

Appendix 3 - Equality Assessment Record



Title of Service, Policy, Procedure, Spending Review being Proposed	Proposal to Cease the Learningonline Services in Redditch
Name of Service Area	Legal, Democratic and Property Services
Name of Officer completing this assessment	Emily Payne, Engagement and Equalities Advisor Julie Heyes, Business Development Manager
Date Assessment Started	23/2/2022
Name of Decision Maker (in relation to the change)	Redditch Borough Council Executive
Date Decision Made	TBC

Please ensure the following:

- That the document is understandable to a reader who has not read any other documents and explains (on its own) how the Public Sector Equality Duty is met. This does not need to be lengthy but must be complete.
- That available support information and data is identified and where it can be found. Also be clear about highlighting gaps in existing data or evidence that you hold, and how you have sought to address these knowledge gaps.
- That the equality impacts are capable of aggregation with those of other EIAs to identify the cumulative impact of all service changes made by the council on different groups of people.

Overview

Provide a clear overview of the aims of the service/policy/procedure and the proposed changes being made. Will the current service users' needs continue to be met? Why is the change being proposed? What needs or duties is it designed to meet?

Learning on Line is a Council run Service that currently sits under Business Development within the Legal, Democratic and Property Service. Learning online (LOL) is a local service offered to residents within Redditch and operates from the Greenlands Business Centre (since 2005.)

LOL delivers within the corporate measures of 'Aspiration, work and financial independence' and 'Living independent, active & healthy lives'. This is under the remit of Adult Education and Learning. It offers qualifications that assist adult learners to:

- Access Higher and Further Education courses in Maths and English
- Progress within their chosen professions (NHS etc..)
- Change Careers
- Help the unemployed move closer to the labour market, develop confidence and new skills.
- Learn in a small supportive environment that offers a flexible attendance and one to one tuition option.

Qualifications offered are Maths, English Functional Skills and ICT, although ICT is not currently offered. Maths and English are fully funded for learners through the Adult Education Budget and LOL holds a contract with Heart of Worcestershire College (HoW)

Other local providers of this type of service include the Heart of Worcestershire College, Worcestershire County Council and Citizens Advice Bureaux, all offer a vast range of services to meet the needs of the customer and community and are also fully funded services.

Demand within communities and requests from customers are low for specific Maths and English skills. The needs which have been identified are:

- Confidence building in using ICT systems i.e. filling in application forms etc.
- Signposting in relation employment, mental health, advocacy and money advice and guidance

Digital inclusion is a high agenda item for these services with more online and flexible options being made available in the last 18 months.

Over the last 4 years, numbers of learners accessing LOL services have dropped significantly, especially the last 2 years due to the covid pandemic. The funding received from HoW College is based on numbers of learners both accessing the courses and passing qualifications, over recent years the funding offered has not been fully achieved.

With Council budgets tightening and the need to review service delivery and impact, a proposal is being brought forward to cease the LOL service and allow the other providers mentioned above to deliver the courses to the adult learners in Redditch.

Who is the proposal likely to affect?	Yes	No
All residents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Specific group(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All Council employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Specific group(s) of employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other – Provide more details below	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Details

Outline who could be affected and how they could be affected by the proposal/service change. Include current service users and those who could benefit from but do not currently access the service.

Should the service be closed completely, there could be the following impacts:

- Impact on current and potential new adult users/students who are looking to gain qualifications in Maths and English Free of Charge (support current users and signpost to other providers if appropriate). Use website and social media to sign post new users to other providers of similar services in Redditch.
- Rooms currently used by LOL at Greenlands Business Centre would be available to rent
- Future Service savings
- Members and Council could receive negative press – although the centre profile is relatively low so closure may not attract too much publicity.
- Closure of non-essential service

Evidence and data used to inform your equality impact assessment

What data, research, or trend analysis have you used? Describe how you have got your information and what it tells you.

We have contacted and looked at other local providers and their offer. There are similar fully funded courses available for adult learners and students in Redditch from Worcestershire County Council, Heart of Worcestershire College, Age UK, Library. We have reviewed our service budgets over the last 5 years and it's apparent that there has been a continuous decline in service users impacting on the ability to draw down the full annual Heart of Worcestershire funding allowance.

Engagement and Consultation

What engagement and consultation have you undertaken about the proposal with current service users, potential users and other stakeholders? What is important to them regarding the current service? How does (or could) the service meet their needs? How will they be affected by the proposal? What potential impacts did they identify because of their protected characteristic(s)? Did they identify any potential barriers they may face in accessing services/other opportunities that meet their needs?

Current users will need to be given the opportunity to complete their courses, this could be using an alternative local provider.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Due regard must be given to the three aims of the Equality Duty. This means that you must consciously think about the three aims as part of the process of decision-making. Consider the current service and any proposed changes, thinking about what issues may arise.

Equality Duty Aims	Evidence
Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation How does the proposal/service ensure that there is no barrier or disproportionate impact for anyone with a particular protected characteristic	We have identified other organisations locally in Redditch who can provide similar services and can support current and new users to access fully funded functional Maths, English and other courses. The only difference will be the flexible working times that LOL provide.
Advance equality of opportunity between different groups How does the proposal/service ensure that its intended outcomes promote equality of opportunity for users? Identify inequalities faced by those with specific protected characteristic(s).	N/A
Foster good relations between different groups Does the service contribute to good relations or to broader community cohesion objectives? How does it achieve this aim?	N/A

Is there evidence of actual or potential unfairness for the following equality groups?

- Does the proposal target or exclude a specific equality group or community?
 - Does it affect some equality groups or communities differently and can this be justified?
 - Is the proposal likely to be equally accessed by all equality groups and communities? If not, can this be justified?
- (It may be useful to consider other groups, not included in the Equality Act, especially if the proposal is specifically for them e.g. lone parents, refugees, unemployed people, carers)

Impact of proposal

Describe the likely impact of the proposal on people because of their protected characteristic and how they may be affected. How likely is it that people with this protected characteristic will be negatively affected? What are the barriers that might make access difficult or stop different groups or communities accessing the proposal? How great will that impact be on their well-being? Could the proposal promote equality and good relations between different groups? How?

If you have identified any area of actual or potential unfairness that cannot be justified, can you eliminate or minimise this?

What mitigating actions can be taken to reduce or remove this impact? (Include these in the action plan at the end of the assessment) Equal treatment does not always produce equal outcomes; sometimes you will have to take specific steps for particular groups to address an existing disadvantage or to meet differing needs.

Protected Group	Impact of proposal	Justification for any actual or potential unfairness identified	If you have identified any area of actual or potential unfairness that cannot be justified, can you eliminate or minimise this?
Age	none		Other local providers give a very similar offer and all FOC for those on low income – the only difference being is that the LOL can provide a more flexible working time – as and when (although evenings and weekends are not included)
Disability	none		
Transgender	none		
Marriage and Civil Partnership	none		
Pregnancy and Maternity	none		
Race	none		
Religion or Belief	none		
Sex (Male/ Female)	none		
Sexual Orientation	none		

How will you monitor any changes identified?

Feedback from Consultation process will be reviewed

The actions required to address these findings are set out below.

Action Required	By Whom	By When	Completion Date
TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC

Sign off on completion	Name	Signature	Date
Lead Officer completing assessment	Julie Heyes	Julie Heyes	08.03.2022
Equalities Officer	Emily Payne	E.Payne	

When you have completed this assessment, retain a copy and send an electronic copy to the Policy Team (Equalities) attaching any supporting evidence used to carry out the assessment.