

Cabinet – 8 February 2012

Walsall Adult Learning Plan

Portfolio:	Councillor Harris. Leisure and Culture
Service:	Walsall Adult and Community College
Wards:	All
Key decision:	No
Forward plan:	No

1. Summary

A comprehensive review of adult learning provision that is funded by the Skills Funding Agency and provided to Walsall residents has been undertaken. The review assesses the current learning needs of Walsall residents, how current learning provision supports Walsall's economic and social regeneration priorities, and what further priorities need to be addressed moving forward.

The review and recommendations assume no growth in funding for learning from the Skills Funding Agency and therefore identify priority sectors for current funding support and a collaborative learning forum to support funding maximisation, coherence and value for money.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves the Adult Learning Plan
- 2.2 That Cabinet approves the establishment of a Walsall Adult Learning Forum to support provider collaboration and to oversee the implementation of Adult Learning Plan priorities.

3. Report detail

A strategic review of Adult Learning provision has been completed.

The review findings and recommendations are included in the documents attached to this covering report; one of which is an executive summary entitled *Strengthening Families, Communities and Individuals in Walsall* (**Appendix A**) and the other being the full draft plan (**Appendix B**).

The recommendations propose priority areas for action and adult learning activity to support both the economic and social regeneration agendas in Walsall; these are identified in paragraphs 33 to 45 of the executive summary.

There is a recommendation that, should the plan be approved by Cabinet, a new Learning Forum for Walsall should be established to facilitate collaborative working to fulfil the priorities in the plan and to provide strategic oversight of the progress made.

4. Council priorities

The Council has committed to three priorities to focus on between now and 2014. These are: communities and neighbourhoods; the economy; and health and wellbeing. These priorities support our ambition to make Walsall a great place to live, work and invest. The proposals in the Adult Learning Plan contribute to all three of these priorities.

5. Risk management

Restrictions in funding for adult learning means that establishing key priorities, shared with partners and delivered collaboratively, will help to mitigate against potential loss of services to residents.

Local priorities and collaborative planning and delivery will increase the likelihood of new funding being secured.

6. Financial implications

All costs are within current budgets and the review and recommendations assumes no growth in funding for learning from the Skills Funding Agency, which is budgeted at £4m for the academic year 2011/12.

The costs in time and potential costs of employing an additional apprentice are noted in section 9 below and are covered within current budgets.

The reduction in the adult learning funds available from existing sources coupled with the greater focus on the use of those funds to deliver government policy for adult learning will have an impact on all colleges and training organisations in the Borough. Should the reduction in available funds, coupled with a redirection in the use of those funds, not be offset by new sources of funding then the total volume of adult learning across the Borough will decline to the detriment of the people of Walsall with some neighbourhoods and communities potentially experiencing dramatic changes. Therefore, the plan includes a strategy for seeking and gaining new funding sources to allow adult learning in Walsall to expand rather than contract.

7. Legal implications

There are no specific legal implications. However, should Cabinet approve the recommendation for a Walsall Adult Learning Forum, constitutional services' advice will be sought.

8. Property implications

There are no specific property implications.

9. Staffing implications

There are no specific additional staffing implications. However, should the recommendation to establish an Adult Learning Forum be approved, the cost of officer time to devote to this will need consideration. The proposed Adult Learning Forum will require clerking and secretariat support. It is envisaged that this will be enabled through an independent clerk who will provide services on an expenses only basis. There may be an additional opportunity to employ an apprentice. Should this be the case the employment and the cost of apprenticeship training could be supported through WACC.

10. Equality implications

Any activities undertaken as a result of the Adult Learning Plan will be subject to equalities impact assessments.

11. Consultation

The Adult Learning Plan has been subject to extensive consultation with learning providers; community groups; Walsall Council directorate staff. A residents' survey has been undertaken.

Background papers

None

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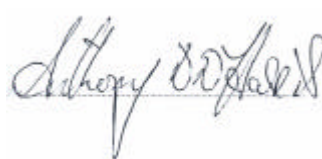
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Jamie Morris
Executive Director



30 January 2012

Councillor Harris
Portfolio Holder



30 January 2012

STRENGTHENING INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES IN WALSALL

Adult Learning for Life, Work and Personal Development 2012/13 to 2014/15

Vision

1. The vision for adult learning Walsall is that it will work towards achieving the characteristics of a four-age model¹ for the residents of Walsall. This model is:

Age group	Individual characteristics:
19-24	> are independent
	> are able to gain and sustain employment
	> have an appetite for learning through life
	> are capable of personal financial management
25-49	> are able to progress within employment and across employment transitions
	> are prepared for parenthood
	> understand and undertake personal wellbeing
	> are capable of family financial management
50-74	> undertake a healthy and active life
	> make a contribution to the community
	> learn for and within work
	> understand and undertake financial planning for retirement
75 and over	> continue with a healthy and active life
	> have sufficient financial resources for personal wellbeing
	> act as role models in the community
	> encourage those in the younger age groups to develop and progress through lifelong learning

Aims

2. The outcomes from implementing the learning plan are to:
- i. increase the REACH of learning in Walsall to encourage participation across all residents and in particular residents within those groups that are currently under-represented in learning and/or have low-level or no qualifications;
 - ii. STRETCH the available public resources by working with employers, the voluntary sector and other organisations to maximise the impact of public funds on the effectiveness of learning

¹Adapted from "Learning Through Life" (National Institute for Adult and Community Education, 2009).

in Walsall and thereby deliver an increase in value-for-money within the Borough.

1. In particular the implementation of the plan will:
 - i prepare the residents of Walsall for the anticipated changes in the jobs market in the Borough over the next five years;
 - ii support the residents of Walsall by stimulating the demand for learning that contributes to improvements in the general health, wellbeing and social consciousness of the population;
 - iii identify how the residents of Walsall will be supported in identifying their individual learning needs and the opportunities available to them;
 - iv create the appropriate learning opportunities for Walsall residents;
 - v ensure that there are no barriers to the learning opportunities being taken up by those who need them;
 - vi identify the most cost effective means of implementing the strategy and the sources of funds that will support it taking into account the ability and willingness of Walsall residents to contribute to these funds.

EMPLOYMENT AND QUALIFICATIONS

Table 1: A comparison of employment and labour supply by qualification level in Walsall

All figures are the number of individuals	Level 4 and above	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1 and below
Employment (100,100)	28,000	26,600	33,400	12,100
Qualifications held by residents aged 16 - 64 (156,500)	27,600	30,100	28,500	70,300*
Average annual enrolments in vocational learning excluding HE (2008/09 to 2010/11)	595	5,159	10,315	2,131
Average annual enrolments in literacy and numeracy (2008/09 to 2010/11)	N/A	30	2,885	7,048

* 31,300 residents have no qualifications at all

3. There is a balance between the number of jobs requiring skills at a given level from level 2 and above and the number of residents with qualifications at those levels.
4. There is a substantial imbalance between the number of jobs requiring skills at level 1 and below and the number of residents whose highest qualification is at these levels.

5. There is a significant bias for those residents in learning taking qualifications at level 2 and below. This meets the skills deficit in the Borough but does not support the demand for individuals with skills at level 3 and above, which is a necessary driver for growth.
6. Around 70,000 adults have, or have the equivalent of 5 GCSEs in English at grade D or below (level 1 literacy or below).
7. Around 100,000 adults have, or have the equivalent of, 5 GCSEs in mathematics of below (level 1 numeracy or below).
8. Around 37% of those undertaking an FE course in one year undertake a second FE course the following year. Around 10% of those undertaking an FE course progress to HE the following year.
9. Walsall's employers cite a lack of literacy, numeracy, basic IT and interpersonal skills as the top four issues with those seeking employment. Also many of those with good CVs have poor interview skills, for example: an extensive use of slang and swear words in their speech; using text speak in written exercises; inappropriate dress for the interview; and poor punctuality. CV preparation and interview skills training should be included in every programme for those seeking a job.

BASELINE FOR ADULT LEARNING IN WALSALL

10. The Skills Funding Agency currently supports c. 24,000 Walsall adult residents to undertake c. 39,000 courses per year. Of the individuals, 4,000 undertake learning at Walsall Adult and Community College (WACC), 3,000 at Walsall College while 6,500 of the residents learn with colleges and training organisations based outside of the Borough. Of the courses, over one-third is in preparation for life and work programmes, which are predominantly literacy and numeracy courses (including their various guises such as key skills and functional skills). The next most popular are: business and administration (10%); health, care and public services (9%); retail and commercial enterprise (7%); and ICT (6%).
11. There is a strong correlation between participation in learning and age. A person aged 19-24 years is between three and four times more likely to be in learning than someone aged 45-64, and between two and three times more likely to take up learning in the next three years.
12. A telephone survey of 500 residents during August and September 2011 found that:
 - > Forty-two percent of the sample were in learning or had been in learning during the last three years;
 - > Almost one third of the sample (30%) knew nothing, while a further third (35%) knew little, of the adult learning opportunities available to them;
 - > Of these in learning in the last three years, 32% were learning or had been learning at work, 16% at university, 12% at a community

association or community centre, 11% at Walsall College and 7% at a different further education college;

- > The reasons for learning were very much job related. Seventy-seven percent wanted to gain qualifications to help their employment prospects, progress within their existing job or gain a new job. A further 17% were learning because their employer required it. Very few would take up further learning to improve their literacy and/or numeracy skills;
- > Thirty percent of the sample had not been in learning since leaving compulsory education;
- > Of those that hadn't been engaged in learning within the last three years, their reasons were predominantly that they didn't have time, were not interested or had an illness or disability that prevented them from learning. If they were to consider undertaking learning in the next three years, ICT, a foreign language, English, mathematics and childcare were the top selections;
- > Being able to learn locally, at home and learning during school hours were frequently cited as reasons that would encourage respondents to undertake learning;

13. The residents' survey clearly identifies the strong vocational and employment motivations for learning even though only just over half of the respondents were employed while those most in need of learning are those least likely to want to learn in the future.

14. There is currently an imbalance in the vocational programmes being taken by adults and the requirements of the local job market. This is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Comparison of areas of learning with jobs and vacancies

Sector-subject Area	Enrolments*	Jobs	Annual vacancies**
Other***	5,250	12,000	500
Health, public service and care	4,100	25,000	1,750
Business, administration and law	3,850	14,000	5,900
Information and communication technology	2,730	6,000	50
Engineering and manufacturing technology	2,500	16,000	950
Retail and commercial enterprise	2,500	20,000	2,200
Construction	1,800	7,000	400
TOTAL	22,730	100,000	11,750

* Average annual enrolments from 2008/09 to 2010/11

** April 2010 to March 2011

*** Aggregate across the remaining eight sector-subject areas excluding Preparation for Life and Work

15. This supports employers' contentions of skills gaps in certain occupations. The high number of vacancies in business, administration and law is for sales representatives and other sales occupations including telesales. There are very few enrolments within these occupations, which normally rely on in-house training.
16. The number of annual vacancies does not represent jobs available to entrants to the jobs market as most vacancies are filled by people already in the jobs market who are simply changing jobs.
17. The three sector-subject areas with the highest ratio of jobs to enrolments are the three areas of greatest employment: health, public service and care; retail and commercial enterprise; and engineering and manufacturing technology. Together these areas provide 59% of jobs in the Borough but only account for 40% of the enrolments on vocational programmes.

KEY AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

18. There are many good learning programmes being delivered in Walsall across vocational, preparation for life and work (including skills for life) and personal development areas. The challenge for Walsall's providers is to increase the volumes of these programmes that are delivered, whilst still improving the quality of delivery, in a climate of ever reducing government funding and at the need to tailor the programmes to a changing demand across the Borough.
19. Literacy, language, numeracy and ICT need to continue be at the forefront of provision in the Borough, closely followed by vocational programmes across all levels, with an increasing focus on apprenticeships. More employers need to be encouraged to invest in the development of their workforce and also to be convinced of the need to make a financial contribution to that development.
20. The biggest challenge for the Borough is to significantly increase the number of adults engaged in learning, particularly those from the more disadvantaged groups. Again, many providers across the Borough are engaging adults from these groups but more needs to be done to support the good work already in place.
21. The second challenge is to improve the overall quality of the learners' experiences across the Borough. This is not to say that overall it is anything less than good but extensive research has demonstrated that the quality of their learning experience, and in particular the quality of teaching and learning together with the learning and social support available, is by far the biggest factor in learners remaining in learning, achieving their learning aims and progressing to further learning and employment.
22. The third challenge is to make the most of the funding available, delivering more for less, and to be proactive in seeking and winning additional funding from new sources over and above those traditionally used.
23. The final challenge is to coordinate adult learning effectively across the Borough so that all resources are focused on delivering high quality learning

rather than on competing for individual learners and groups of learners. This is not to say that learners should not have the choice of what, where and when they learn. Indeed a greater choice for learners across all these aspects of learning should be part of the strategy to increase engagement.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES

24. There are many ways in which adult learning could be transformed across the Borough. These are just some of them.
25. Residents are primarily motivated to take up learning for employment related reasons. A growth in the jobs market will drive a growth in residents taking up learning opportunities. It is likely that many of those managing small and small-to-medium businesses in Walsall are struggling to grow their businesses in a weak economic climate and believe that now is not the time to invest in learning, either for themselves or for their employees. Unfortunately, now is the time that learning is most needed. Learning programmes for business leaders based on practical ways to develop a business that are flexible in their delivery, venue and timing when combined with mentoring, for example by using volunteers, could contribute to the stimulus to growth across the Borough.
26. Too few of the neediest learners are aware of the opportunities available to them. Their responses and other evidence indicate that the internet, providers' prospectuses and leaflets through the door are the most effective at conveying information on opportunities. Direct mail could be targeted at those who have been in learning and also those in disadvantaged groups. A standard message should be used across Walsall to get people's attention and encourage them to make contact with a college or training organisation. Each organisation must then ensure that it can bring information, advice, guidance and initial assessment services to bear to ensure that potential learners are directed to the learning programme most appropriate to them.
27. Employers could do more to promote the benefits of learning to their employees. If there is a standard message available this can be used to promote learning. Here there is a conflict as many employers feel that developing their employees may lead to an increase in employee turnover. The research evidence suggests the opposite outcome. More employers should be encouraged to take on apprentices, not because they are making a contribution to society or getting cheap labour but because most will get a good return on the investment that they will have to put into it.
28. Developing literacy and numeracy skills does not always come from encouraging individuals to take a specialist course. Literacy and numeracy learning is often most effective if it is embedded in vocational and many personal development courses. Providers, as part of their annual course reviews, should be encouraged to consider the extent to which the development of literacy and numeracy skills are, or could be embedded in each course. Family learning provision should also be expanded.
29. Extensive research has demonstrated that the quality of individuals' learning experiences, and in particular the quality of teaching and learning together with the learning and social support available, is by far the biggest

factor in learners remaining in learning, achieving their learning aims and progressing to further learning and employment. All teachers, tutors and trainers should be encouraged to become qualified as teachers if they are not already. Particularly, those teaching on programmes that lead to accredited programmes should hold a teaching qualification at level 4 or above.

30. The availability of funding from traditional sources in the current economic climate is declining. Other funding sources need to be identified and won. This is far more likely if colleges and training organisations can work together and submit joint bids than compete for the same funds through separate bids.

31. Volunteers should be more widely used. Those with existing education and vocational training skills can be used straight away. Those with the time and inclination but not the skill can be trained.

32. There is a continuing need for a forum within Walsall to act as the focus for adult learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

33. Establish a forum to bring together organisations with an interest in adult learning from both the demand and supply sides to coordinate adult learning across the Borough.

34. Continue to provide a curriculum offer across the Borough that ensures the current level of around 24,000 adult residents a year engage in learning is maintained as a baseline.

