

A whole organisation approach to embedding English, maths and ESOL in adult and community learning

Salford Adult Learning



Who we are

Salford Adult Learning, part of Salford City Council, is located in Greater Manchester. Salford encompasses industrial and rural areas and is experiencing exciting developments offering new opportunities, such as the development of Media City at Salford Quays. It is an interesting place to live with a strong sense of community and history. There are also challenges for this, the fifteenth most deprived local authority in the country, with poverty entrenched in pockets across the city.

Salford Adult Learning aims to work with local communities to develop and deliver relevant and accessible opportunities for learning. Our courses are designed to be useful to adults who are unable to access college based further education and are located in neighbourhood venues. We also aim to support the development of Third Sector organisations as learning providers so as many adults as possible have the opportunity to develop their skills, interests and communities. Family Learning is a key part of our provision alongside ESOL, ITC, English and maths provision. Leisure Learning opportunities are key to engaging new learners and include languages, using social media, arts and crafts, beauty therapy and creative writing. A range of first steps courses offer learners the chance to gain accreditation.

The vast majority of our learners are Salford residents; 26% of our learners have a black and minority ethnic background and 13% have a disability. These proportions reflect the changing ethnic makeup of Salford, and the higher than average rate of sickness and disability in the adult population. Only 16% of our learners are male.

Our impetus to improve learner experience

Ofsted inspectors identified some good practice in meeting individual learner needs, but this was not systematic or across all areas of the adult and community learning (ACL) provision. We were clear that this was a priority area, and the challenge was to embed a whole organisation approach. We recognised that differentiation is a tailored activity and crucial in driving up quality of teaching and learning. Our focus was the need to

Supported provider

Salford Adult Learning,
Salford Council:

- Miranda Clarke, Adult Learning Manager

Improvement partner

Oldham Lifelong Learning
Service:

- Mary Grainger, Senior Manager

identify the English, maths and ESOL skills needed to complete our courses, and to empower teaching staff to identify and develop these with learners by embedding skills within their provision. We wanted to build on the good practice in family learning identified at inspection - having documentation in place that records learning and provides evidence that is auditable and measurable.

What we wanted from the Support Programme

Belonging to peer groups and networks in the ACL sector within the region is important to us. We welcomed the opportunity to work with experienced colleagues from Oldham Lifelong Learning Service, trusted by our team to identify our existing good practice and help us build on that.

We wanted our activity to result in:

- A service wide rationale and unified practice for assessing learners and use of assessment results, evidenced through a service wide policy and Individual Learning Plan (ILP) audit
- Learning tailored to individual need and interest rather than on the basis of a group profile, evidenced through ILP and Observation of Teaching and Learning (OTL) audits
- Learners understanding and owning their individual learning plan and setting their own targets, evidenced through ILP and OTL audits
- An increase in learner satisfaction evidenced through learner evaluation forms

Developing our own skills, concentrating on the learning journey

We decided to structure our staff training round each stage of our learners' journeys. We wished to improve initial advice and guidance, enhance skills checks to ensure that learners were on the right course and that English, maths and ESOL assessments were included where appropriate. Our training for tutors was to ensure that processes were understood, and how embedding English, maths and ESOL fitted within our overall quality system. Our CPD was contextualised from LSIS support resources. We developed our action plan for the second year to include more on the importance of embedding, and the planning processes for differentiation to be included in schemes of work and lesson plans.

Celebrating our progress as a service, and the improvements for our learners

- 1) We have introduced a service wide assessment policy and standardised assessment practice is now observable in OTL. OTL grades have improved and staff are developing fruitful peer-to-peer support networks. We feel we "own" quality improvements and can take responsibility for them. Part-time tutors are now moderating each other's folders. The whole process is audited thoroughly by senior managers and we give support where need is identified.

Family Learning and English, maths and ESOL

- Assessment and target setting improved, particularly the measurable "soft" targets
- More thorough assessment of written work at initial stages with a more structured interview
- ILPs now demonstrate improvement through target setting

- 2) We now have regular ILP audits throughout the year, concentrating on embedding English, maths and ESOL. These demonstrate good improvement in target setting and constructive feedback to learners. We can see that individual tutors have been using the training resources to help learners identify their own targets and goals. Regular written and verbal feedback is provided for learners which recognises success, and promotes further learning.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) with embedded English

“Joe’s work can mean irregular attendance. I assessed Joe in September, concentrating on reading and writing. In the main he was working at E2 level, “emerging” to “consolidating”. After the LSIS training I felt confident to help him. In December a repeated assessment demonstrated notable improvements, especially in knowledge of sentence structure where he has moved from “emerging” to “established.” This is reflected in Joe’s reading, which I feel has improved immensely since September. When I asked him how he thought he was doing, he said, ‘brilliantly!’”

- Tutor

Beauty Therapy

In the Beauty courses improvements include the introduction of written assignments, oral skills development, new and improved resources, embedding, better learner evaluations leading to progression. SMART targets and inclusion of peer support as a means of assessing learning have been introduced.

“Embedding English throughout the course has led to improvements in the portfolios submitted. Our external moderator commented on the high quality of the written work.”

- Curriculum Manager

- 3) Learners know and are able to explain the learning process. Learner target setting and tailored learning is demonstrated in ILPs, OTLs and learner satisfaction surveys. Learners’ targets are measurable, written in language that the learners understand.

Learner Feedback

Learner feedback demonstrated that on the question “how do you rate the teaching support from your tutor?” 84% of learners said “very good” (top score); 15% said “good.”

Sharing our skills and knowledge

A real strength of the programme has been the generous and open sharing of good practice and resources across local authorities. This has been appreciated at all levels of the organisation – from managers through to teaching staff. By offering practical support focused on specific issues, tutors instantly took on some of the suggestions made in training, and have adopted some of the examples in their practice. The support we received has undoubtedly moved the service forward, and has been accessible and relevant at all levels of the team.

We have learned the importance of not being frightened to share resources and learn from each other.