

Lincolnshire County Council Covid-19 response (March to July 2020)

1. Actions leaders took to ensure that they provided an appropriate curriculum that responded to the reasonable needs of the learners and stakeholders and adapted to changed circumstances

Between April and July 2020 LCC supported its staff, trainers and subcontracted providers to adapt to the ever changing challenges of learning during various levels of lockdown and maintaining compliance with the DfE guidelines.

Leaders recognised the challenges of working from home and delivering online learning and have invested in computer equipment and software to support LCC staff for the unprecedented demand for online learning. All LCC staff, trainers and tutors were provided with a laptop, access to Office 365 and associated training to use the new packages.

Family Learning programme; the service prioritised enhancing its website, www.2aspire.org.uk, to support those Family Learning learners whose classes had been halted. The website was refreshed to include information and activities for learning at home, advice on keeping safe on line and maintaining good mental health. Tutors were issued with new fully equipped laptops in order to be able to fully communicate with learners in a variety of different ways. A moodle project plan is in place to develop an online Family Learning programme for 2020/21

Adult Learning Providers were encouraged to up-skill their staff to support the significant shift to on-line learning. This included adapting courses to become online ready and staff being trained on various digital platforms such as; Zoom, Teams and Moodle etc. Providers were also encouraged to amend/redesign their provision where possible to help keep learners engaged, as well as supporting individuals that had recently been made redundant, unemployed or furloughed.

Managers say that they have identified some benefits of the blended approach to teaching that they will retain when things return to normal. For example, they can offer a more diverse range of courses and extend learning opportunities beyond the classroom. A development plan incorporating online enrolments and e-surveys was initiated to support the continuation of a blended learning approach.

With regards to 16-19 Study Programmes, during lockdown learners were provided with home learning packs and teaching moved quickly to online delivery via Zoom. For those learners who couldn't access the Zoom sessions home learning packs continued to be provided. Learning for the most vulnerable remained face to face.

In line with DfE guidance, sites were opened up on a risk assessed basis. Contingency planning was in place to ensure that learning could move seamlessly to remote delivery if a site needed to close or if learners were required to self-isolate.

The 16-19 curriculum has been adapted to ensure learners have the skills and knowledge to safely access remote learning and to support them to keep safe emotionally and physically.

Most YPLP programmes are based around learners improving their employability skills and preparing for the world of work. The employment teams have tried their utmost to ensure the work experience placements are only put on hold for the minimum time necessary and they have developed a programme of online support to give learners the opportunity to continue developing their employability skills, including online careers fairs, tutorials, employer talks and mock remote interviews.

Apprenticeship provision was maintained during the period of lockdown. All apprentices are employed by LCC and in line with both government and LCC guidance, all staff were required to work from home. To ensure health and wellbeing, as well as support progress on the Apprenticeship programme, regular contact with managers as well as weekly meetings with tutors was prioritised.

The roll out of Office 365 at the start of lockdown has been used well to support Apprentices on programme as well as providing a tool for observations ensuring progress on programme continued.

2. Steps leaders, managers and staff took to ensure that approaches used for building knowledge and skills were appropriate to meet the needs of learners

Leaders and managers have put in place a number of measures to support staff to adapt to online learning, including those who had previously been resistant to this approach.

Prior to the pandemic the Adult Learning Service, and its Learning Providers, had very limited experience of delivering online. The service prioritised providing online training for its tutors and providers so that the programme could be converted to an online offer. This has resulted in providers re-developing their pre course IAG methods and selecting appropriate systems to support individuals during the transition to enable learners to access sessions.

An online learning platform was developed for its directly delivered Family Learning programme with an appropriate, underpinning staff training programme. Three VLE champions were selected to provide peer support to their fellow tutors. Tutors were given the opportunity to further develop their online delivery skills by taking part in a range of pilot online courses, facilitated and delivered to and by each other. Leaders believe that this new approach provided a safe environment where tutors could test and experiment with different styles and methods of delivery, as well as evaluating their teaching.