35. Increase the engagement of adult residents by providing additional curriculum offers that are tailored to those most in need of further learning to encourage more adult residents to take up learning programmes, in particular those 19-24 year olds who are not in employment, education or training, those with no formal qualifications, parents with young children, people with health problems, families with low incomes and learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

36. Increase the availability of community-based provision.

37. Develop and promote new learning programmes for volunteers to allow them to make a greater contribution to learning in the community either as teachers, support workers or organisers within community-based provision.

38. Increase the availability of ESOL, family learning programmes and programmes directly linked to employment opportunities in the Borough (cf Table 5).

39. Encourage more residents already qualified to level 2 to progress to qualifications at level 3.

40. Develop and offer new programmes for the owner/managers of small, established businesses to further develop their skills in creating growth within their businesses.

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41. Develop and offer new enterprise initiatives and programmes to encourage and support those considering self-employment or a business start-up that will give them the essential skills to set-up, manage and grow their fledgling businesses.
 42. Increase the capability and capacity of learning provision in the Borough through an increase in the number of teacher-training programmes at levels 3, 4 and 5 that specialise in adult learning. The level 5 programmes will be in collaboration with local universities.
 43. Increase the promotion of adult learning within the local authority and health sectors both across the organisations and the individuals employed within them.
 44. Increase the promotion of the benefits of adult learning across those customers of health and local authority services through the delivery of those services. For example, a recent news report cited a GP as prescribing art classes for some patients as part of their treatment.
 45. Develop and offer new learning programmes for training organisations within and around the Borough on the use of modern business development techniques, for example those based on a systems approach, that when implemented will allow them to increase their capacity and efficiency within their existing funding.

Strengthening Individuals, Communities and Families in Walsall

Adult Learning for Life, Work and Personal Development 2012/13 to 2014/15



Walsall Council

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Version 12011021
January 2012

PREFACE

Education must include learning but not all learning is education.

Rogers (2003)

*If you always do what you've always done,
You'll always get what you've always got.*

Anon.

*The line it is drawn, the future is cast,
The slow one now will later be fast,
As the present now will later be past,
The order is rapidly fading,
And the first one now will later be last,
For the times they are a-changin'*

Bob Dylan (1964)

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SOURCES AND AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work has drawn on a number of sources from within Walsall Council and the Walsall Partnership. In particular:

Corporate Plan 2011/12 - 2014/15, Walsall Council, March 2011

Worklessness assessment, Walsall Council, 2011

Child poverty assessment, Walsall Council, 2011

Walsall's Sustainable Community Strategy, Walsall Partnership, June 2008

The input from colleagues within the Council responsible for these and other sources is gratefully acknowledged. Any errors or misinterpretation of evidence or conclusions from these sources is the responsibility of the author of this report alone.

The support of the Walsall Lifelong Learning Alliance is also gratefully acknowledged as is the access to their research report:

Adult Learning in Walsall: A Mapping and Perceptions Survey, Walsall Lifelong Learning Alliance, Autumn 2007

Finally, grateful thanks are due to the many stakeholders and providers of Walsall who gave freely of their time for discussions and interviews in advance of and as part of the research into adult learning in Walsall that was carried out during the late summer and autumn of 2011.

FORWARD

[DN: PS to provide. Suggestions available if required]

Paul Sheehan
Chief Executive
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

RECOMMENDATIONS

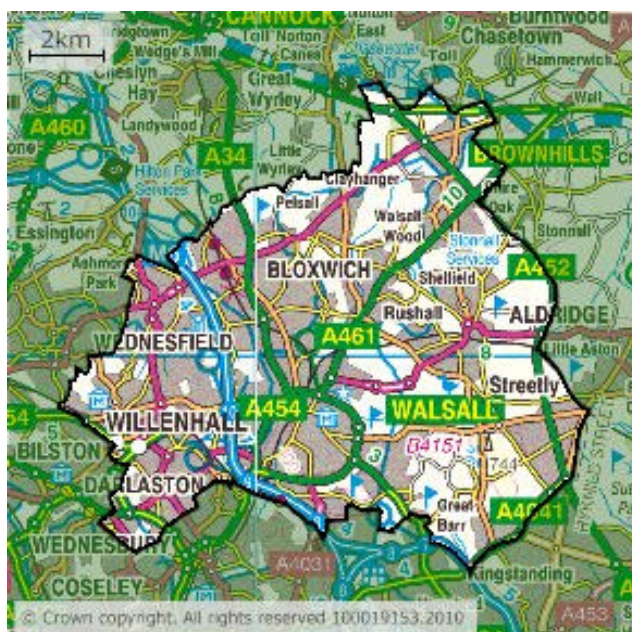
1. Establish a forum to bring together organisations with an interest in adult learning from both the demand and supply sides to coordinate adult learning priorities across the Borough.
2. Continue to provide a curriculum offer across the Borough that ensures the current level of around 24,000 adult residents a year engage in learning is at least maintained as a baseline.
3. Increase the engagement of adult residents by providing additional curriculum offers that are tailored to those most in need of further learning to encourage more adult residents to take up learning programmes, in particular those 19-24 year olds who are not in employment, education or training, those with no formal qualifications, parents with young children, people with health problems, families with low incomes and learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
4. Increase the availability of community-based provision.
5. Develop and promote new learning programmes for volunteers to allow them to make a greater contribution to learning in the community either as teachers, support workers or organisers within community-based provision.
6. Increase the availability of ESOL, family learning programmes and programmes directly linked to employment opportunities in the Borough (cf Table 5).
7. Encourage more residents already qualified to level 2 to progress to qualifications at level 3.
8. Develop and offer new programmes for the owner/managers of small, established businesses to further develop their skills in creating growth within their businesses.
9. Develop and offer new enterprise initiatives and programmes to encourage and support those considering self-employment or a business start-up that will give them the essential skills to set-up, manage and grow their fledgling businesses.
10. Increase the capability and capacity of learning provision in the Borough through an increase in the number of teacher-training programmes at levels, 4 and 5 that specialise in adult learning. The level 5 programmes will be in collaboration with local universities.
11. Increase the promotion of adult learning within the local authority and health sectors both across the organisations and the individuals employed within them.
12. Increase the promotion of the benefits of adult learning across those customers of health and local authority services through the delivery of those services. For example, a recent news report cited a GP as prescribing art classes for some patients as part of their treatment.

13. Develop and offer new learning programmes for training organisations within and around the Borough on the use of modern business development techniques, for example those based on a systems approach, that when implemented will allow them to increase their capacity and efficiency within their existing funding.

WALSALL

Geography and Population

14. Walsall Metropolitan Borough is at the heart of the Black Country just to the north of the junction between the M5 and the M6 in the West Midlands Region of England. It covers an area of 40.1 square miles (10,400 hectares) and is divided into 20 wards. These are shown below: [DN: check that latest boundary changes are shown on the ward map. If not then another map required. Does the Council have one?]



15. Walsall has an adult population¹ of almost 200,000² of which 158,000 are of working age (16-64). The average proportion of people from black, Asian and ethnic minority groups (BAEM) in those aged 16 and over is 17% but this masks a significant variation across the age range and across the 20 wards that make up the Borough. The proportion of 16-19 year olds within BAEM groups is 48% while the proportion of those from BAEM groups within some wards exceeds 30%. The majority of those BAEM residents aged 16 and over have a family background in Pakistan, Bangladesh and South-east Asia. Population growth is highest amongst the South-east Asian population.

16. Walsall is ranked 45th (out of 354) in the indices of multiple deprivation and has become relatively more deprived since 2004 when it was ranked 61st.

¹ For the purpose of this plan, an adult is defined as someone who is aged 19 years and over.

² Except where stated otherwise, the data in this report are taken from the Office of National Statistics official labour market statistics, the 2001 census and data supplied by Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council. As the same or similar data can be taken from different reports using different samples there can be small differences in the same nominal metric. This can be due to slight differences in timing or the contribution of small quantities that are not statistically significant. For these reasons and for the purpose of interpretation, the data used in this report should be treated as indicative rather than definitive.

This makes Walsall among the worst performing 13% of districts. It is also the 4th (out of 34) most deprived authority in the West Midlands. This Borough average hides a significant variation in deprivation across the Borough. In general, the more deprived wards are in the west of the Borough with the more affluent wards in the east. In particular, parts of Blakenall, Birchills Leamore, St Matthew's and Pleck are among the 10% most deprived areas in England, while parts of Streetly and Aldridge are in the 10% least deprived. There are also pockets of deprivation in the most affluent wards of Aldridge and Streetly.

17. Relative to the working-age population, there are almost one-third more key benefit claimants (excluding job-seekers benefits) in Walsall than in Great Britain and almost a quarter more than the average for the West Midlands. Walsall has higher than the national average levels of working age adults suffering illnesses and mental health issues that prevent full participation in work and community life. Walsall also has rates of teenage pregnancy and childhood obesity that are higher than the national averages. Twenty-seven percent of the Borough's children are defined as living in poverty.

Employment and Skills

18. There are 100,000 jobs in the Borough and 113,500 adults who are economically active, which means that worklessness among those who are economically active is high. Average incomes in Walsall are lower than in the West Midlands and Great Britain. Average gross weekly pay for men and women in Walsall is only 84% and 83 % respectively of the averages for Great Britain when the extra one hour per week in working hours for Walsall's men compared to the average for Great Britain is taken into account.

19. Walsall has suffered from a decline in its traditional industries of manufacturing, engineering and motor vehicles, which has become more intense as a result of the recession. The traditional industries although still significant, have been replaced by service industry employment. Employment in manufacturing in Walsall during 2008 was 18.4% of those employed, which compares with 13.8% in the West Midlands and 10.2% in Great Britain. The largest employers in Walsall are the Borough Council and the NHS. In December 2007 there were 6,180 VAT-registered businesses in Walsall. The average economically active population of those aged 16 and over for the year to June 2010 was 113,500 of which 100,100 were in employment.

20. The distribution of occupations of those in employment in Walsall differs from that in the West Midlands with a greater proportion of those in employment being in less skilled jobs. Only 33.6% of those employed are in professional, associate professional, technical and managerial positions compared with 40.4% in the West Midlands and 44.4% in Great Britain. Conversely, 21.9% of those employed in Walsall work as process plant and machine operatives and in elementary occupations compared with 19.9% in the West Midlands and 17.8% in Great Britain.

21. Table 1 shows the distribution of employment, labour supply and vacancies by qualification level in Walsall.

Table 1: A comparison of employment and labour supply by qualification level in Walsall

All figures are the number of individuals	Level 4 and above	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1 and below
Employment (100,100)	28,000	26,600	33,400	12,100
Qualifications held by residents aged 16 and over (156,500)	27,600	30,100	28,500	70,300

22. Typically over 70% of vacancies in Walsall are for jobs at levels 2 and 3.

23. These results are revealing. In essence, there is a balance between labour demand and supply for jobs at each of the levels 2, 3 and 4+. The slight under supply at level 2 could be filled possibly by a combination of older workers with level 1 qualifications having been trained by their employer to move up to a level 2 job or those younger employees with level 3 qualifications (for example, two A' levels) being employed in a level 2 job. Given the small differences involved, this suggests that the number of residents working outside the Borough in jobs at levels 2 and above is balanced by those resident outside of the Borough that come into the Borough to work.

24. These data show that, given the current availability of jobs in the Borough, unemployment is heavily weighted to those with qualifications at level 1 and below. Any future growth in jobs is likely to be predominantly at level 2 and above with a probable bias towards level 3 and above, although the creation of higher level professional and management jobs tends also to create a requirement for lower level jobs. This means that a focus only on increasing the level of qualifications held by those residents who are currently at level 1 or below will just create an oversupply of individuals at level 2, who will still find employment difficult as the demand from employers at level 2 will be insufficient to match the supply. This leads to the conclusion that as employment opportunities increase, it is vital that any vacancies created for higher level jobs are filled by residents of the Borough to create vacancies for lower level jobs that other residents can move up into. For this to happen, given the current balance between supply and demand at level 2 and above, those with qualifications at level 2 and above must also be encouraged to engage in learning to move their qualifications up at least one level.

25. It is well established that deficiencies in literacy, language and numeracy skills, and increasingly IT skills, are a significant barrier to gaining higher level vocational skills and employment. As a rule of thumb, to gain a qualification and employment at level 2 and above, literacy and numeracy skills, and IT where relevant, are desirable with skills at level 1 in these subjects being virtually essential. Research over many years has also shown that lack of

support by colleges and training organisations for the development of literacy and numeracy skills as part of vocational training programmes is the second most important reason (behind the quality of teaching) for learners failing to complete a vocational training programme. In Walsall, there are around 70,000 adult residents with literacy skills at level 1 and below and 100,000 adult residents with numeracy skills at level 1 and below. This means that a significant emphasis on literacy, numeracy and IT is required to underpin a drive to encourage many more adult residents to improve their skills in these areas. This doesn't necessarily have to be by running more specialist courses in literacy and numeracy. It does mean that the development of literacy and numeracy skills has to be embedded in all courses, even those being taken for leisure purposes. Done well (and it is being done well by some providers inside and outside the Borough), learners may not even realise that their literacy and numeracy skills are being developed.

26. As with employment, research has shown that there is a positive correlation between levels of literacy and numeracy skills and health. This reinforces the need for developing these skills as a major building block in the necessary foundations on which to build the economic regeneration of the Borough.

27. More detailed information living, working and learning in Walsall is given in Annex 1.

28. Many of the actions and activities that are necessary to bring about those outcomes needed to achieve the economic regeneration of the Borough, such as achieving higher levels of employment, lessening overall levels of deprivation and reducing child poverty, the level of teenage pregnancy and the life expectancy gap between the most and least deprived communities in the Borough, are dependent on all public, private, voluntary and community organisations in the Borough finding ways of being able to achieve more outcomes from fewer resources. This will require Walsall's adult residents to improve their knowledge, and their leadership, management, vocational, literacy and numeracy skills and, for many, their life skills. Finally, and just as importantly, it will require the development of their abilities to broaden, participate in and enjoy their leisure activities, many of which will have benefits to their own and their children's health.

29. The development and implementation of the Adult Learning Plan will provide:

- i support to local families, helping tackle poor health and low educational attainment;
- ii better qualified people that are able and ready for new opportunities in the workforce across the Borough;
- iii a life-long learning community based on public, voluntary and community sector working in partnership with any organisation capable of contributing to achieving the Council's vision for the Borough.

30. A more detailed discussion of the active link between the Boroughs development plans and adult learning is given in Annex 2.

A VISION FOR ADULT LEARNING IN WALSALL

The Four-age Model for Adult Learning

31. Looking to the future, it is proposed that the vision for Walsall should be a population approaching the following characteristics based on the NIACE four-stage model for adult learning³ as being a coherent systematic approach to lifelong learning. In this model, adults are seen as progressing through four age bands in which their learning needs develop as the individual progresses through adulthood. The age groups proposed in the NIACE study together with proposals on the ideal characteristics of the groups suggested by this proposal are given in Table 2.

Table 2: The Four-age Model for Lifelong Learning

Age group	Individual characteristics:
19-24	> are independent
	> are able to gain and sustain employment
	> have an appetite for learning through life
	> are capable of personal financial management
25-49	> are able to progress within employment and across employment transitions
	> are prepared for parenthood
	> understand and undertake personal wellbeing
	> are capable of family financial management
50-74	> undertake a healthy and active life
	> make a contribution to the community
	> learn for and within work
	> understand and undertake financial planning for retirement
75 and over	> continue with a healthy and active life
	> have sufficient financial resources for personal wellbeing
	> act as role models in the community
	> encourage those in the younger age groups to develop and progress through lifelong learning

³ Schuller, T. and Watson, D. *Learning Through Life: Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning*. Leicester: National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 2009.

32. The characteristics included in Table 4 are not necessarily confined to specific age groups but are meant to be descriptive of the large majority of individuals within the age group. For example, in Walsall many of those aged 19-24 and even younger are parents so that they need to be prepared for parenthood even though this is would not be a typical characteristic of the group.

