



2020
2022



New Directions College
Build your future here

Strategic Development Plan

Introduction


Reading Borough Council has delivered adult and community education (ACE) for over 63 years in Reading. Today, the service is delivered by New Directions College. Starting out as Reading Technical College in 1958 we offered courses in Battle, EP Collier and Alfred Sutton Schools. These included fencing, shorthand, car maintenance and for Spring brides “special courses in cookery and needlecrafts.”

We became New Directions in 2008 when Reading Adult and Community College and the Training Education Advice (TEA) Shop merged. We have taught from numerous premises over the years and now have our dedicated centre in Whitley as well as learning sites across Reading including the Curious Lounge, Reading University (London Road) schools, libraries and children’s centres.

Thousands of people have benefited from our courses over the last 6 decades – finding their creative potential; gaining the skills to pursue a career or simply making friends and connections in their local community.

Some sixty years later, New Directions College offer a complete range of formal and informal education programmes that include; Traineeships, Apprenticeships, Kickstart Work Programmes and work experience.

Furthermore, we specialise in delivering GCSEs and functional skills in English and Mathematics, English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) and essential and advanced digital skills qualifications. Furthermore, we offer a breadth of vocational qualifications in subjects such as business management, hospitality, Early Years and childcare, courses for teaching assistants and those who work in the education and training sector.



Our range of creative arts and crafts courses are also vibrant and includes ceramics, art, dressmaking and textiles, cookery and languages to list a few.

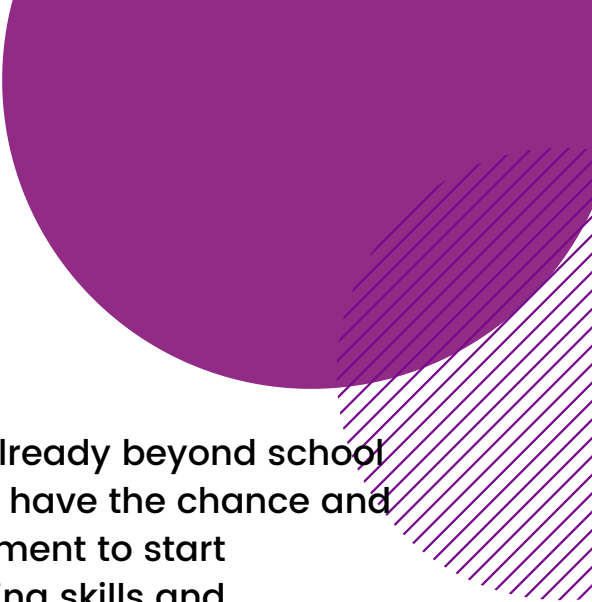
In addition to our direct delivery, New Directions College also commission additional community learning programmes with a range of partners that include Reading Libraries, Brighter Futures for Children, and Reading Sport and Leisure. We also subcontract Autism Berkshire, the Berkshire School of English, Reading Community Learning Centre, Rosetta Life and Food 4 Families to deliver bespoke community learning programmes that reach and meet local need.

Ofsted have graded the College Good for the past 6 years (last inspected in June 2019) and the College is committed to delivering an outstanding quality of education to our local communities and businesses.

High quality adult and community education provides many opportunities to improve economic and social prosperity of the adult residents in Reading and across Berkshire. A strong adult learning offer can help reduce the pockets of education and skills deprivation that exist in parts of the borough and can be responsive to the diverse challenges Reading faces regarding adult skills.

Reading Borough has an ageing society, a vibrant cultural diversity and variety in life. It experiences changing employment patterns as young people take longer to settle into jobs and older people take longer to leave work. Overall, people are facing longer working lives with the consequent need to update skills and add to their knowledge.

As the COVID-19 crisis continues to grip our communities, the offer of learning at New Directions College is a more important lifeline than ever before.



Without it, many adults – including some of our hardest to reach, vulnerable or isolated residents – that access provision every year would not progress into further learning and work or be able to cope with what life brings.

Delivering a range of learning across different community venues in Reading, New Directions College gives residents a first, second, third or even fourth chance to access learning.

We work with the grain of Reading based services including employment, regeneration, education, health and culture and community and voluntary sector organisations, and add value to each, as well as connecting with agencies like Jobcentre Plus and other local colleges and training providers.

