase in the number of parents and communities actively engaged in supporting children and young people's learning and development

Key impact 4: Improved outcomes for children and young people in the borough.

3. *Strengthening Communities including community cohesion and Personal and Community Development Learning*

Key impact 5: Increase in the number of people involved in decision-making within their local areas

Key impact 6: Increase in the number of people involved in voluntary work including charities and community groups.

4. *Enhancing employment prospects including First Steps, skills and employability.*

Key impact 7: Achieve the skills outcomes included in the Economic Strategy through the development of improved learning and skills in the borough. This includes a clear learning journey ranging from first engagement of disaffected learners to the increase of the number of local residents with skills at Level 4 and above.

Key Impact 8: Narrow the skills gap between residents in the City Strategy wards and rest of the borough.

5. *Quality and Benchmarking*

Key Impact 9 Quality and breadth of curriculum choice, together with quality and variety of learning opportunities offered, will underpin all elements of the Strategy.

Key Impact 10 Curriculum choice meets the needs of the wide range of skills and learning needs identified through the multiplicity of plans and strategies as detailed in the matrices within the Strategy.

20. A performance management framework will be mapped and developed linking each key impact with the relevant Local Area Agreement and Dudley Community Partnership theme. The primary accountable partnership will be the Economic Development and Regeneration Partnership.

**Finance**

21. The implementation of the strategy will enable more strategic identification of potential funding sources and improved partnership working for the benefit of Dudley residents.

**Law**

22. The Council is under a duty to secure the provision of adequate facilities for further education under Section 15 of the Education Act 1996.

23. The Council may do anything, which is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic well being of the area under Section 2 of the Local Government Act, 2000.

24. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, empowers the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of its functions.

**Equality Impact**

25. The strategy has been assessed using the Council's Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment criteria to ensure that it does not discriminate against any learners in the borough as part of the consultation programme.

**Recommendation**

26. It is recommended that Cabinet approve the Dudley's draft Post 19 Learning and Skills Strategy



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### **List of Background Papers**

**An Economic Strategy for Dudley Borough 2008/2009**, Dudley MBC, 2008

**Community Strategy 2002 – 2020**, Dudley Community Partnership, 2005

**Our single statement of requirements**, Learning and Skills Council 2006

**Skills – getting on in business, getting on at work Part 1**, Department for Education and Schools, March 2005