33. It is important to recognise that achieving the vision for the older age groups is made more difficult at the start as some, possibly many, of them will not have yet achieved all of the characteristics of the younger age groups below them. This has an affect on the sequencing of the plan as there has to be some priority given to the younger age groups in the initial stages of the plan's so that, as they grow older, they take with them the characteristics that can be built on during the following age groups.

34. It will also be important to give some priority to older residents in the borough as this will contribute to improving their overall health and wellbeing at a time in their lives when this is most needed.

The Adult Learning Plan

Aims

35. The aim of the project is to develop of an adult learning plan for Walsall that, when implemented, will:

- i. increase the REACH of learning in Walsall to increase participation across all residents and in particular residents within those groups that are currently under-represented in learning and/or have low-level or no qualifications;
- ii. STRETCH the available public resources by working with employers, the voluntary sector and other organisations to maximise the impact of public funds on the effectiveness of learning in Walsall and thereby deliver an increase in value-for-money within the Borough.

36. The first aim recognises that learning is not just directed towards improving employment or career progression opportunities but also encompasses the quality of life of all residents and the social regeneration initiatives. For example, this means that learning directed towards healthy living, coping with a disability or caring for a relative can be just as important for some individuals as working towards a vocational qualification.

37. This links with the second aim as increased competencies within the resident population derived from learning can reduce the demand across all public services and allow more effective use of public funds across a greater proportion of the population.

38. In particular the implementation of the plan will:

- i prepare the residents of Walsall for the anticipated changes in the jobs market in the Borough over the next five years;

- ii support the residents of Walsall by stimulating the demand for learning that contributes to improvements in the general health, wellbeing and social consciousness of the population;
- iii identify how the residents of Walsall will be supported in identifying their individual learning needs and the opportunities available to them;
- iv create the appropriate learning opportunities for Walsall residents;
- v ensure that there are no barriers to the learning opportunities being taken up by those who need them;
- vi identify the most cost effective means of implementing the strategy and the sources of funds that will support it taking into account the ability and willingness of Walsall's residents and employers to contribute to these funds.

Objectives

39. Specific objectives for adult learning in Walsall over the next three years, particularly those relating to participation and achievement, are contained in the business plans of all those organisations, within and outside Walsall, delivering learning to Walsall's residents.

40. It is expected that, in addition to participation and achievement, these will contain a number of specific objectives relating to the:

- i Responsiveness;
- ii Effectiveness;
- iii Efficiency;

of the delivery of adult learning in the Borough as well as objectives relating to the:

- iv People; and
- v Resources;

required to deliver the learning.

41. Appropriate processes will need to be developed for monitoring, recording and reporting aggregate progress across the Borough.

Scope of the Plan

42. This report uses public information to provide a picture of Walsall in terms of the characteristics of the Borough and what it is like to live, work, and learn here. The report then looks at Walsall Council's Latest Corporate Plan for 2011/12 to 2014/15 and Walsall Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS). The Corporate Plan and the SCS together set out the developments that will be achieved across Walsall over the next three to nine years to improve the quality of life of its residents, to support them in living healthy lifestyles, to give them increased access to better jobs and to make their neighbourhoods better places to live. The report examines how adult

learning in the Borough can contribute to meeting the objectives of both the Corporate Plan and the SCS and also how adult learning is responsible for, or contributes to, many of the actions identified in them.

43. The impact of adult learning on residents of the Borough is examined through a vision for adult learning based on the NIACE four-age model of adult learning, which is used to identify a route for constructing the aims and objectives for the plan.

44. No plan adds value until it is implemented. The implications of the Government's policies and the current financial climate on adult learning in Walsall and the implementation of the adult learning plan are considered. In particular, the important role of the voluntary community sector organisations in implementing the plan and on the funding needed to support them are discussed. It is concluded that it is not acceptable for the volume of adult learning to be allowed to contract in line with reductions in funds from existing sources so that the plan must identify the means by which existing funds can be used more effectively and efficiently and also how additional funding sources can be introduced.

THE BASELINE FOR ADULT LEARNING AND SKILLS IN WALSALL

The Evidence Base

45. The adult learning plan is based on existing information (see Sources and Acknowledgements) supplemented by further research commissioned by Walsall Council during August and September 2011 (WMBC Research) that was designed to identify to what extent the findings of the 2007 study were still current and to provide a more detailed map of the trends in provision and participation in the Borough from the 2008/09 to the 2010/11 academic years using data available from the Skills Funding Agency's Individual Learner Records (ILRs). This means that residents in higher education are not included in the data presented herein. The research also included a mixed telephone and face-to-face survey of 13 stakeholders in the Borough as well as a telephone survey of 500 adult residents. A description of this research is given in Annex 3, which also includes details of where to find the research reports.

What Learners Learn

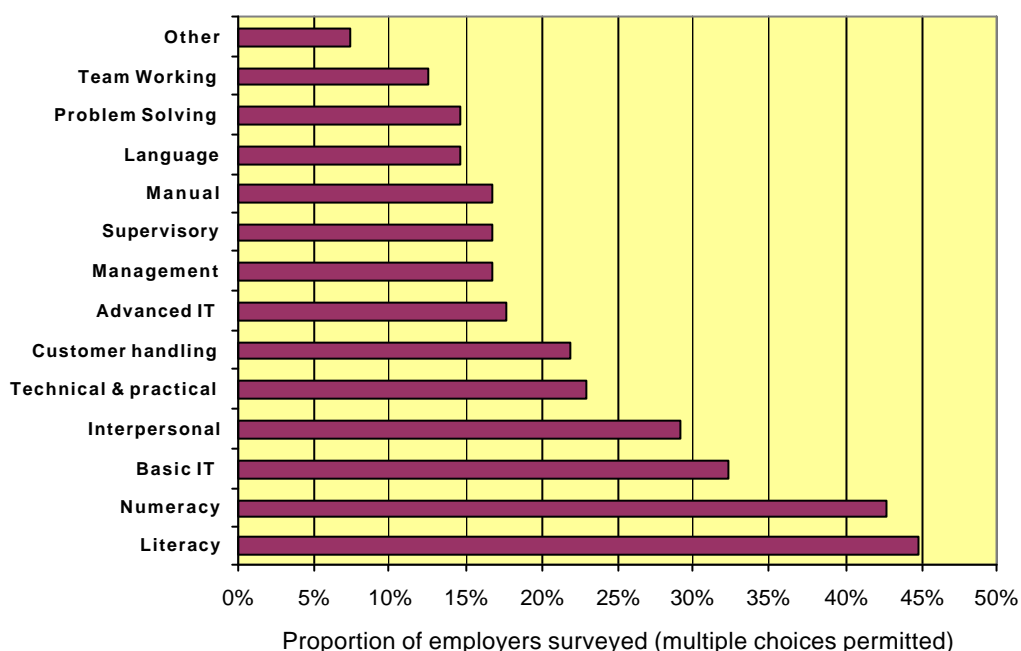
46. In 2007, WM Consultants mapped learning provision in Walsall and carried out a among Walsall residents to identify their perceptions of adult learning in the Borough (WM Consultants, 2007). One of their findings was the skills identified by employers as being required but not available locally. This is reproduced in Figure 1.

47. The top three skills gaps were in literacy, numeracy and basic IT with the fourth being interpersonal and communications skills. This is the same issue

as that deduced from the more recent employment data that was discussed earlier.

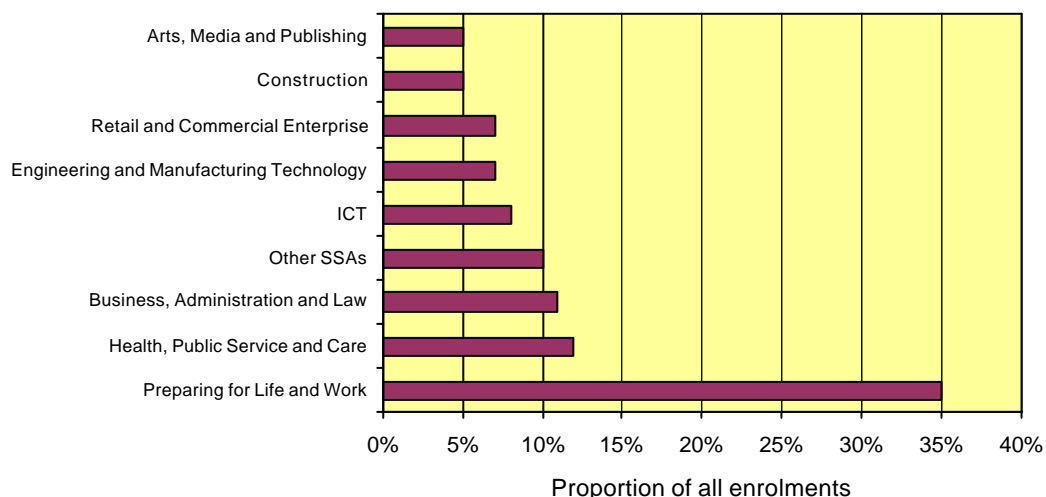
48. This issue is clearly apparent to adult learners and providers in Walsall. Figure 2 shows the distribution of their enrolments on programmes funded by the Skills Funding Agency for the top seven sector-subject areas (out of 15 identified by Ofsted) covering 90% of enrolments. The preparation for life and work programmes were mainly communications and application of number key skills, the national certificates in literacy and numeracy and functional skills English and functional skills mathematics, predominantly at levels 1 and 2.

Figure1: Skills gaps identified by employers



Source: WM Consultants (2007)

Figure 2: Average annual enrolments by adult learners, 2008/09 to 2010/11



Source: WMBC Research

49. The distribution of enrolments across the various levels of study is given in Table 3.

Table 3: Average annual enrolments between 2008/09 and 2010/11 by level of study*

	All SSAs (excl PLW)		PLW**		All SSAs (incl PLW)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Entry Level	450	3%	3,420	34%	3,870	14%
Level 1	1,680	9%	3,630	37%	5,310	19%
Level 2	10,315	57%	2,885	29%	13,200	47%
Level 3	5,160	28%	30	--	5,190	18%
Level 4 and above***	595	3%	--	--	595	2%
TOTAL	18,200		9,965		28,165	

* A further 9,910 enrolments were on programmes for which no level of study was indicated

** Preparation for Life and Work (includes literacy, numeracy, functional skills and key skills)

** The Skills Funding Agency's remit covers only a small number of qualifications at level 4

50. In vocational programmes there were twice as many enrolments at level 2 than at level 3. This appears to conflict with the requirement based on employment data discussed earlier that suggests a more even balance between enrolments at levels 2 and 3 is required to meet current and future employment requirements. It is likely that the focus on level 2 enrolments is due to the government's Train to Gain programme, which was used by many providers to accredit existing skills, particularly at level 2, rather than to develop skills. This meant that many people with level 2 skills in level 2 jobs simply had these skills formally recognised.

51. In Preparation for Life and Work, 7,050 (71% of enrolments) were at Entry Level and Level 1. Remembering from earlier that around 70,000 of Walsall's residents have literacy skills at level 1 and below and 100,000 have numeracy skills at level 1 and below then, at these rates of progression, it will be many years before a significant impact on the levels of literacy and numeracy in the Borough will be achieved. There needs to be a significant increase in the number of residents improving their literacy and numeracy skills over the next few years if the Borough's literacy and numeracy deficit is to be addressed.

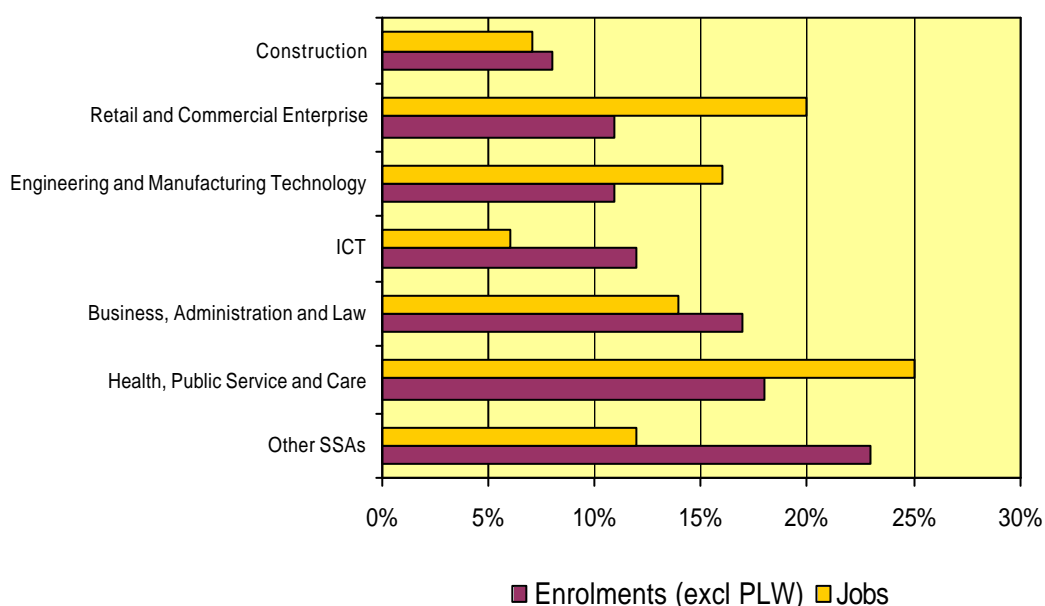
52. Also when interpreting these data, it should be remembered that the average number of enrolments per individual is 1.6 and also that individuals who already hold a highest level of qualification at any level can enrol on a second, or even a third, qualification at the same level. For example an individual with five or more GCSEs at grade C and above can enrol on a vocational programme at level 2.

53. On average over the three years to 2010/11, 24,000 Walsall residents aged 19 and over⁴ have enrolled on 38,000 courses per year funded by the Skills Funding Agency. Where a learner enrolls on a second course in the same academic year it is often one of those within the preparation for life and work sector-subject area.

54. Overall, half of all learners are aged between 25 and 44 years with around 23% being 19-24 years old, a further 23% aged between 45 and 64 years and the remaining 4% aged 65 and over.

55. The fifth skills gap identified by employers was in technical and practical skills. Figure 3 shows the proportion of adult enrolments in sector-subject areas excluding those in 'Preparation for Life and Work'. This Figure also shows the proportion of jobs in Walsall in each of these sector-subject areas. There is a significant difference between the two, which indicates that adults in Walsall are not enrolling on programmes linked to the available jobs in the Borough to sustain the skills requirements of the job current job market. It may be that Walsall's adults are enrolling on programmes that will provide them with skills in a future job market should the balance of jobs in the Borough change over the next four years but, at present, this is unknown. Also, the time frame for the balance of the jobs market to change is much longer than the duration of most learning programmes so that there is likely to be a delay between learning new skills and the availability of sufficient jobs requiring those skills. It may also be that learners are prepared to look wider than the Borough when looking for employment following their learning or that they have chosen to enrol on a learning programme without consideration of its consequences for the possibility of employment following its completion.