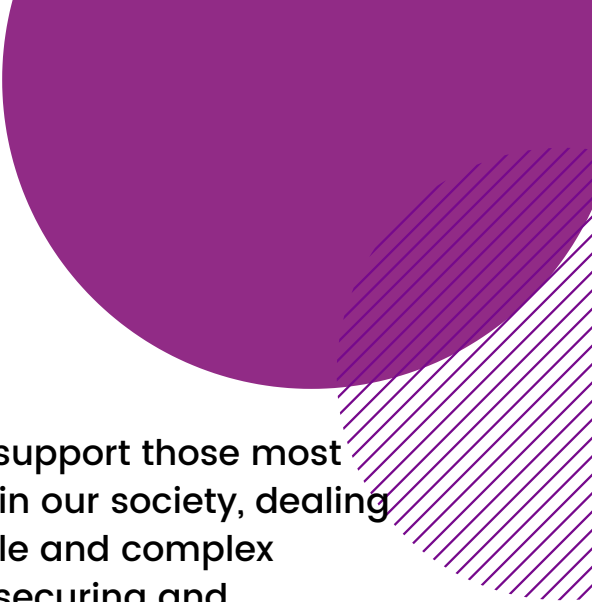
All adults already beyond school age should have the chance and encouragement to start accumulating skills and qualifications that will lead to better, more fulfilling life chances.

They should also be better equipped to support their families and local communities.

Adult education supports individuals to consider their return to education, enhance their skills and employability, and utilise their skills effectively in the labour market.

There are many beneficiaries of adult and community education, including individuals, their families and communities, and the organisations where they study and work, as well as society.

As well as having clear and direct benefits in terms of economic prosperity, employment and productivity, adult learning is linked to the ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle, grow confidence and self-esteem and provide meaning and purpose in life.



Associated outcomes of participation include the development of collaborative and creative thinking skills such as problem solving, innovation, curiosity and adaptability; enhanced physical and mental health; greater interest in politics and community engagement; and greater diversity in the workforce.

To create a healthy and productive local economy, our learning offer aims to address the specific needs of local communities and has the potential to build the levels of basic skills, including literacy, numeracy and digital skills as well as ESOL and courses to support residents with English as an additional language.

New Directions College is focused on supporting the future social and economic prosperity of all our learners, local communities and businesses.

We aim for our service to impact positively on the overall prosperity of the borough through community-based learning.

We aim to support those most vulnerable in our society, dealing with multiple and complex barriers to securing and sustaining employment or their place as an active citizen.

This strategic development plan sets out our vision, aims and objectives for creating an outstanding adult and community education offer for Reading residents throughout 2021 and 2022.

Vision, aims and success measures

Our vision:

To deliver an outstanding quality of education that supports individuals to achieve their personal aims and aspirations whether they are to gain employment, improve their skills and learn something new, or to help them be part of their community.

Our aim:

To provide outstanding skills and community learning that meets the needs of learners, communities and local businesses.

How we will measure success:

- Our learners gain new skills and qualifications, report enhanced levels of knowledge and confidence and improved health and wellbeing. Learners will report feeling more able to support their family and/or be an active citizen in their local community.
- An outstanding quality of education develops personal, social and employability skills that prepare learners well for their intended job role, career aims and/or personal goals.
- We effectively record and recognise learners' progress and achievements to inform teaching and support programmes to help learners reach their goals.
- Arrangements for Safeguarding are appropriate and effective. Learners report being and feeling safe.

Underpinning principles

- The College uses a placed-based approach to both service and curriculum development. We use local social, economic, human and environmental data and intelligence to build our local learning offer. The College is focused on supporting the future social and/or economic prosperity of all learners, local communities and businesses.
- The College and its subcontractors deliver an outstanding quality of learning with clear delivery intentions, strong implementation plans and effective methods of monitoring and recording impact.
- The College is committed to ensuring all learners, including the most vulnerable and those furthest from the labour market, have good and equal access to bespoke, high quality learning opportunities that meet local need and support progression.
- The College develops and harnesses strong and effective partnerships with local employers, sector bodies, business associations and stakeholders such as Job Centre Plus, that widen participation and support learners' progression to further learning and/or employment relevant to their personal circumstances.
- The College offers a range of community learning opportunities that develops stronger communities.
- The College is financially fit for the future, delivers value for money and is prepared to take risks in a balanced and measured way.

Priority 1.

Deliver learning programmes that meet the needs of local communities and businesses and support local economic development plans.

Objectives:

- a) Work with key partners and stakeholders such as Reading UK CIC and the TVB LEP to identify and utilise local social, economic, human and environmental data and intelligence to build our local learning offer.
- b) Identify and define the intention of our learning offer.
- c) Build clear learning pathways across all types of provision and at all levels, so progression opportunities are clear.
- d) deliver innovative employability opportunities that are created in partnership with key stakeholders such as Reading UK CIC and JCP i.e. Sector Based Work Programmes and Traineeships linked to specific employers/sectors and targeted at specific learner groups.
- e) Deliver Apprenticeships and technical/vocational education that meets the skills gaps within key sectors and is responsive to employer demand.
- f) Offer bespoke provision for adults with LD with a focus on developing pathways to employment.
- g) Offer provision for adults with mental health conditions that will support their recovery and enable them to progress.
- h) Offer family learning activities which promote the development of basic skills and parental engagement in education.
- i) Celebrate Learner success throughout the year and via the annual Festival of Learning Awards.

