

### **‘Rescue’ findings: Adult Learning (AL) Summary**

#### **Overall:**

Adult Learning providers have moved to remote learning in different ways. Many are using established platforms such as Google Classroom and Zoom, whilst others are providing a more resources-based approach. A mixture of ‘online’ and ‘offline’ approaches are being used by different providers. Most local authority providers do not have an organisational digital platform or VLE to use with adult learners.

Adult learning providers are working hard to provide well-being support for their learners, being particularly conscious of issues of lack of face to face contact, isolation and removal from community spaces. They have developed innovative approaches to manage this, and are continuing to upskill their staff to manage the transition.

The main challenges for adult learning were identified as:

- Access to suitable IT equipment/connectivity issues at home. Further work would be required to quantify the scale of requirements and consider how this could be addressed sustainably.
- Accessibility issues (for learners with additional learning needs including visual or audial impairment; and learners in specific categories)
- Learners’ digital literacy skills, confidence with using digital technologies, and skills for working remotely. Learners may benefit from introductory or refresher sessions to improve their basic skill levels.
- Upskilling staff and improving their knowledge of, and confidence in using, relevant digital tools & platforms
- Maintaining learner engagement in the context of difficult learning environments, with learners who may be dealing with competing demands within the household for IT equipment and broadband; learners who may be juggling learning activities with working, childcare or other caring responsibilities; and learners with pressing financial or health/wellbeing concerns. Some learners may need to temporarily suspend learning.
- The lack of awarding body information in some areas has made planning difficult.

Some providers have also said they would like to see:

- An overarching strategy for digital engagement in Wales (covering broadband/connectivity and access to IT equipment for people living in disadvantaged areas)

- A digital platform for AL providers to share resources and good practice, and support for providers to explore suitable platforms for delivery and support.
- Continuing Professional Development on a national level to reduce 'silo' thinking and sharing good practice and ideas through communities of practice.

### **Learner support:**

There are a number of differing ways in which providers are identifying learners who are unable to access learning. Some providers adopted a proactive approach prior to lockdown, whilst others are more reliant on the emerging picture. Methods of identification include:

- contacting learners in advance of lockdown to ascertain the position, and where necessary providing additional technological support
- provider-based/initiated contact with learners (by telephone where email addresses are not provided)
- cross referencing of digital attendees and registers
- reliance on induction and previous knowledge of learners

Strategies in place to support these learners generally include posting work for learners to access at home. There are differences in how work completed at home is being returned to providers and marked. In some cases, Stamped Addressed Envelopes are included for the return of work, or work is being held at home until classes resume. In a few cases, mobile phones are being used to photograph completed work, and send this to tutors for marking and feedback.

More general support is being provided for all learners in differing ways, including support by telephone and text, and by signposting to internal and external agencies. In some cases, WhatsApp groups and closed Facebook groups are being used.

Specific issues raised in responses include learners' digital skill levels (which can prevent online engagement or make this more difficult) and learners without broadband who do not have sufficient funds to increase mobile data allowances.

### **Curriculum delivery:**

The majority of providers are continuing with Adult Basic Skills, Essential Skills, Digital learning - including ECDL, and languages – predominantly ESOL, Welsh and British Sign Language. Some providers are continuing with other provision such as counselling and teaching and learning assistant support, whilst some are providing a range of courses, ranging from 'Pathways to Employment' to health and well-being activity.

A number of providers gave examples of adapting their delivery to suit the circumstances; encouraging learners to practice their skills through wider family activities, in pursuit of hobbies and leisure activities, and in everyday scenarios.

## **Learners following Adult Basic Education / Essential Skills Wales / GCSE courses**

ILS/Essential skills are being delivered in a number of ways. Some providers are using “face to face” learning (using platforms such as Google Classroom and Zoom) and others provide a “distance” model (resource provision, with support interventions where required).

A range of platforms and channels are being used including Google Classroom, Zoom, Quill.org, Microsoft Teams, Moodle, Facebook, WhatsApp, email and telephone. A number of, but not all providers, confirmed that WEST is available to learners for upskilling purposes. One provider is offering ‘Pathways to Employment’ courses to learners previously engaged in Essential Skills.

One provider noted that only 50% of learners provided e-mail addresses. For learners without access to the internet or devices, contact is offered by phone and work posted to learners. One provider stated that no remote learning is currently taking place.

## **Learners following language courses**

British Sign Language is being delivered by at least four providers. Three of these providers are using Zoom for delivery. One provider also uses Dropbox, Google Classroom, Nearpod and Flipgrid.

One provider uses Skype to provide group support and socialisation for learners with visual impairments. Telephone support is also available.

One provider uses Zoom to hold informal conversational groups for Welsh language learners to practice, using discussion materials prepared by staff. Tutors provide activities and tips through other channels including WhatsApp, Facebook/Twitter and email.

## **Learners following English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses**

A mixture of platforms are being used by providers for direct delivery, including Google Classroom, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams. Other channels are used for support and contact including WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, YouTube and Facetime.

One provider does not use direct delivery, but encourages learners to practice their language skills with family and neighbours, and through their hobbies and leisure activities. Learners are asked to keep a written diary to practice writing skills and use as evidence for assessment.

Another provider offers a flexible timetable, with access during the evening and weekends, and encourages language practice in online groups. Learners on the Syrian Vulnerable Person Relocation Programme are supported with assistance from the British Red Cross.

### **Learners following digital skills courses, including ECDL**

Approximately half of providers deliver digital skills in some form. Some providers are delivering direct sessions using Google Classrooms and Zoom, whilst a number of providers are providing resources and activities for learners to access at their convenience through a range of channels including Wettransfer, Dropbox, YouTube, email. One provider noted that some learners have requested DVDs to be posted.

Some providers offer one-to-one support for individual learners by telephone.

### **Learners following other accredited courses**

Qualifications within this section include Counselling at L2 and L3, supporting teaching and learning in school/teaching assistant support in schools, food hygiene and personal development. Skype, Zoom and Microsoft Teams are being used by some providers, with support via email and/or WhatsApp. One provider creates and shares topic-specific Powerpoints each week.

### **Learners participating in family and intergenerational learning activities**

Strategies for delivery vary in this area as well. Some learning activities involving school partners have been temporarily suspended.

At least six providers gave examples of continued delivery using various digital channels, including Google Classroom, Zoom, WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook closed groups and social media. Two providers gave examples highlighting the use of offline resources and activities, with one stating that they have specifically designed their learning resource not to solely rely on IT tools.

Issues identified include access to online learning, access to up to date equipment, and connectivity. Some learners need to be upskilled and there is sometimes anxiety about video teaching.