Figure 3: Comparison of enrolments and jobs by sector-subject area



Source: ONS and WMBC

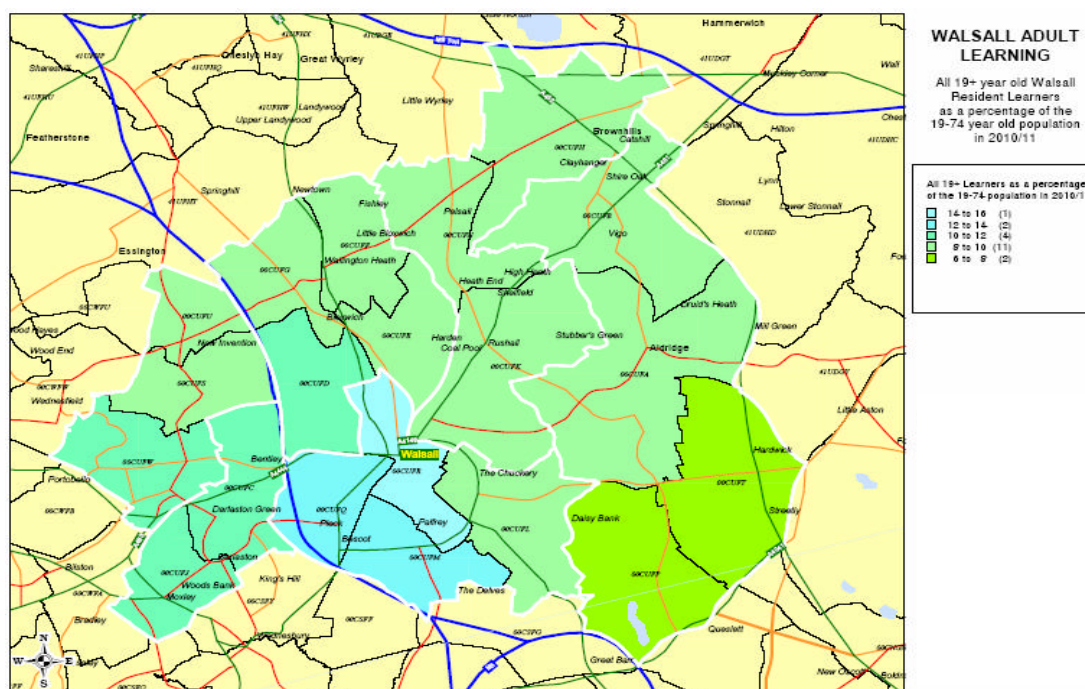
⁴ Approximately 12% of those aged 19 and over

56. This puts the focus on pre-learning information, advice and guidance services as being essential to ensure that learners are aware of the consequences of their choice of learning programme. It is often claimed that the choice of learning programme is less relevant to an employer than the fact that a prospective employee has completed one and, as a result, has acquired the literacy, numeracy, basic IT and interpersonal skills that employers value more than skills directly relevant to the job, which employers feel they can deliver themselves. However, when it comes to an interview, employers will usually select the candidate who comes closest to their requirements, so applying for a job in healthcare without a healthcare qualification is likely to lead to disappointment.

Where Learners Live

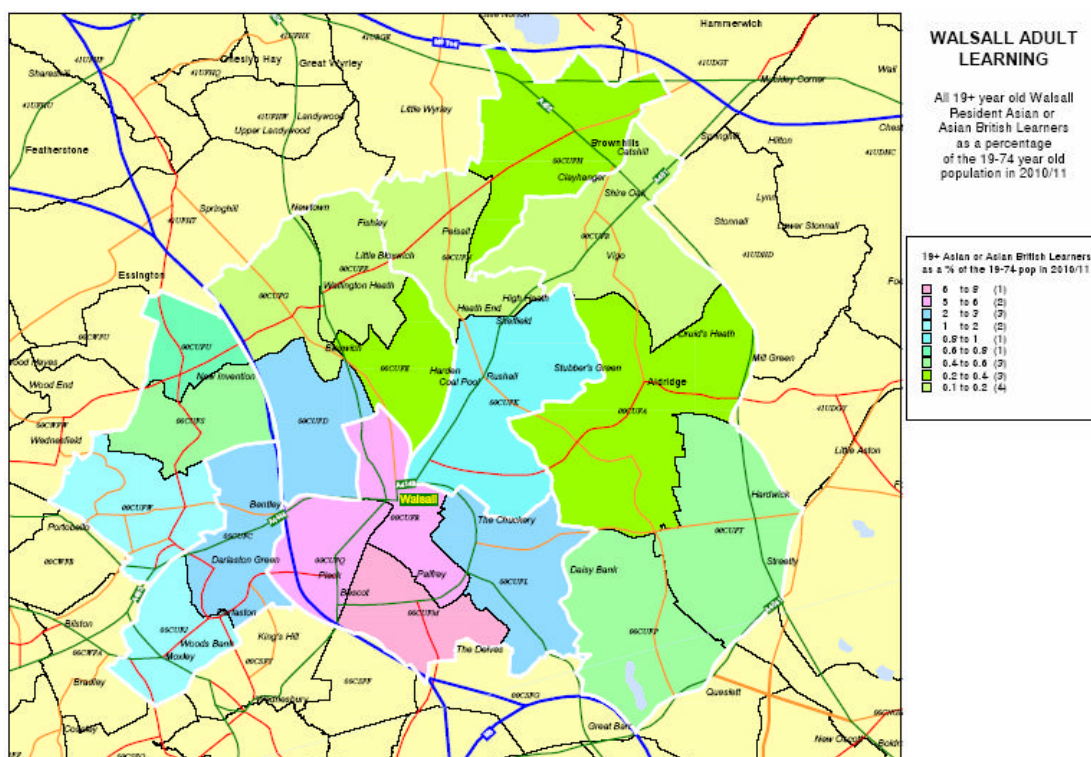
57. Learners are not distributed uniformly across the Borough in terms of where they live. This is shown in Figure 4 for all learners.

Figure 4: Distribution of learners' main residence across the Borough



58. The highest concentration of learners is in St Matthews with 14-16% of the population aged 19-74, with above average concentrations in Palfrey and Pleck (12-14%). Birchills Leamore, Bentley, Darlaston and Willenhall South are just below the average (10-12%). The remainder of the Borough has learner concentrations of 6-10%.

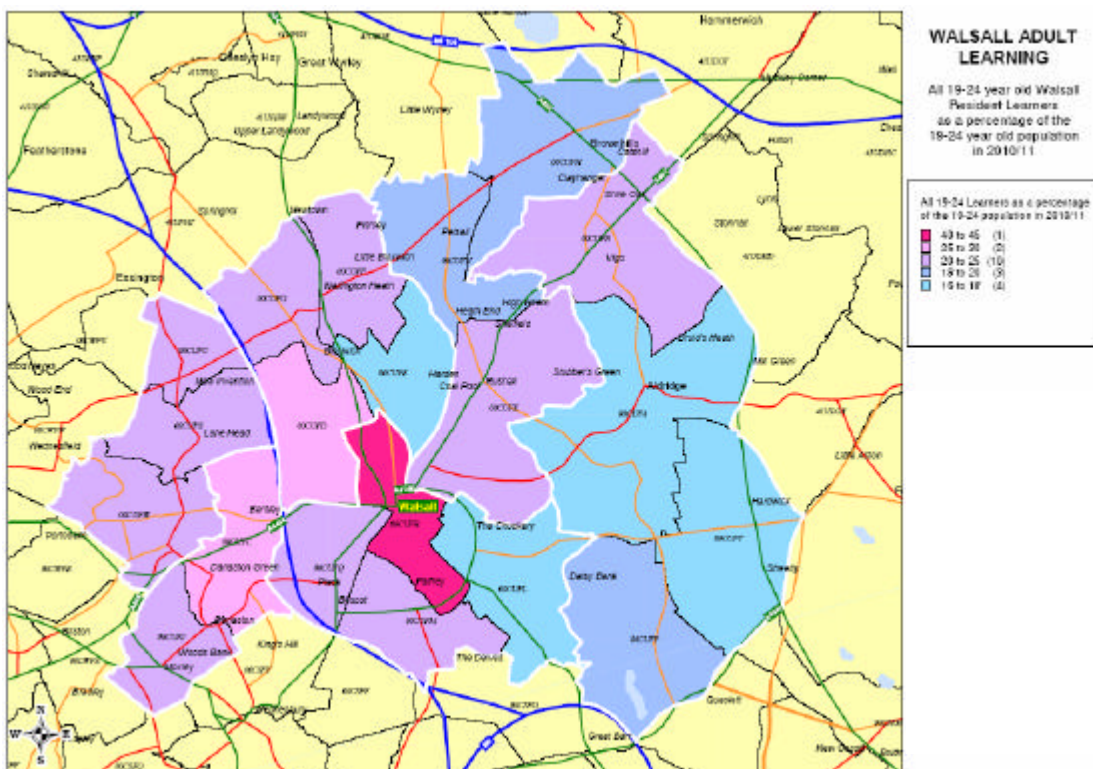
Figure 5: Distribution of Asian and Asian British learners' main residence



59. The high concentration of learners from St Matthews and adjacent wards is probably not surprising given the relatively high concentration of learning providers in and around this area, including Steps to Work, Walsall Housing Group, Palfrey Community Association, Walsall College and the Whitehall Centre, which is part of Walsall Adult and Community College, together with eight of its community outreach centres in St Matthews and Pleck. This may be taken as an indication that learners prefer to learn close to home if possible, which reinforces the same contention from training organisations in both the WM Consultants (2007) and the WMBC research.

60. There is also evidence that individuals from black and ethnic minority groups are equally represented in learning with respect to other ethnic groups. For example, in the St Matthews, Palfrey and Pleck wards around 45% of learners living in these wards are from an Asian or British Asian background, which is in-line with the proportion of young adults in these wards from BAEM backgrounds. This is shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Distribution of residence for learners aged 19-24 years

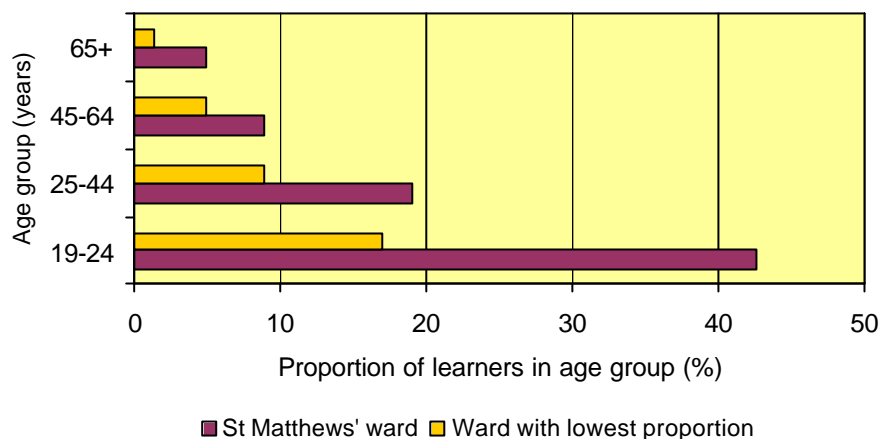


Where Learners Learn

61. Figure 7 shows the distribution based on main residence of learners aged between 19 and 24 years. St Matthews ward has the highest proportion of 19-24 year olds in learning followed by Birchills, Bentley and Darlaston wards. Figure 6 shows the proportion of each age group in learning funded by the Skills Funding Agency for the St Matthews ward.

62. This information is relevant to engagement and participation of learners. It is likely that most of the difference in participation within each age group between St Matthews and the ward with the lowest participation in each age group is due to the relatively high levels of deprivation and worklessness in St Matthews creating much greater demand for learning particularly amongst the younger adults than in other more affluent wards. However, the local availability of learning opportunities may also be a factor.

Figure 7: Age distribution of learners in 2010/11



63. Despite the evidence so far that learners prefer to learn locally, not all do. Of the 17,700 adult learners enrolled on Skills Funding Agency funded programmes between 1 August 2010 and 14 May 2011, 4,200 were enrolled at Walsall Adult and Community College and 3,000 at Walsall College with a further 6,300 were with providers outside of Walsall.

64. Almost half (47%) of those learning outside Walsall were enrolled at a number of nearby further education colleges including:

- > City of Wolverhampton College (1,050 learners)
- > Birmingham Metropolitan College (584 learners)
- > Stourbridge College (395 learners)
- > Dudley College of Technology (395 learners)
- > Telford College of Arts and Technology (314 learners)
- > South Staffordshire College (248 learners)

65. There were a further 539 enrolments on Ufl **learnirect** distance-learning, internet-based programmes. This had increased significantly from 65 in the previous year and a similar number the year before. This sharp increase in enrolments is probably because some training organisations delivering the DWP Work programme are referring clients who require the development of their literacy and numeracy skills to **learnirect** as a source of this learning rather than more conventional provision because of the simplicity and flexibility it gives them in arranging literacy and numeracy provision for their clients at less cost than more traditional provision.

66. Of the 17,700 learners, 14,170 were enrolled across a total of 45 different colleges and training organisations within and outside Walsall while the remaining 2,530 were enrolled across 340 further training organisations, at an average of 7 learners per organisation. This large number of organisations, based throughout England, involved in providing education and training for Walsall residents is concerning from an efficiency perspective, especially when much, if not all of the provision required by Walsall residents is available locally or at least close to Walsall.

Stakeholders' Views

The Survey

67. Thirteen stakeholders, including representatives from Walsall College, Walsall Housing Group, local training providers and community associations, were interviewed during the research period in August and September 2011. Their views on the suitability of the available adult learning in respect of local adult needs were gathered through a mixture of face-to-face and telephone qualitative depth interviews.

68. The open questions covered topics such as:
- > the availability and adequacy of adult learning provision in Walsall;
 - > whether the range, location and times of available adult learning provision meet the needs of residents;
 - > the support available to help engage and support those residents with basic skills needs;
 - > the barriers to engagement for those individuals with low or no qualifications and how they could be overcome;
 - > the impact of the large numbers of residents with no or low qualifications on the local economy and public services such as health, police, and the wider Council services;
 - > the contribution that adult learning makes to reducing worklessness and the opportunities available for those that overcome their low employability skills.

Main Findings

69. Providers were very keen to express the importance of being able to deliver learning provision at a local level, through community organisations and other public facilities. They also felt that there needs to be a strong focus on community engagement and as such the adult learning plan should consider how providers, community organisations and other bodies can inspire the local residents to take up adult learning. Providers also felt that it is important to acknowledge the different needs and capabilities of residents (such as those with learning difficulties, poor literacy and numeracy) in the community and offer more flexibility within the delivery criteria and eligibility criteria of learning programmes.

70. The providers from the voluntary and community sector believed that there had been less partnership working in recent years than they had been used to previously and that this should be addressed.

71. There was general support from stakeholders to promote volunteering as a means of demonstrating employability skills to employers. There was also support for family learning programmes, particularly those for young parents to give them an understanding of the benefits of learning to them and their

children, which should engage and inspire them to gain skills and qualifications.

72. Stakeholders felt that there is still a big difference between what residents want and what they need. Individuals' ambitions need to be focused on reality as the job they want may not be available (there is a true example of a young man in Milton Keynes demanding that a training provider to put him on a deep sea diving course, as he believed was his right, so that he could get a job working on North Sea oil rigs but who was not willing, for family reasons, to train outside Milton Keynes)

73. Providers also believed that funding was being diverted from programmes at levels 1 and 2 to programmes at levels 3 and 4. The ILR data for Walsall from the Skills Funding Agency tends to partly support this, with the notable exception of skills for life programmes at entry level, level 1 and level 2, which have increased by 24% from 2008/09 to 2010/11. It isn't that funds have been moved from levels 1 and 2 to levels 3 and 4 but that there are significant reductions in the number of learners on level 2 programmes whereas level 3 enrolments have remained stable. For example, between 2008/09 and 2010/11, the number of learners on level 2 programmes in: construction is down by 30%; in ICT is down by 26% (with level 1 down by 66%); in service enterprises by 25% and in warehousing and distribution by 16%. The numbers on level 2 programmes in hospitality have remained stable and in retailing have increased by 265%. Over all levels, learner numbers are down over the period by approximately 15% although enrolments may have remained stable or increased following the Government's drive to encourage progression in learning for those who complete a Government-funded learning programme.

74. The strong focus among providers on community engagement, and in particular with hard-to-reach groups, reflected the findings in WM Consultants (2007). People with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LLDD), young people, single parents and specific BAEM groups, particularly women, were the most frequently identified as being those groups at which most attention was directed. In the 2011 survey, the direction has changed slightly with greater emphasis being placed on preparing people for work. There was strong support from stakeholders to prioritise funding into areas that meet the employment needs of the area, including basic skills and ICT. There was a minority view that the current availability of adult learning in Walsall was adequate but that it didn't always meet the needs of residents.