Priority 2.

Provide an outstanding quality of education that is rated good by Ofsted (with an aim to move to Outstanding) and is highly valued by learners, local communities and employers.

Objectives:

- a) Develop and offer a highly effective Virtual Learning Environment where learners can fully access high quality education.
- b) Develop and implement an effective and meaningful system for monitoring and developing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- c) Establish new and innovative pedagogy and andragogy principles to further enhance the quality of education at the College.
- d) Establish effective methods of recognising and recording progress and achievement and implement this across all non-accredited ESFA provision (RARPA).
- e) Share areas of good practice using conventional and innovative methodologies.
- f) Set annual targets for Retention/ Achievement/ Success Rates by level type of provision.
- g) Establish a Governance Board that will monitor and challenge the service performance rigorously, quarterly and annually.
- h) Develop and publish an accurate and robust SAR that identifies excellent practice, areas for improvement and is endorsed by Ofsted.
- i) Develop and implement an effective annual Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).
- j) Develop innovative ways of capturing learner feedback that will contribute to ongoing service development.
- k) Develop new mechanisms for promoting, delivering and recording highly effective staff CPD.

Priority 2.

Provide an outstanding quality of education that is rated good by Ofsted (with an aim to move to Outstanding) and is highly valued by learners, local communities and employers.

Objectives continued...:

l) Celebrate staff and contributor's success.

m) Establish protocols for collectively assessing staff workload and implementing measures to address challenges.

n) Ensure all staff have the necessary ICT equipment and training to work effectively.

Priority 3.

Improve equality of access to learning for learners from different communities across all parts of Reading, including those who are digitally excluded and/or suffer hardship.

Objectives:

- a) Adopt a place-based approach to delivering and commissioning adult skills and community learning provision.
- b) Ensure easy access to course information and the local learning offer.
- c) Develop and offer more online/digital courses that learners can access from anywhere.
- d) Deliver a highly effective Learner Support programme that breaks down barriers to participation and success.
- e) Strengthen partnerships with local community and voluntary sector groups to promote the learning offer, build and deliver support packages that increase participation and identify potential gaps in the service.
- f) Work effectively with local public and statutory services i.e. Adult social care to promote provision and identify need.
- g) Work with employers to increase participation of learners accessing pre-employment support (for local jobs) and off the job training.
- h) Set and monitor participation targets for gender, age, BME and vulnerable groups.
- i) Establish a system for signposting adults to local alternative provision that meets their needs.
- j) Seek ways of gathering ideas for improvement to access of provision and progression opportunities from delivery staff, partners and stakeholders.

Priority 4.

Build strong and effective partnerships with local employers, sector bodies, business associations and stakeholders, that lead to improved outcomes for our learners.

Objectives:

- a) Deliver a service that is effectively aligned and connected to local projects and programmes of work linked to improved economic and social outcomes for adults.
- b) Work with Reading UK CIC, Job Centre Plus/DWP to develop innovative needs-based provision leading to better employment outcomes.
- c) Work effectively with Reading UK CIC and employers to address local skills gaps of both employed and unemployed residents.
- d) Work with local FE and learning providers to avoid duplication and to ensure equality of access to learning provision across Reading.
- e) Work with the National Careers Service to ensure all learners have access to high quality, impartial CIAG
- f) Work with partners and stakeholders to actively identify and promote progression opportunities for all learners.
- g) Seek opportunities to increase funding available to achieve our vision from additional sources e.g. External projects, partnership working etc.
- h) Explore possibilities and opportunities to convert the Curious Lounge scheme into a Community Interest Company (CIC).
- i) Establish effective protocols for recording and reporting on outcomes and destinations.

Priority 5.

Make the service financially fit for the future and deliver excellent value for money.

Objectives:

- a) Produce clear and accurate annual budgets
- b) Budget for the service to operate within its own financial envelope from 2021 onwards.
- c) Implement robust systems for financial reporting and monitoring.
- d) Annually revise the fees policy for co-funded learners and full cost recovery provision.
- e) Fully deliver against the AEB Grant – aiming for 3% over delivery where possible.
- f) Set and monitor clear income generation targets for the service.
- g) Annually review the local terms and conditions and pay scales for academic roles.
- h) Ensure the service operates at full staff utilisation and identifies emerging resource need in a timely manner.

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