Online learning walks have been developed to ensure the quality of teaching and learning was maintained across the Adult Learning programme.

Managers recognised that the online learning lessons did not suit all learners. For these learners, they sent out paper copies of tasks. Tutors reviewed the work with learners over the telephone and provided feedback.

Adult Learners' participation during lockdown was lower than in previous months and the curriculum was changed on a regular basis to try and engage new learners. However, leaders and managers recognise that for some learners, pandemic restrictions made it difficult to study and to commit to studying.

Career, Information Advice and Guidance continued throughout the pandemic to ensure that learners on Study Programmes felt supported; this included transition support for those learners who were leaving YPLP. Learners were supported to see how options may have changed due to the pandemic and to explore if this had an impact on their long term goals.

Staff were given expectations of what online delivery should look like and ideas on how to ensure learner engagement throughout the online sessions. This included use of formative assessments throughout, such as, quizzes and Q&A sessions. Learners were invited to give feedback on sessions and to request if there was anything further they wanted including. Managers carried out 'drop ins' to online sessions.

Leaders had regular meetings with the tutor groups to offer support and to share good practice and any concerns with the new way of delivering. Staff were also supported to access training to support moving to online delivery.

Early in the start of the 2020/21 academic year summative assessments that were planned to take place towards the end of 2019/20 academic year were carried out.

Prior to lockdown the Apprenticeship delivery team made very limited use of online learning. Managers feel that the new online programme meets apprentices' needs well, and they intend to develop their use of it. The skills scan, which is undertaken during the apprentice's induction, has been converted for use online and helps the service identify areas of strength and improvement for follow up activity. Early on in the pandemic the Apprenticeship enrichment programme was converted to an online format. Managers from different LCC service areas provided virtual presentations with the opportunity for work experience so that apprentices could experience new areas that are of interest to them.

Close working with City and Guilds, following guidance from Ofqual, ensured apprentices completed their programme in the expected time and incorporated appropriate use of calculated grades guidance

3. Keeping learners safe and well informed about potential risks, including from online sources

During the pandemic LCC prioritised the welfare of its staff. Daily bulletins were provided with links to wellbeing services and information on how to remain safe working from home.

The joint Safeguarding Policy for FE and Skills Provision was reviewed, updated and reinforced at the start of the lockdown in response to the increase in online learning resulting from the pandemic.

A risk assessed approach was adopted by the Adult Learning team to ensure the safety and wellbeing of its staff, providers and learners during the pandemic. Full risk assessments were undertaken of online delivery and additional guidance was provided regarding expectations of what should be in place. This was supported by additional information being made available on the 2aspire website (www.2aspire.org.uk). Tutors were provided with an online generic learner induction PowerPoint presentation which informed learners how to keep themselves safe on line, as well as agree etiquette, to ensure a robust and consistent approach. A new risk assessment template was in place for any classroom delivery, with links to the latest DfE guidance. Learners, responding to service questionnaires, said they felt safe online.

Sessions around health and well-being were delivered to learners on Study Programme to ensure that they knew how to keep themselves safe during the pandemic and understood the guidelines being issued by the government. Specific sessions were delivered to support learners to keep themselves safe online and how to positively manage their mental health. These sessions have been revisited and continue to be revisited as the situation progresses and there are changes to guidance and guidelines.

Parents and carers were kept up to date with changes, guidance and the measures YPLP were taking to keep learners safe throughout and this is continuing in the 2020/21 academic year. This included information on accessing online learning safely from home.

Apprentice's health & wellbeing, along with their safety, is a priority for the Council. Safeguarding training is prioritised as part of an apprentice's induction. Daily bulletins, as well as newsletters and webinars, providing health and wellbeing information helped to support staff mental wellbeing, as well as information on, and access to, specialist services. Risk Assessments are in place for those Apprentices required to carry out work on site. These include information on social distancing, safe routes around their office, the requirement to wear a mask in communal areas, positioning of hand sanitation points and hygiene requirements, such as frequent hand washing.