75. Providers felt that the availability of learning programmes during the week, in the evenings and at weekends was now adequate to meet learners' needs. This is in conflict with the findings in WM Consultants (2007) where residents felt that there needed to be more provision available in the evenings and at weekends but the 2011 resident's survey seems to confirm the providers' view.

76. The views of stakeholders in the 2011 survey are totally consistent with those from four years previously. WM Consultants (2007) concludes that, over time, residents build up confidence and begin to see the direct benefits of

becoming involved in learning. Respondents feel this means that in order for adult learning to begin to have any impact or relevance in a local area, the provider has to be well established, trusted, seen to be part of the community it serves and must offer a multitude of services and information sources other than just learning.

77. A common perception was that there is as much an issue in developing demand for adult learning as there is in making sure there is adequate provision available. It is not enough to simply put up posters and place adverts in local papers to say that adult learning courses are being delivered in a community centre or library and expect people to just turn up. The suggestions are that this simply doesn't work on its own and that providers need to become far more involved in really trying to engage with people in the community and build relationships in order to get people signed up to courses. Many felt that the engagement process needs to be a delicate one in an attempt to make people feel comfortable taking part in adult learning. Often this is best achieved by building relationships with people and informing them of the vast benefits to learning rather than just strongly promoting the availability of courses. When you are new to the learning arena it can be a big step to take and providers need to make that first step as easy as possible to build up confidence. Most respondents said they feel it important to ensure that there is sufficient one-to-one support for learners with poor literacy or numeracy skills. Others say courses need to be more flexible, allowing people to learn in their own time and at their own speed.

78. Many respondents were keen to focus on the support needs of people with learning difficulties. In this regard they felt that the requirement to follow the core curriculum which does not allow for any flexibility in course content or indeed timescale severely hampers the progress and achievement of these learners above Entry 2 qualifications. It is believed that the majority of these individuals have the desire and ability to achieve higher level qualifications but that the individual's additional needs requires the courses to be more flexible, particularly in respect to the time allowed to complete a course.

Residents' Views

The Survey

79. Telephone interviews were conducted with 500 residents distributed across the Borough. A sample size was identified for each of the six Area Partnerships and then a random selection of respondents was made within each Area Partnership. If no contact could be made with a selected individual or if they were not prepared to take part in the survey then another randomly chosen individual was added until the required sample size for the each Area was achieved. The telephone survey was carried out by a specialist telephone survey company.

80. The final sample reflected the characteristics of the Borough's population across gender, age and ethnicity. The sample was underrepresented by people whose highest level of qualification held was at level 1 and below (5% of the sample against 16% of the adult population) and overrepresented by

people whose highest level of qualification held was at level 2 (30% of the sample against 18% of the adult population). This could be because people with lower levels of qualification were less inclined to respond to the survey when invited to do so. The sample was also overrepresented by people who were economically active (62% of the sample against 57% in the population).

81. At least 10% of the sample had at least one disability but only 2% of the sample admitted to having one or more learning difficulties with reading, writing and number. This latter figure correlates well with the low proportion of the sample holding a highest qualification at level 1 and below.

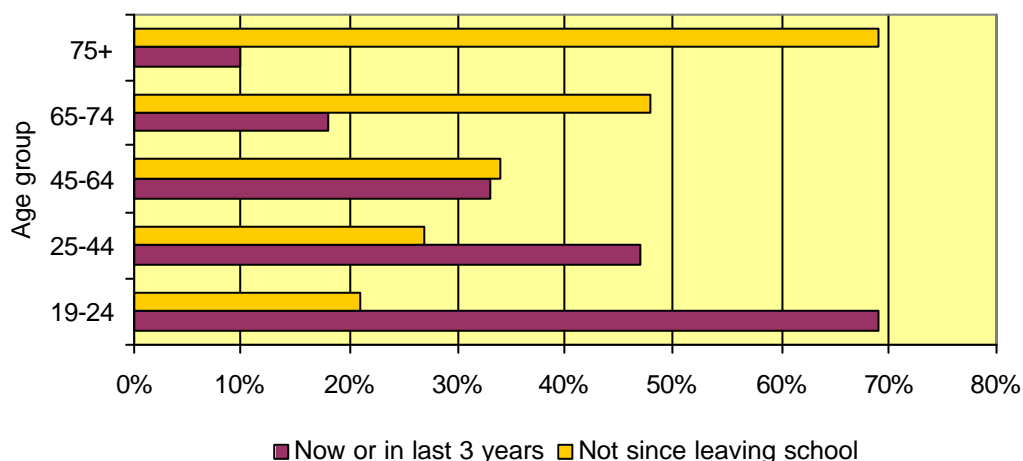
82. It was felt that, as the survey was not being used for comparative purposes, it was not necessary to correct the survey outcomes for the differences in these characteristics between the sample and the population. Consequently, the quantitative results quoted herein are those taken directly from the survey responses without any correction being applied.

Main Findings

All Respondents

83. Almost one third of the sample (30%) knew nothing, while a further third (35%) knew little, of the adult learning opportunities available to them. Residents' knowledge of adult learning decreased the lower their highest level of qualification. This means that those people who have more need to know about the opportunities available are the people who actually know less.

Figure 8: Correlation between learning and age



84. When asked how they would find out about adult learning opportunities if they needed to, almost half (47%) would use the internet, 15% their local library, 14% the Walsall College brochure and 11% a community centre. Almost all respondents (89%) had access to the internet, predominantly either at home (85%) or at work (32%) or both.

85. Within the sample, 42% were either currently in learning (15%) or had been within the last three years (27%). There was a strong correlation

between the age of the respondent and them having a recent learning experience as shown in Figure 8.

Respondents with Recent Learning Experience

86. There were 210 respondents who were either in learning (75) or had been in the last three years (135). Of these, 32% were learning or had been learning at work, 16% at university, 12% at a community learning centre, 11% at Walsall College and 7% at a different further education college. Only 2% claimed to be currently in learning or to have been in the last three years at Walsall Adult and Community College (WACC). This contrasts with the 23% per annum of those in learning who are enrolled at WACC. It is possible that, rather than the sample being unrepresentative of those with recent learning experiences, the responses reflect the fact that many of WACC's learners learn at one or more of its over 40 community outreach venues and that they think of the centre they are, or have been, learning at, which they don't associate with WACC when responding to the question.

87. The reasons for learning were very much job related. Seventy-seven percent wanted to gain qualifications to help their employment prospects, progress within their existing job or gain a new job. A further 17% were learning because their employer required it. Only 2% were or had been in learning for personal interest reasons. When asked if the learning had helped them achieve their needs, 65% scored 8 or more out of 10 where 10 is completely and 1 is not at all. Of these, over half (35%) scored 10/10. Only 6% scored 3/10 or less, although this still represents around 1 in every 15 learners or around 1,450 learners per year. A similar profile was obtained when respondents were asked whether they enjoyed their learning.

88. In terms of progression, 75% of respondents would definitely (43%) or probably (32%) undertake further learning in the next 3 years while only 14% would probably or definitely not. There was a strong correlation between the desire for further learning and the highest qualification held by the respondent. This means that those who most need to progress to further learning are less likely to do so.

89. Again, the large majority (71%) of those who were likely to take up further learning would do it for work-related reasons or to achieve qualifications. Only 2% would do it to improve their reading, writing and/or their speaking skills.

90. The top four preferences as to where they would like to learn, in descending order of preference, were: at work; Walsall College; a community learning venue; and at home.

91. Of those that said they probably or definitely would not undertake further learning, 42% said that they were not interested in doing it with a further 13% saying that they had all the qualifications they needed (so much for lifelong learning). A further 20% said that they didn't have the time. The remaining 25% had a variety of different personal reasons for not wishing to undertake more learning.

92. Learning was rated important (8 or more out of 10) by 44% of the respondents and unimportant (3 or less out of 10) by 15% of those with a recent learning experience, possibly a number of those whose employer required it rather than it being under their own volition and possibly those who had a poor learning experience or had not achieved what they wanted.

Respondents with No Recent Learning Experience

93. There were 289 respondents⁵ that had not engaged in learning within the last three years, of which 95 had not had any learning experience since they left compulsory education.

94. Their reasons for not engaging in learning were predominantly that they didn't have time, were not interested or had an illness or disability that prevented them from learning. Only 3% felt that they would not be able to afford the course fees and 2% that they don't know where to find out about the available courses. This contrasts with the 30% of the whole sample (500) who said that they knew nothing at all about the adult learning that was available (cf paragraph 59).

95. Looking to the future, 31% said that they would definitely (6%) or probably (25%) undertake learning in the next three years although 42% would definitely not and 13% would probably not. Two-thirds of those with no qualifications or qualifications at level 1 and below said that they definitely would not be undertaking a learning programme in the next three years. There was a strong correlation of responses with age. Those under 25 were two and a half times more likely to undertake learning in the next three years than those aged 45 to 64.

96. Again the reasons for considering learning, among those who were, was to gain qualifications, to get a new job, to progress in their current job or to change to a different type of job. Only 13% said that it would be for personal development. The top four preferences for a learning venue were: Walsall College (37%); a community learning venue (17%); at home (14%); and at WACC (9%).

97. ICT, a foreign language, English, mathematics and childcare were the top selections of those who might consider learning in the next three years.

98. Being able to learn at home and learning during school hours were frequently cited as reasons that would encourage respondents to undertake learning.

99. Almost a third of respondents (32%) did not believe learning was important at all and a further 11% considered it only as of minor importance. Family finances, addressing health issues, looking after children, working and sorting out housing issues were seen as being of far more importance than learning.

⁵ One respondent couldn't say whether they had or had not had any training in the last three years.

100. The top five venues for learning, in descending order of preference, among those who weren't likely to engage in learning in the next three years were: Walsall College; a community learning venue; at home; at a local school; and at WACC.

Summary of the Findings

101. The residents' survey clearly identifies the strong vocational and employment motivations for learning even though only just over half of the respondents were employed. Improving literacy and numeracy skills was not seen as being particularly important for many of the respondents even though 20% of them had no qualifications and a further 5% had a highest qualification at level 1 and below.

102. Learners' clear preference seems to be to either learn locally or at Walsall College although preference for the latter may come from residents living near the College, as discussed in an earlier section of this report. The option of learning at home was attractive to a number of respondents. This coupled with the large majority of respondents having internet access at home may indicate that an investment in internet-based, distance-learning should be considered. This is backed up by the 539 people already using this form of learning through Ufl's *learnirect* programmes.

103. Unlike the findings in WM Consultants (2007), there were no strong feelings that the times learning programmes were available constituted a barrier to people taking up learning. Focusing weekday provision on school hours during term time was the only significant response. Otherwise, current availability was considered adequate.

104. Making residents aware of the available learning opportunities and motivating them to engage in learning is a major factor in adult learning. Internet-based and direct-mail marketing may be way forward. The latter, although expensive, may be effective. There is evidence from learner engagement projects in 2009 and 2010 that 85% of all enrolments on short, taster sessions came from residents getting a leaflet through their door. This could be made even more cost effective by targeting the specific postal addresses of those most in need of undertaking learning based on multiple indices of deprivation.

105. Those most in need of learning are those least likely to want to learn in the future. If adults try learning and do not get what they want out of it or do not enjoy it or are afraid even to try it then they are less likely to return for more or go for the first time. A number of authors have claimed that adults have to know why they have to learn something before they will undertake to learn it. Their readiness to learn is linked to the tasks associated with their social role and stage of life. Adults engage in problem-centred rather than subject-centred learning and are generally driven by internal locus of control, rather than external locus of control. This implies that adults will resist forced learning, for example by their employer or their JCP adviser, unless they can see why they must learn and the benefits they will accrue from the learning. This means that if an adult does not see the need to learn then they don't engage. The challenge will be to get more of Walsall's adults to want to learn

what they need to learn to resolve immediate identified or perceived issues and, more importantly for long term personal independence and sustainable work and family lives. This applies particularly to those who are the more disadvantaged in the Borough. Innovations to achieve this need to be developed.

TRANSFORMING ADULT LEARNING AND SKILLS IN WALSALL

The Challenges

106. Every year, around 24,000 adult residents in Walsall undertake a formal learning programme funded by the Skills Funding Agency. This is 12% of the population aged 19 and over. There will be a number of others who undertake formal and informal learning funded through other sources. If the outcome from the survey of residents that was carried out for this project is representative of this population, then it is likely that a further 12% of residents *per annum* are undertaking formal learning funded through these other sources. This means that around one-fifth to one-quarter of residents aged 19 and over undertakes some form of learning each year.

107. If nothing were to be done, it is likely that this situation would continue. Is this sufficient? Is what they are learning the best things for them to learn? Does this situation need to change and, if so, how? Clearly, change is necessary as continuous improvement of adult learning is essential within Walsall. The key questions are “What needs to be done?” and then “How can what needs to be done be done?”.

108. In terms of what needs to be done, this plan doesn't consider trying to plan adult learning in terms of learner numbers and sector-subject areas. Colleges and training organisations are perfectly capable of identifying which qualifications and programmes are needed where. Instead, this plan seeks to identify and provide new approaches to some of the more important generic issues that underpin adult learning.

109. In terms of how it can be done, if adult learning in Walsall is to change for the better then those delivering adult learning and their consumers (employers and individuals) must also change what they do as doing nothing will not change anything. There is nothing to make them change other than that change will be in their own best interests, which means that employers and individuals have to be made aware of the opportunities available to them and the benefits that learning will bring while colleges and training organisations will need to coordinate their activities to ensure that the best learning opportunities are made available to employers and individuals with the minimum of wasteful duplication and effort.

110. There are many good learning programmes being delivered in Walsall across vocational, preparation for life and work (including skills for life) and personal development areas. The requirement on Walsall's providers is to

increase the volumes of these programmes that are delivered, whilst still improving the quality of delivery, in a climate of ever reducing government funding and at the need to tailor the programmes to a changing demand across the Borough.

111. The biggest challenge for the Borough is to significantly increase the number of adults engaged in learning, particularly those from the more disadvantaged groups. Again, many providers across the Borough are engaging adults from these groups but more needs to be done to support the good work already in place. Engagement of the adults who most need to learn into learning is a key challenge.

112. The second challenge is to improve the overall quality of the learners' experiences across the Borough. This is not to say that overall it is anything less than good but extensive research has demonstrated that the quality of their learning experience, and in particular the quality of teaching and learning together with the learning and social support available, is by far the biggest factor in learners remaining in learning, achieving their learning aims and progressing to further learning and employment. Ensuring adult learning delivery is both relevant and excellent is a key challenge.

113. The third challenge is to make the most of the funding available, delivering more for less (for example by increasing average class sizes⁶), and to be proactive in seeking and winning additional funding from new sources to support experimentation, allow for 'failure' and subsidise the cost of non-viable cohort sizes over and above those traditionally used is a key challenge.

114. The final challenge is to coordinate adult learning effectively across the Borough so that all resources are focused on delivering high quality learning rather than on competing for the most accessible individuals and groups of learners. This is not to say that learners should not have the choice of what, where and when they learn. Indeed a greater choice for learners across all these aspects of learning should be part of the strategy to increase providers' ability to connect with potential learners and increase engagement. Increasing engagement is a key challenge.

115. There needs to be agreement across all stakeholders in Walsall about what needs to be done and then agreement as to where responsibility and accountability for making the necessary changes and interventions rests. This will best be achieved through consultation and coordination with individual organisations taking for themselves the responsibility and accountability for implementing the interventions they are most successful in and therefore achieving agreed changes and potential to meet outcomes for residents. If this is to work then there needs to be a forum for consultation and better coordination of adult learning in Walsall. It is recommended that this is done through a new learning partnership for Walsall which is connected to other strategic forums and initiatives with impacts on both economic and social returns reported, recorded acknowledged and celebrated.

