



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

COUNCIL CABINET
3 JUNE 2008

ITEM 9A

Report of the Corporate Director for Children
and Young People

Adult Learning Service Course Fees 2008/09

RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 To approve the adoption of a new structure for Adult Learning Service course fees for the 2008/09 academic year.
- 1.2 To agree that any minor adjustments to the rates of fee remissions and concessions as a result of the Equalities Impact Assessment should be approved by the Corporate Director for Children and Young People in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Services.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 2.2 The Adult Learning Service is mainly funded by the LSC and is obliged to adopt a fees policy that is in line with LSC priorities. In order to continue to offer the current broad range of courses the Adult Learning Service proposes to increase course fees from September 2008. This is necessary due to a reduction in the overall funding which will be received from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) from that date.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Derby City Council Adult Learning Service delivers a wide range of adult learning opportunities in adult learning centres, schools, community venues and workplaces across the city. In 2006/07 there were 4,429 learners and 8,063 enrolments on to courses. The largest number of enrolments is on Skills for Life courses including courses in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Other popular areas of learning include Computing, Modern Foreign Languages, British Sign Language and Visual Arts. The service focuses on a programme of courses which support social cohesion and substantial provision is made in neighbourhoods with the highest levels of socio-economic deprivation.
- 3.2 The Adult Learning Service is substantially funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The LSC is introducing a new funding approach across the whole post 16 further education sector for 2008/09. The funding approach forms part of the demand led system as outlined in the LSC's Statement of Priorities "Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives" in November 2007.

3.3 In 2007/08 the Adult Learning Service received a total of £2,983,000 from the two main LSC funding streams. In 2008/09, as a result of the new funding approach, indicative allocations show that the overall funding will be cut by approximately 10%, although final allocations have not yet been confirmed.

3.4 The LSC's new funding policy has several strands:

16- 18 year olds Funding

All provision in this category is provided at no cost to the learners.

FE Adult Responsive Funding

This includes accredited vocational training including GCSEs, Basic Literacy and Numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages.

Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL)

This funding stream is for non-accredited learning that is usually for leisure and personal fulfilment. It can be divided into sub categories:

PCDL General Programme

This is a wide ranging programme mostly delivered in the evenings. It includes visual arts and crafts, languages and computing.

PCDL Specialist

This is a narrow programme of courses that learners have progressed to over several years. The course fee reflects the fact that class sizes are smaller than average. It includes Advanced Languages Conversation and Advanced Wine Appreciation.

PCDL First Steps

This is a programme aimed at those learners who have not previously benefited from the education system and may need to boost their confidence in order to progress on to further learning. These courses include computers for beginners and practical arts and crafts and are usually offered in the daytime.

Employer Responsive Funding

This funding is for vocational training delivered in the workplace. The course fees are usually paid by the employer.

3.5 The LSC have issued national guidance that the fee element of accredited vocational courses funded through the Adult Responsive funding stream should be equivalent to 42% of the course cost in 2008/09. Our fees structure needs adjustment in order to reach this level. The new course fees structure will take into account learners' ability to pay fees and ensure that individuals, groups and communities continue to have access to affordable learning opportunities. An Equalities Impact Assessment is currently in progress. This may result in minor adjustments to the proposed concessions.

- 3.6 The Adult Learning Service receives no funding directly from Derby City Council. The only other source of income is course fees paid by learners or their employers.
- 3.7 The last report to Council Cabinet regarding course fees was presented on 16th May 2006. At that point several changes to the structure for fees and concessions were agreed. The removal of concessions for learners aged over 60 years has proved to be unpopular and concerns have been raised about the impact on those living on pensions who do not receive any other state benefits. Concessions based on non-means tested benefits have proved difficult to implement due to the complexity of evidence required. The new structure for course fees for 2008/09 is designed to provide affordable learning for all and to assist those who have not previously benefited from education and those on low incomes.
- 3.8 The introduction of a concession for Derbyshire Gold Card holders will assist learners over 60 years of age and those with disabilities who are not in receipt of means tested benefits.
- 3.9 Family learning courses are offered in many schools in Derby at no cost to the parents who attend. One of the aims of these courses is to encourage adults to engage in learning for themselves as well as to assist their children. A concession for adults who have previously engaged in family learning is proposed to assist those who would like to enrol on to a further learning opportunity.
- 3.10 Proposed fees policy (from September 2008)

16- 18 year olds courses

Full fee remission will be given to all learners between the ages of 16 and 18.

FE Adult Responsive courses

Increase the course fee from £2.70 per hour to £2.90 per hour with the exception of full fee remission for to the following learners;

- learners studying their first full Level 2 qualification
- unemployed people in receipt of income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- those in receipt of income-based benefits, i.e. Council Tax Benefit, Housing Benefit, and Income Support
- those in receipt of Working Tax Credit with a household income of less than £15,050
- those in receipt of Pension Credits–Guarantee
- the unwaged dependants of those listed above
- those taking Basic Literacy and Numeracy courses
- asylum seekers eligible for LSC funding and in receipt of the equivalent of income-based benefit (assistance under the terms of the *Immigration and Asylum Act 1999*)
- those on British Sign Language (BSL) or Makaton courses who live in the same household as a BSL or Makaton user.

Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL) courses

Adjust fees as follows;

- **general programme** – increase the course fee from £3.70 per hour to £3.90 per hour
- **specialist programme** - increase the course fee from £3.70 per hour to £4.20 per hour
- **first steps programme** – reduce the course fee from £3.70 per hour to £2.00 per hour.

With the exception of the following fee remissions;

Full fee remission for the following learners;

- 16 – 18 year-olds
- hearing impaired learners on lip-reading courses
- those on British Sign Language or Makaton courses who live in the same household as a BSL or Makaton user.

50% fee concession for the following learners;

- unemployed people in receipt of income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- those in receipt of income-based benefits, i.e. Council Tax Benefit, Housing Benefit and Income Support
- those in receipt of Working Tax Credit with a household income of less than £15,050
- those in receipt of Pension Credits–Guarantee
- the unwaged dependants of those listed above
- asylum seekers eligible for LSC funding and in receipt of the equivalent of income-based benefit (assistance under the terms of the *Immigration and Asylum Act 1999*).

10% fee concession* for Derbyshire Gold Card holders.

10% fee concession* for adults who attended a Derby City Council Family Learning course in 2007/08.

Concessions marked with * will only apply to those who do not meet the criteria for 50% fee concession.

Employer Responsive courses

The cost of courses that are delivered in response to requests by employers, usually delivered on their own premises, will be negotiated separately with the employer.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 To reduce the number and range of courses offered in order to reduce the overall running costs of the service. This could lead to staff redundancies.
- 4.2 To introduce a course fee subsidy from Council funding. This option has not been recommended due to current Council budget pressures.

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Background papers: None
List of appendices: Appendix 1 – Implications

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

- 1.1 In 2007/08 the fee income was £208,000. The target for income generated from the new fees structure in 2008/09 will be £240,000 and this level of income would secure the current range of courses. Current demand for places on courses indicates that this level of income generation is feasible.

Legal

- 2.1 None.

Personnel

- 3.1 The employment of Adult Learning Service staff may be affected by a reduction in learner numbers resulting from the decrease in funding received from the LSC or course fee increases. This could include a reduction in contracted hours for teaching staff.

Equalities Impact

- 4.1 The fee remissions and concessions are designed to enable those on the lowest incomes and those with specific needs to participate in learning.
- 4.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment of the new fees structure is in progress.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 5.1 Supporting everyone in learning and achieving.