⁶ Between 2008/09 and 2010/11, 1,873 courses funded by the Skills Funding Agency ran with four or fewer enrolments.

Preparation for Life and Work

116. Over the last three years there are around 12,000 enrolments on literacy, numeracy, key skills and functional skills programmes. This is encouraging although many of these are linked to other vocational frameworks and as supplements to other qualifications. Despite this there is a demonstrable need to encourage more adults to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. These skills form the basis of employability and are vehicles for developing individuals understanding of workplace behaviours which enable them to fulfil workplace behaviour expectations.

This needs to be incremental to existing learning across all subjects that is taking place. It is not appropriate to divert existing funding from, for example, some vocational qualifications (even if there is little demand from employers in the Borough for these qualifications) to skills for life qualifications as this would disadvantage some individuals for the benefit of others. This means that additional funding for literacy, numeracy and employability programmes needs to be found from outside existing funding.

Alternatively, existing funding could be stretched, for example by increasing average class sizes or delivering employability programmes in partnership with large companies within the context of their corporate social responsibilities frameworks

This is probably best achieved by increasing the volume of literacy and numeracy engagement provision in community venues as this should have the effect of increasing demand. Increasing the availability of family learning in these venues and delivering literacy and numeracy embedded in other programmes should be beneficial and increasing the quality and availability of workplace experience opportunities for first and second level learners.

In practice, all options for increasing the availability and take up of literacy and numeracy will have to be identified and implemented. Improving the literacy and numeracy skills of those adults currently at Level 1 and below has to be the top priority for adult learning in Walsall over the next four years.

117. Family learning.....

Vocational Learning

Business Development, Leadership and Management

118. Transforming adult learning and skills in Walsall has to be intimately linked with the economic regeneration of the Borough and particularly with the necessary growth in employment and with the more effective and efficient delivery of public services.

119. There are currently 100,000 jobs in the Borough, a number which will remain stable at best with the current small declining trend more likely to remain for the immediate future. Within these jobs, around 3,000 real

vacancies⁷ are created each year as people retire and leave the Borough to work elsewhere. To balance this around 3,000 young people aged 16-21 come into the jobs market from full-time education in schools, further education colleges and higher education institutions.

120. It is also worth noting that, if the number of jobs in the Borough remains the same over time, then the number of those in the Borough without a job but wanting a job will also remain the same even though there are plenty of vacancies (c. 2,000) at any one time. This means that those organisations whose role it is to place individuals, particularly those people not in work, into jobs cannot reduce the overall number of those without jobs.

121. For employment to grow, demand must grow. Changes to the supply side, for example the opening of a new supermarket, does not lead to sustainable growth. The construction of the supermarket represents a short term increase in demand for the construction employment sector, although not all of the labour will come from within the Borough. However, the retail jobs it creates are pseudo vacancies as, if the disposable income of residents in the Borough has not increased, their expenditure is just transferred from an existing retail outlet to the new supermarket, with the likely loss of jobs in existing retail outlets producing no or very limited gain for the borough.

122. This is not to say that such new developments are bad for the Borough, it is just that they are probably at best neutral in terms of the number of sustainable jobs available in Walsall. Increasing sustainable employment in Walsall will come from:

- i Businesses in Walsall ensuring that they are the first choice for customers in Walsall. How much business do Walsall companies lose because customers in Walsall buy goods and services from suppliers outside the Borough that could be sourced locally? This is the basis of the Think/Trade Walsall strategies;
- ii Businesses in Walsall doing more business with customers outside the Borough. Put the other way round this means getting more companies from outside of the Borough wanting to buy from Walsall-based companies;
- iii Attracting appropriate new businesses to the Borough. Being appropriate is important as this is the supermarket dilemma: if a new business merely takes over from existing businesses in the Borough then the long term employment benefits are much reduced. The Borough ideally needs to attract new businesses, the majority of whose customer base is outside Walsall and most, if not all, of whose employees are to be recruited from within the Borough.

⁷ A real vacancy is one that when filled has a net reduction of one in those seeking employment. A pseudo vacancy is one that results in no net reduction in the unemployment figure as it, and the chain of vacancies it creates, are all filled by people already in employment in the Borough. In Walsall, the ratio of pseudo vacancies to real vacancies is probably between 15:1 and 20:1 based on the current vacancy statistics for the Borough.

123. It will be seen that these options are not necessarily benefiting any other community but Walsall but, in the current economic climate, parochialism is necessary. Also these options are focused on the demand side by tapping into existing demand. Creating supply without the demand is not sustainable and can miss the big opportunities.

124. What is the relevance of this discussion to transforming adult learning and skills in Walsall? It highlights the need for businesses to broaden their markets both within and outside of Walsall. Achieving this will not come about just by sending more sales people out or doing more advertising⁸. There are good ways and bad ways of developing and growing a business that many business people are unaware of because the pressures of running, particularly small, businesses in the current economic climate often don't allow them the time to learn how to effectively research the opportunities and to develop them.

125. There is a need for a business development, leadership and management programmes targeted at small business leaders – focused on learning about the means to grow the business and the requirement of the business to employ more local people.

Such learning programmes or events need to give business leaders the flexibility to learn when it is appropriate and in a venue that is convenient for them. Business Leaders' learning programmes should have a distance learning core with on-demand support from a mentor, who themselves are credible and have access to specialist learning support as necessary. It may be possible and appropriate if this programme were to be eventually accredited by, for example, the Institute for Leadership and Management (ILM), the Chartered Management Institute (CMI), Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) or the Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative (SFEDI).

126. The cost of delivering the programmes could be reduced by recruiting business volunteers into mentoring roles. These could be retired or senior managers who would be trained to act in the mentoring role. This may also be an opportunity to tap into an unused resource.

Similarly, learning on technology; innovation and creativity could be sourced through local graduates that have not yet found work in a 'knowledge-transfer role. The pay-off for these graduates could be CV enhancement and free access to literacy and numeracy skill enhancement as this skill area often lies unaddressed through the HE curriculum experience.

127. It is unlikely that these programmes would meet the funding requirements of the Skills Funding Agency, so that other sources of funds would have to be sought and won, although some existing ILM, CMI and CIM courses are funded by the Agency.

128. Such programmes as these could be coordinated by the new learning partnership together with the Chamber of Commerce, and the Education

⁸ It is interesting that by far the greatest number of vacancies in the Borough is for sales representatives and other sales related occupations.

Business Partnership, which may also have a role in acquiring appropriate funding. It is recommended that at least a pilot programme should be considered to run during 2012.

Vocational Programmes

129. There is currently an imbalance in the vocational programmes being taken by adults and the requirements of the local job market. This is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Comparison of enrolments with jobs and vacancies

Sector-subject Area	Enrolments*	Jobs	Annual vacancies**
Other***	5,250	12,000	500
Health, public service and care	4,100	25,000	1,750
Business, administration and law	3,850	14,000	5,900
Information and communication technology	2,730	6,000	50
Engineering and manufacturing technology	2,500	16,000	950
Retail and commercial enterprise	2,500	20,000	2,200
Construction	1,800	7,000	400
TOTAL	22,730	100,000	11,750

* Average annual enrolments from 2008/09 to 2010/11

** April 2010 to March 2011

*** Aggregate across the remaining eight sector-subject areas excluding Preparation for Life and Work

130. The sector-subject area (SSC) with the most vacancies is Business, Administration and Law, which is also the only SSC with more vacancies per year than enrolments. The issue here is that the very large majority of vacancies are for sales representatives and sales related occupations (excluding retail sales), while there are very few sales related enrolments.

131. The ratio of the number of jobs in an SSC to the number of vacancies per year is an indication of the average length of time that someone in that SSC stays in a job, or stays with the same employer. The average over all SSCs is 8.5 years. There is a general perception that the turnover rate of employees is much higher than this suggests. While this is true for certain groups of people in certain occupations, a significant majority of people work for three or fewer employers during their working life. Also the job longevity calculated in this way doesn't include those job moves, particularly within the same employer, that are not externally advertised.

132. The ratio of vacancies to enrolments is as indication of the relative likelihood across the SSCs of a learning programme leading to a job at the end of the programme. Excluding Business Administration and Law because of the strong sales bias in vacancies that is not reflected in enrolments, the areas for study most likely to lead to a job in Walsall are Retailing and

Commercial Enterprise; Health, Public Service and Care; and Engineering, Manufacturing Technology. These SSCs account for only 40% of enrolments. ICT; Other; and Construction are the SSCs least likely to lead to a job in Walsall yet account for 43% of enrolments.

Apprenticeships

133. An apprenticeship⁹ represents a framework of qualifications:

- i a Certificate or Diploma in occupational competence (NVQ);
- ii functional skills or a GCSE in both English and mathematics (or, at the moment, key skills in communications and application of number). Some frameworks also require the functional skill qualification or GCSE or key skill qualification in IT;
- iii a technical certificate (the knowledge-based element of the framework);
- iv employment rights and responsibilities (in some frameworks this is a separate workbook but more often is embedded in other elements of the framework);
- v personal thinking and listening skills (in some frameworks this is a separate qualification but more often is embedded in other elements of the framework).

134. Apprenticeships are available for those aged 16 and over but the national rate for apprenticeship funding reduces at age 19 and again at age 25. Also, full funding at the national rate is only available for those aged 19 and over that do not have a first full level 2 qualification or those aged 19-24 that do not have a first full level 3 qualification. For those apprentices that are not eligible for full funding, their employer is expected to contribute 50% of the cost of the apprenticeship. This is known as the co-funded employer contribution.

135. Many providers are unable, or find it difficult, to recoup the co-funded employer contribution from apprentices' employers. This means that the provider should be unable to deliver the required standard of apprenticeship as the funding rates are determined from the cost of delivering an apprenticeship to the appropriate standard. It also means that, if providers are able to deliver a high quality apprenticeship for less than the Government feels is necessary, then with more money coming from employer contributions, they would be able to deliver more apprenticeships, further benefiting the local economy.

136. Apprenticeships are a major plank in the Government's strategy to re-energise the workforce and apprentices have a right to expect that there are sufficient funds available from both the Government and their employer to provide training to the appropriate standard.

⁹ As a rule, a generic reference to apprenticeships will include Apprenticeships at level 2, Advanced Apprenticeships at level 3 and Higher Apprenticeships at level 4. Upper case leading characters will be used to identify specific levels of apprenticeship where necessary.

137. Many employers already invest in the training and development of their staff. A large proportion of this investment is usually directed at management, professional, administration and sales employees¹⁰ but few employers identify the return they get from their investment in the training and development of their employees. Re-direction of their existing spend on training and development to give the maximum return on that investment (RoI) should ensure that scarce money is spent by employers to best effect.

A New Learning Partnership for Walsall

138. It is recommended that the promotion and coordination of adult learning for Walsall residents can be achieved through a new learning partnership for Walsall to succeed the Walsall Lifelong Learning Alliance.

139. The New Partnership would bring together a range of organisations from the public, private and third sectors with a shared interest in lifelong learning to coordinate and steer the provision of learning, skills and personal development in the same direction to enhance the lives of Walsall's residents, now and in the future.

Aims

140. The New Partnership would aim to achieve this by:

- > steering the learning related activities and actions within the Borough's development strategies and plans to be incorporated into an adult learning plan for the Borough;
- > individually and collectively developing strategies to remove barriers to learning and to promote equality and diversity in learning;
- > promoting and encouraging engagement and participation in learning among those currently not in learning;
- > ensuring that information on learning in Walsall and the current and future skills needs of Walsall is effectively gathered and disseminated;
- > ensuring that creativity and innovation is stimulated and nurtured in learning opportunities across Walsall to make learning more attractive and more effective for the residents;
- > coordinating and facilitating an increase in the amount of external funding for learning that is attracted to Walsall through the identification and promotion of collaborative funding opportunities;
- > promoting family learning across the Borough;
- > promoting volunteering as a means of building capacity in learning providers and other organisations;

¹⁰ *National Employer Skills Survey for England 2009: Key findings report*. Evidence Report 13, UK Commission for Employment and Skills, March 2010.

- > promoting and supporting quality improvement across training organisations in Walsall.

Objectives

141. In its first year, the Partnership would:

- > establish an effective partnership that is fit to meet its aims and objectives;
- > engage with learning deliverers to communicate the benefits of membership of the New Partnership;
- > review and revise the adult learning plan and its contribution to learning in Walsall;
- > support others in securing additional external funding for learning in Walsall over that available in 2011/12;
- > consult with employers and their representative organisations to promote the alignment of vocational learning opportunities with the current and future needs for employment in the Borough;

ENGAGING ADULTS IN LEARNING

What Motivates Adults to Learn?

142. What makes an adult to enrol on a formal learning programme at a college or training organisation? For some it is because someone expects them to do it, for example their employer or their partner. This may be greeted positively by some but not by all. For others it can be because they feel that learning will improve their lives or those of their children. Often adults seek out learning experiences in order to cope with a specific life-changing event with the learning directly related to the event that triggered the seeking. In this way, learning is a means to an end rather than an end to a means. Increasing self-esteem following the event is often a strong secondary motivator.

143. This is consistent with research¹¹ which suggests that the motivation to learn comes from an individual knowing why she or he needs to engage in learning and, once in learning, why they are taught particular things in a particular way. Adult learners are internally rather than externally motivated. They have a view of why they are in learning so that if they cannot see how the content or the mode of delivery will lead them to achieve what they feel they need to learn then they will not learn and will probably withdraw from learning. This makes it important that, in order to engage and retain adult learners, the reasons why learning is needed, why the content is what it is and why the delivery is the way it is have to be made explicit.

¹¹ *The Adult Learner: A neglected species*. M. Knowles, Gulf Publishing Company, 1973

144. Rogers (2003)¹² argues that the natural learning that all people do in the course of living is the most important kind and that unless we understand and value it we will never create effective learning opportunities for those we are so keen to get into such programmes. Learning is inevitably embedded within daily life such that people's everyday experiences bring with them, often sub-conscious, continuous learning. Research¹³ has brought to light the significance of this informal and incidental learning in people's lives, which implies the need to be aware of adults' learning outside formal provision and to see unplanned learning within the classroom as a resource. The work on reflective and experiential learning shows the significance and importance of real-life problems, situations and issues for people's learning and the uniqueness and unpredictability of each person's process of reflection. This is why adults prefer self-directed and self-designed learning projects over group learning experiences led by a professional.

145. On a physical level, there is clear evidence, including that from the residents' survey carried out for this project, that individuals prefer to learn locally wherever possible so that the availability of the right course at the right time has to be matched with the right place to encourage individuals to become learners.

What Keeps Adults in Learning?

146. The development of self-direction in learners stemming from this continuous learning process should be supported. Adult learners engage in problem-centred rather than subject-centred learning and should be encouraged to draw on their own experiences where possible and made aware of how the tasks they are engaged in outside the learning environment, together with the social roles and stages these are associated with, contribute to their learning. Learning should be related to genuine problems and issues in people's lives, rather than just focusing on decontextualised topics and skills. People's own motivations for learning need to be understood and respected. It must also be recognised that many people need more than just a personal motivation to learn. They often need the support of their family, friends and/or their employer, should they have one. Without this support, the perseverance to engage in and then complete a learning programme is much more difficult than if it is there. This means that the motivation of family, friends and/or employers to support the learning of others is also necessary.

147. People pass through different stages in their lives, in which they take on different social and cultural roles and responsibilities. Provision needs to take account of this and find ways to understand and respond to the sorts of practices and problems people engage with in their lives outside the classroom. At the same time, provision needs to recognise the socially- and culturally-shaped nature of these developmental modes, and the implications of the pressures people experience to meet expectations about appropriate choices and behaviour at particular points in their lives. Inappropriate modes

¹² *What is the Difference? A new critique of adult learning and teaching*, A. Rogers, NIACE, 2003

¹³ *Models of Adult Learning: a literature review*, NRDC, 2004.

of adult development, particularly those that assume there is a single developmental path and end-point towards which all learners should be aiming, should be avoided.

148. These arguments reinforce the proposition for flexible approaches to learning and provision that engage centrally with the learner's own contexts and practices. This is particularly relevant to gender. Gender-blind centres regard men as the same as women and offer the same services to men and women. Gender-aware centres regard men as different to women and provide different experiences for men in order to attract and retain them within learning. Men want no frills, no chat, to get to the point and to get on with things. Research¹³ shows that around 87% of fathers want to play a more active role in their families' lives but don't know how and yet are often under-represented in adult learning and particularly in family learning. Getting fathers involved requires shorter courses out of learning hours, a welcoming approach that reaches out to fathers and even fathers-only sessions.

149. There is clear evidence that parents with higher level literacy and numeracy skills have children who perform better in literacy and numeracy tests¹⁴. The approach to adults learning literacy, numeracy and ESOL must address the non-material aspects of learning and understanding that are at the heart of learning these skills. Learners' behaviour does not necessarily correlate with understanding so that ways need to be found that build on people's existing knowledge to help them make sense of new information and bring to light the learner's active role in this process. Learners need to be supported in making their own meanings and connections. Work on self-directed learning suggests that it is not merely a desirable property of an individual learner, but arises from a complex set of factors in social interaction. Ideas concerning learning to learn demonstrate that it is useful for adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL learners to have space and time to reflect on their learning processes, as well as on the particular topics addressed in class.

150. Within Adult Safeguarded Learning, the focus on formal, curriculum driven, tutor-developed provision, which has grown up to meet the requirements either of funding regimes or inspection criteria, is unhelpful in supporting the personal development of learners. A model that gains from self-directed-learning approaches by involving learners in developing provision and focuses on the process rather than a set curriculum has the potential to stimulate, excite and inspire a much wider audience.

What Should be Done?

151. Community venue provision is more likely to engage hard-to-reach groups who can feel marginalised by traditional college environments.

152. Courses that personalise provision and contextualise content to individual learner's lives are more successful across all priority groups.

¹⁴ De Coulon, A., Meschi, E., and Vignoles, A. *Parents Basic Skills and their children's test scores*, London: NRDC (2008)

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153. Provision that is responsive to the different locations, timings and support needs of each group of priority learners is likely to be more effective.
154. Flexible courses that allow learners to drop in and out as they deal with the challenges in their personal lives are more likely to retain learners over the long term.
155. Peer support, mentors or supportive learners in the community have an important role in sustaining motivation and progression.
156. Positive action schemes to train people from priority groups to act as champions, mentors and ultimately tutors are highly effective.
157. Family learning in 'family-familiar' settings.
158. Tutors and teachers who are trained and expert in contextualising basic skills as well as embedding them in vocational programmes.
159. Coordinated support for learners across education, health, social services and third-sector agencies achieved through multi-agency working derived from a joint belief that learning works.
160. Inclusion of care leavers, adult offenders in the community, learners with learning difficulties and disabilities and those with mental health support needs in the list of priority groups for engaging in learning. All of whom are both target learning groups but also have potential to contribute to 155 – 159 above given the right structures, support, co-ordination, and environment.

ANNEX 1

WALSALL

Characteristics of Walsall

1. Walsall Metropolitan Borough is located within the Black Country area of the West Midlands Region of England. There are 20 Wards in the Borough. The Borough's neighbourhood management model groups the Wards into six neighbourhood management areas. These are:

- i Darlaston*
 - > *highest older population;*
- ii Willenhall;
- iii Bloxwich (East and West) / Blakenall / Birchills / Leamore*
 - > *high JSA claimant rate;*
 - > *high concentration of people with no qualifications;*
- iv St Matthews / Paddock / Palfrey / Pleck*
 - > *highest population under age 30yrs;*
 - > *highest concentration of South Asian population;*
 - > *highest population growth;*
- v Aldridge North / Brownhills / Pelsall / Rushall / Shelfield;
- vi Streetly / Pheasy / Adridge South

* denotes areas of greatest learning need¹⁵

2. Most of the Borough lies between the M6 motorway in the south and the M6 Toll motorway to the north, which provide good road transport links to both the north-west region and to the midlands and southern regions of England. There are also good rail services to Birmingham. Birmingham International Airport is also easily accessible by both road and rail.

Living in Walsall

Population

3. Walsall has a population of around 256,000¹⁶ of which an estimated 158,000 are of working age (16-64). Of these 31,500 (21%) have declared a

¹⁵ Walsall Adult and Community College Strategic Plan (Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, January 2010)

¹⁶ Except where stated otherwise, the data in this report are taken from the Office of National Statistics official labour market and other statistics. As the same or similar data can be taken from different reports using different samples there can be small differences in the same nominal parameter. This can be due to slight differences in timing or the contribution of small quantities that are not statistically significant. For these reasons and for the purpose of interpretation, the data used in this report should be treated as indicative rather than definitive.

disability and 116,800 aged over 16 are economically active of which 101,600 are in employment.

4. The average proportion of people from black and minority ethnic groups (BAEM) in those aged 16 and over is 17% but this masks a significant variation across the age range. This is shown in Table A1.

Table A1: Proportion of individuals from minority ethnic groups in the population aged 16 and over

	White		BAEM		Ratio of BAEM to White	Total
	Total	Average Annual cohort	Total	Average Annual cohort		
16-19	8,500	2,125	4,100	1,025	48%	12,600
20-24	17,100	3,420	2,700	540	16%	19,800
25-49	62,800	2,512	17,000	680	27%	79,800
50-64	41,000	2,733	3,800	253	9%	44,800
65+	40,000	--	1,900	--	5%	41,900
Total	169,400	--	29,500	--	17%	198,900

5. The majority of those BAEM residents aged 16 and over have a family background in Pakistan, Bangladesh and South-east Asia. Population growth is highest amongst the South-east Asian population.

6. The data for the 20-24 age group shows some anomalies when compared to the other age groups and so its interpretation should be treated with caution.

Deprivation

7. Walsall is ranked 45th (out of 354) in the indices of multiple deprivation and has become relatively more deprived since 2004 when it was ranked 61st. This makes Walsall among the worst performing 13% of districts. It is also the 4th (out of 34) most deprived authority in the West Midlands. This Borough average hides a significant variation in deprivation across the Borough. In general, the more deprived wards are in the west of the Borough with the more affluent wards in the east. In particular, parts of Blakenall, Birchills Leamore, St Matthew's and Pleck are among the 10% most deprived areas in England, while parts of Streetly and Aldridge are in the 10% least deprived. There are also pockets of deprivation in the most affluent wards of Aldridge and Streetly.

Income

8. Average incomes in Walsall are lower than in the West Midlands and Great Britain. Average gross weekly pay for men is only 92.2% of that in the West Midlands and 85.5% of that in Great Britain. For women, average gross

weekly pay is 90.9% and 83.3% of the averages for the West Midlands and Great Britain respectively.

9. On top of this, men work an average of one hour per week more than other men in the West Midlands and Great Britain. Women work the same hours per week in Walsall as in the region and across Great Britain.

Skills in Walsall

10. Walsall is characterised by low skills and low aspiration. Whilst school sector performance is improving, low skills and qualification rates amongst the adult population have been evident for some time in the Borough. Among the working age population, 32,000 have no formal qualifications and 42,000 have not reached level 2 which is the threshold for employability. Some areas have intense ESOL needs, including needs to support newly arrived migrants in language and citizenship.

Skills for Life

11. A major study by the Government's Basic Skills Agency in the late 1990s mapped the national standards for literacy and numeracy at level 2 onto the standards for all of the popular VQs and NVQs at level 2 and level 3 across most sector-subject areas. This means that no one can meet the standards for a level 2 or level 3 VQ or NVQ without having literacy and numeracy skills at level 2.

12. Data for 2003 collected by the government's Basic Skills Strategy Unit that was part of the then Department for Education and Skills showed that, in the Black Country 17% of the working-aged population (aged 16-64) had literacy skills at Entry Level¹⁷ and 56% had numeracy skills at Entry Level. Literacy and numeracy skills at this level rule people out from being considered for most jobs other than the lowest paid manual jobs.

13. The picture is little better for Level 1¹⁸ literacy and numeracy. Again in the Black Country, 50% of the working-age population have literacy skills at Level 1 while only 33% have Level 1 numeracy skills.

14. To complete the picture for the Black Country, only 32% of the working-age population (less than one in three) has literacy skills at Level 2 and above (equivalent to at least a grade C in GCSE English) while only 11% (one in nine) of the working-age population have numeracy skills at Level 2 and above (equivalent to at least a grade C in GCSE Mathematics).

15. Even those with literacy and/or numeracy skills at level 1 and below that are in work will find it difficult to progress to jobs requiring a higher skill level as there is a direct and positive correlation between literacy and numeracy skills and vocational skills up to at least level 2.

16. The picture is improving for those at age 16 where, in Walsall, 55.2% of 16 year olds achieve both GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics at grade C

¹⁷ The top of Entry Level, Entry 3 is the expected standard for an 11 year old.

¹⁸ Level 1 literacy and numeracy correspond to the expected standard for a 14 year old.

and above. However, this still means that just under half of all 16 year olds in Walsall are leaving compulsory education without the necessary literacy and numeracy skills to achieve a level-2 vocational qualification. Many of these young people, as well as their elders, need significant post-16 literacy and numeracy training if they are to be equipped for life in the workplace. This means that around 1,650 16 year olds per year from Walsall schools are entering work or post-16 education and training with literacy and numeracy skills at level 1 or below.

Vocational Skills

17. The nationally recognised (NVQ equivalent) and other qualifications held by Walsall residents is shown in Table A2.

Table A2: Qualification levels achieved by Walsall residents

Qualification level	Walsall (numbers)	Walsall (%)	West Midlands (%)	Great Britain (%)
Level 4 and above	27,700	17.6	24.8	29.9
Level 3	30,100	19.2	19.0	19.4
Level 2	28,600	18.2	17.1	16.1
Level 1	25,000	15.9	14.7	13.5
Other qualifications	14,300	9.1	8.2	8.8
No qualifications	31,200	19.9	16.2	12.3

Source: ONS Labour Market Information

18. This Table shows that there is a significant deficit in the proportion of residents that hold qualifications at level 4 and above when compared with the West Midlands as a whole and with Great Britain. At the other end of the spectrum, there is a large proportion of residents with qualifications at Level 1 and below (44.9% in Walsall compared with 34.6% in Great Britain).

19. While these data give a qualitative picture of qualifications across Walsall, other factors need to be considered in their interpretation. In particular, many individuals may have no or low level qualifications yet have significant vocational skills that have been learned on-the-job or through employer-funded learning that did not lead to a recognised qualification. Often, though, such skills are job specific and may not provide a basis for progression or digression as the job market changes across the Borough.

Working in Walsall

Employment

20. Walsall has suffered from a decline in its traditional industries of manufacturing, engineering and motor vehicles, which has become more intense as a result of the recession. The traditional industries although still

significant, have been replaced by service industry employment. Employment in manufacturing in Walsall during 2008 was 18.4% of those employed, which compares with 13.8% in the West Midlands and 10.2% in Great Britain. The largest employers in Walsall are the Borough Council and the NHS. In December 2007 there were 6,180 VAT-registered businesses in Walsall. The average economically active population of those aged 16 and over for the year to June 2010 was 113,500 of which 100,100 were in employment.

21. The distribution of occupations of those in employment in Walsall differs from that in the West Midlands with a greater proportion of those in employment being in less skilled jobs. Only 33.6% of those employed are in professional, associate professional, technical and managerial positions compared with 40.4% in the West Midlands and 44.4% in Great Britain. Conversely, 21.9% of those employed in Walsall work as process plant and machine operatives and in elementary occupations compared with 19.9% in the West Midlands and 17.8% in Great Britain.

22. Table A3 shows the distribution of employment, labour supply and vacancies by qualification level in Walsall.

Table A3: A comparison of employment, labour supply and vacancies by qualification level in Walsall

All figures are % (number)	Level 4 and above	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1 and below
Employment (100,100)	27.9 (27,928)	26.6 (26,626)	33.4 (33,433)	12.0 (12,012)
Qualifications held by Walsall residents (156,900)	17.6 (27,614)	19.2 (30,125)	18.2 (28,556)	44.8 (70,291)
Vacancies (2,171)	11.9 (258)	32.6 (708)	39.1 (849)	16.4 (356)

Source: ONS Labour Market Information

23. If there is little travel into and out of Walsall for employment then these data suggest that the majority of worklessness and economic inactivity is within those residents with qualifications at level 1 and below.

Worklessness

24. In Walsall, 13,800 people are economically active but without employment. Of these 9,600 were claiming job-seekers benefits. This has risen by 4,025 claimants since March 2009. Worklessness in Walsall is 3.0 percentage points higher than the average for the West Midlands and 4.4 percentage points higher than the national average but in line with national

patterns, worklessness is rising more steeply amongst the 16-25 age group. This is resulting in an emerging need to support young adults (aged 19-24) who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

25. Total vacancies in Walsall are around 2,000-2,500 at any one time. Most of these are not new jobs, they are the result of individuals in employment moving to another employer and thereby creating a vacancy, which is often filled by someone who is already in employment themselves. The number of available jobs remains the same so the number of people employed in them stays the same. This process can give the impression of a vibrant jobs market but it is not adding to the pool of available jobs. Nor does it favour those applicants without a job over those already in employment.

26. Job opportunities for the workless are created when someone in employment retires or leaves their job for other reasons such as a medical condition, becoming a parent, becoming a full time carer or moves away from the area. Generally, these opportunities are around 2.5% of the total job market per annum (c. 2,500 jobs per annum in Walsall). This is similar to the number of individuals entering the job market at age 16 so that, without growth there can be little or no significant change in the proportions of people in employment and those seeking employment. Economic growth is vital for the creation of additional new jobs as existing employers increase the size of their workforce to meet increasing demand or new employers start up in the Borough. Without economic growth, the number of those without work in the Borough will barely change unless the workless residents in the Borough are able to find work in nearby authorities that are experiencing growth.

27. Eighteen thousand new jobs are forecast across the Black Country by 2017, around half are expected in higher skilled managerial, professional, associate professional, technical occupations and personal services¹⁹. However, when replacement demand is accounted for there is forecast demand for labour at every occupational level.

28. Further information is available in the report of a recent comprehensive study by Walsall Council²⁰ that provides detailed information on worklessness in Walsall on a ward by ward basis.

Economic Inactivity

29. In Walsall, 32,300 people aged 16-64 are economically inactive. Of these 22,000 (68%) are women. There were 23,890 key benefit claimants in Walsall in May 2010 excluding those claiming job-seekers benefits. Claimants of other key benefits were 11.9% of the working-age population. This compares with 9.4 % in the West Midlands and 8.9% in Great Britain. Relative to the working-age population, there are almost one-third more key benefit claimants (excluding job-seekers benefits) in Walsall than in Great Britain and almost a quarter more than the average for the West Midlands.

¹⁹ These forecast proportions are interesting as, in general, every new job at level 4 creates more than one additional job to support it.

²⁰ *Walsall Worklessness Assessment* (Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, January 2011)

30. There are many financial, social, cultural and educational reasons why people may not want or be able to take up employment. These reasons include, but are not restricted to, being in full-time education or training, in a full-time caring role, looking after children, doing voluntary work, being retired early, being unable to work through a medical condition or physical disability or any combinations of these.

31. Walsall has higher than the national average levels of working age adults suffering illnesses and mental health issues that prevent full participation in work and community life. Walsall also has rates of teenage pregnancy and childhood obesity that are higher than the national averages. Twenty-seven percent of the Borough's children are defined as living in poverty.

Adult Learning in Walsall

32. There are six neighbourhood management areas in Walsall. Each has different learning needs, which are reflected by the differences in the demography of the areas. The emerging model for neighbourhood management provides opportunities to develop a network of learning neighbourhoods that are co-terminus with the Walsall neighbourhood management strategy and which provides opportunities to operate across sectors to open up new learning spaces.

Skills for Life

33. There is ample research evidence available from many studies over many years that the factors affecting whether an individual progresses from one skill level to the next are (in order of significance):

- i the quality of the teaching and training;
- ii the development of literacy and numeracy skills up to at least level 2;
- iii the availability of social support whilst learning that help overcome the barriers to learning, for example the availability of free or heavily state subsidised training, alternatives to the often detrimental impact of training on benefits, training that is available at times and in locations that make it easy for individuals to participate in training, child-care facilities and an understanding of cultural attitudes to training, particularly for women.

34. Of these, the most often overlooked is the second of these factors: the development of literacy and numeracy skills to level 2.

35. The working age population of Walsall in 2009 was 157,700. Of these 113,500 were economically active. Approximately 76,000 of the economically active population had literacy at level 1 and below while approximately 101,000 had numeracy skills at level 1 and below.

36. In the 2009/10 academic year, the two largest public-funded providers of literacy and numeracy provision in Walsall, Walsall College and Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, through Walsall Adult and Community

Learning College, helped young people and adults achieve 2,200 qualifications in literacy and numeracy (of which approximately 600 were achieved by young people). This corresponds to between 1,100 individuals (if all of them achieved both a literacy and a numeracy qualification) and 2,200 individuals (if all of them achieved either a literacy or a numeracy qualification). Also these qualifications are spread across Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2.

37. Given the number of young people leaving compulsory education each year with levels of literacy and numeracy below level 2 and the probable number of Walsall residents with insufficient literacy and numeracy skills to progress into level 2 jobs, this amount of literacy and numeracy training appears woefully short of that needed address the skills shortage in Walsall.

38. Average earnings in Walsall are almost £3,000 pa below the national average earnings rate and £1,270 pa below the West Midlands average. This has an impact on Walsall people's ability to pay for education and training, to travel to learn, particularly in the neighbourhood management areas highlighted above, and to engage in fees-based informal and leisure learning. Mechanisms need to be established to enable access to informal adult learning amongst the most disadvantaged as this is often the hook to further learning and future qualification gains, leading to improved employment prospects and social cohesion.

Vocational Learning

39. Many organisations in Walsall offer adult learning programmes. The two largest are Walsall College and Walsall Adult and Community College, which is part of the Neighbourhoods and Communities Directorate of Walsall Council. In addition to the two colleges, the Skills Funding Agency has direct contracts with 10 other organisations in the Borough. Two of these are companies training their own employees, one is an NHS Trust and one is a housing association.

40. In September 2007, the Walsall Lifelong Learning Alliance and the then Black Country Learning and Skills Council commissioned a survey into adult learning in Walsall²¹. This survey covered both vocational learning and personal development learning. Over half of the organisations responding to the survey described themselves as voluntary and community organisations while only five considered themselves to be private training organisations. Twelve responding organisations were schools and fourteen were libraries. Of those that responded, 24% did not deliver vocational courses.

41. Almost two-thirds of the providers delivered across the whole of Walsall while 14 percent only delivered in the neighbourhood in which they were based. Just less than 20 percent delivered only in the ward in which they were based.

42. The most popular vocational provision was ICT and other computer

²¹ ADULT LEARNING IN WALSALL: A Mapping and Perception Survey (WM Enterprise Consultants, September 2007). The survey gathered 104 responses out of the 175 colleges and training organisations identified in Walsall.

learning. This was offered by 61% of providers. Almost 60 per cent of courses offered were CLAIT (Computer Literacy and IT) at level 1. A further 16 percent of courses were NVQ and accredited Vocational Qualifications (VQs). Fifteen per cent of courses were not accredited.

43. Literacy and numeracy courses were also widely available from almost half of the providers responding.

44. Health, social care and public services programmes and business administration, management and professional programmes were the most popular vocational courses after ICT, being offered by 35% and 19% of providers respectively. Construction and engineering/manufacturing programmes were only offered by 7 per cent and five per cent of responding providers. As these included the two colleges in the Borough, the number of learners on these programmes is not necessarily reflected in the small number of providers delivering them. Also, as these programmes require considerable capital resources to support their delivery, it is not surprising that they are offered by only a few providers in the Borough.

45. The survey also considered the providers motives for the choice of courses they offered. Almost a half of providers based their offer on the needs of the learners they were recruiting while a further third based their offer on employers' requirements for those skills. The majority of the remainder based their programme offers on whether they could get funding for them or the fact that they had always offered them.

46. Learning was found to be available in all months of the year although one in three respondents did not deliver in August, one in four in July and one in seven in September. One in six respondents did not deliver in December. Virtually all providers offered courses between 9:00am and 5:00pm on weekdays but only a third offered courses after 5:30pm on weekdays, with half this proportion offering courses at weekends. This was seen by the individual residents of the Borough that were included in the survey as being a significant barrier to their learning, particularly by those that were employed. Interviewed residents also cited a lack of easily available information about the learning opportunities in the Borough as another significant barrier to them participating in learning.

Personal Development Learning

47. Specific personal development learning can be placed in one of four categories:

- i Developing individuals;
- ii Enhancing employability;
- iii Strengthening communities
- iv Supporting families.

48. Overall, 58 per cent of personal development learning programmes offered in Walsall were developing individuals, 35 per cent were enhancing employability courses; 28 per cent were courses to supporting families; and

15 per cent were courses focused on strengthening communities.

49. The provision is a mix of accredited and unaccredited programmes, with the unaccredited courses being in the majority.

50. In over 40 per cent of providers, the courses offered are those the learner cohort wants while in a further 27 per cent of providers it is because funding is available for it or they are courses that have always been offered. Only 15 per cent of providers offer personal development learning courses that employers have said that they require those skills.

Academic Learning

51. Academic learning is usually taken to be learning directed towards GCSEs, GCE Advanced Level qualifications and now some non-vocational awards, certificates and diplomas on the Qualifications and Credit Framework. There appears to be little or no opportunities for adult learners to undertake academic learning in the Borough, other than a small GCSE provision at Walsall Adult and Community College and possibly with some private examination schools.

Higher Education

52. Walsall has a lower progression to higher education than the national average. There is also a net outward migration of graduates from the Borough²².

Targeting Hard-to-Reach Groups

53. Overall, 68.7% of providers targeted specific groups. The most important included people with learning disabilities, which were targeted by 21.9% of providers, Young People who are actively targeted by 20.8% of providers, lone parents (17.7%) and specific BME communities (15.6%). Interestingly, 16.7% of providers surveyed did not have any initiatives aimed at specific groups and a further 15.6% did not know whether or not they actively targeted particular groups.

²² Source: Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

ANNEX 2

KEY DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

Contribution of Adult Learning to Delivering the Strategies and Plans for Walsall

Walsall Corporate Plan

1. The Walsall Corporate Plan²³ identifies the Council's actions to deliver on their three priorities²⁴ over the next four years. In particular, adult learning will contribute directly to the achievement of the Plan's specific outcomes for Walsall in terms of :
 - > improving and developing the knowledge and skills of Walsall's workforce to match current and future business needs as well as those of the residents;
 - > supporting residents to gain and sustain work by improving their skills for life and their vocational and employability skills;
 - > improving family well-being and prosperity through the Family Learning strategy as well as employability and skills training;
 - > supporting a climate for a thriving local economy by providing a pool of appropriately qualified skilled and experienced individuals that meet the needs of business;
 - > supporting a reduction in the gap in life expectancy between the least and most deprived areas of the Borough by providing education and training in health and well-being targeted at those in the more deprived neighbourhoods of the Borough.
2. In achieving this, the implementation of the adult learning plan will contribute to ensuring that:
 - > more residents volunteer locally (for example, former learners of Walsall Adult and Community College are now working as volunteers supporting current learners at the College);
 - > residents are happy with the local services provided by the colleges and training organisations; and
 - > young people engage in positive activities (for example through participating in Family Learning activities)
3. The achievement of adult learning provision that delivers value for money and exceeds its customers (those that pay for it) and its consumers

²³ *Building Pride in Walsall, Corporate Plan 2011/12 - 2014/15* (Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, 2011)

²⁴ The three priorities are: Neighbourhoods and Communities; The Economy; and Health & Wellbeing

(those that benefit from it) expectations will require effective collaboration across all organisations in the Borough that can contribute to adult learning making a significant positive contribution to achieving the Council's vision for the Borough.

The Sustainable Community Strategy

4. The Walsall Partnership²⁵, the overarching partnership of the key agencies in the Borough that are working to make Walsall a great place to live, work and invest, have produced the Walsall Sustainable Community Strategy²⁶ as an overall framework for driving and guiding the key policies and actions of partners to achieve the Strategy's vision of Walsall in 2021. The strategy identifies the priorities for the Borough and how they will be achieved up to 2015.

5. The Strategy has five priorities:

- > People;
- > Places;
- > Prosperity;
- > Research and development; and
- > Working with employers.

6. For each of these priorities the Strategy identifies what is planned to be done and how it is to be done. Adult learning contributes to many of the desired outcomes and the actions that need to be taken to achieve them.

People

Creating opportunity and helping people to achieve their potential

7. The implementation of the Adult Learning Plan will contribute to the achievement of this goal through:

- i Encouraging the achievement of personal goals, skills, knowledge and ambitions by:
 - > Ensuring that high-quality adult learning, training and education opportunities are accessible regardless of where people live;
 - > Creating learning opportunities in community settings which reflect the needs of local people;
 - > Work in partnership to provide support and guidance to enable people to access key services, facilities and opportunity;
- ii Improving personal health by changing lifestyles through:
 - > Co-ordinating sustainable healthy learning activities
 - > Encouraging healthy lifestyle choices

²⁵ Formerly the Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership

²⁶ *Walsall's Sustainable Community Strategy* (Walsall Partnership, 2009)

- iii Enhancing the quality of life for people living and working in Walsall by;
 - > Raising achievement levels of NVQ Levels 2 and 3 and graduate and post-graduate status;
- iv Provide accessible learning opportunities that will;
 - > Give people who are in work the opportunity to upgrade their skills;
 - > Remove barriers to learning and promote progression through training and qualifications;
 - > Support the delivery of a sustainable Family Learning Strategy

Feeling safe and being healthy

8. The implementation of the Adult Learning Plan will contribute to the achievement of this goal by:

- i Supporting the reduction of the health inequalities between the east and west of the borough through:
 - > the provision of learning opportunities that encourage healthier lifestyles by demonstrating how they can be achieved;
 - > the provision of efficient and effective access to opportunities that are important for a good quality of life
 - > the provision of support for vulnerable groups to tackle inequalities and improve their lives

Developing strong and dynamic communities

9. The development of the Adult Learning Plan will engage local people in deciding what is important in their locality and create opportunities for them to shape learning opportunities to meet local needs.

10. The Adult Learning Plan will include the further development and use of local volunteers to complement those already working with the many voluntary sector training organisations in the Borough and to maximise the impact of the available resources.

11. The Adult Learning Plan will provide appropriate learning support to families through the extended Family Learning Strategy.

Places

Improving the quality of our environment

12. The Adult Learning Plan will incorporate provision to inform and educate learners in the practical techniques for improving energy efficiency and for reducing energy wastage.

Prosperity

13. The Adult Learning Plan will provide the basis for the development and delivery of the neighbourhood employment, knowledge and skills action plans,

which will identify the local barriers to work opportunities and the gaps in local-area services together with the actions needed to assist people to develop skills and get jobs. In particular the Adult Learning Plan will identify how the skills and knowledge of people both in and out of work will be improved through:

- > Working across local learning providers, schools, colleges, Jobcentre Plus, universities, Walsall Council, the voluntary sector and the health economy;
- > Ensuring that local learners are able to contribute to improvements in provision, in particular through the Personal and Community Development Learning Forum; [DN: does this exist?]
- > Providing knowledge and skills-for-life training, with a focus on the six most disadvantaged wards;
- > Encouraging local people to develop their knowledge and skills so that increasing numbers of adults return to learning and training, and achieve qualifications;
- > Removing those critical barriers and hurdles which prevent people from participating fully in learning and education, from schools to college to university to postgraduate study and/or the development of professional qualifications;
- > Encouraging life-long learning for all;
- > Encouraging entry and progression into careers and professions;
- > Work with schools, Walsall Council, the voluntary sector and others to develop and deliver a sustainable Family Learning Strategy;
- > Support people with ideas to capitalise on those ideas and prepare people for starting a new business;
- > Offering a range of high-quality learning to new and existing local businesses;
- > Assisting businesses in declining markets to identify and capitalise on new opportunities;
- > Developing and re-skilling our workforce to equip them with knowledge relevant to the needs of a prosperous economy;
- > Further develop the business and learning campus.

Working with Employers

14. The Adult Learning Plan will identify how existing businesses that are looking to make significant investments in their operations will be supported through the offer tailored packages of learning support, particularly through:

- > The supply of apprentices;
- > Facilitating engagement between businesses and workforce development initiatives such as Train to Gain and its successor programme;
- > The provision of continuing professional development opportunities;
- > Brokering and delivering re-training initiatives such as the Response-to-Redundancy programme.

Implications of the Government's Policies and the Current Financial Climate for Adult Learning in Walsall

15. The government's priorities for funding adult learning are clear. It will be focused on: expanding adult apprenticeships; developing leadership and management capability in small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); the acquisition of full level-2 and full level-3 qualifications for those aged 19-24 that do not already have one; basic skills (including foundation learning) for those below level 2; training for people who are unemployed²⁷. Within these priorities, colleges and training organisations are required to recognise the needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities within their local communities when planning delivery.
16. Within Adult Safeguarded Learning (ASL), providers are required to effectively target the most disadvantaged communities and focus the limited available public money on people who face barriers to learning such as those who face the biggest challenges, start with the biggest disadvantages and come from the most deprived communities. Providers should also plan to build more effective progression routes for those people who want to progress to formal learning.
17. The reduction in the adult learning funds available from existing sources coupled with the greater focus on the use of those funds to deliver government policy for adult learning will have an impact on all colleges and training organisations in the Borough. If the reduction in available funds coupled with a redirection in the use of those funds is not offset by new sources of funding then the total volume of adult learning across the Borough will decline to the detriment of the people of Walsall with some neighbourhoods and communities potentially experiencing dramatic changes. This means that the plan must include a strategy for seeking and gaining new funding sources to allow adult learning in Walsall to expand rather than contract. It is unlikely that this will be successful if providers act independently as there are significant benefits to scale when applying for funds. The adult learning plan must include an objective around gathering additional funding and identify actions to make it a reality. The use of matched funding wherever possible must also be included to maximise the impact of public funds on the extent and quality of adult learning in Walsall.
18. The Government recognises the important contribution made by the large number of small voluntary and community sector providers to their local neighbourhoods and communities and desires that this valuable resource expands rather than contracts. It is important that the adult learning plan recognises the impact of these organisations and supports the expansion of their contribution to adult learning in Walsall.
19. It is not the intention of the plan that it will be prescriptive as to the use

²⁷ Further Education – New Horizon: Investing in Skills for Sustainable Growth (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills Strategy Document, November 2010)

providers make of their own funds as this will depend on any restrictions imposed by the funding source as to use of those funds and, where there are none, on the discretion of the governing body of the organisation, which will be directed by the constitution of the organisation as to the proper use of the funds it receives. It is hoped that most, if not all of the colleges and training organisations in the Borough will have signed up to the adult learning plan and will structure their provision to contribute towards meeting its outcomes within the acknowledged constraints of its own funding and constitution.

20. It is also recognised that some organisations will wish to subcontract some of their provision to other organisations. Under these circumstances the required subcontracted provision will be specified and monitored by the contractor as it is the contractor that is responsible for the use the funds it subcontracts.