

Briefing note (CONTROLLED)

October 2024

Cornwall Adult Education Service

In recent years 17 Adult Education centres have operated in Cornwall. During the years of the Covid pandemic online learning was greatly developed as an alternative and complement to face-to-face delivery.

During this period delivery has also come under financial pressure: enrolments on courses, completions and achievements were suppressed which reduced funding, they have in large part recovered pre-Covid levels but not entirely; during the same period costs, particularly those of employees, have continued to increase. The resulting budget position has been the total use of Adult Education reserves and a deficit being managed by the Economy and Skills Service.

The Adult Education Board of Governors considered options to balance the projected budget deficit and endorsed the closure of six learning centres, together with confirming a further centre closure already in process.

The centres proposed for closure are Camelford, Callington, Torpoint, Saltash, Launceston, Penzance and St Austell. Centres remaining open are Bude, Newquay, Liskeard, St Dennis, Bodmin, Helston, Truro, Camborne, Hayle and Falmouth.

The centres individually proposed for closure had generated budget out-turn deficits at the end of at least academic year 2023/24 and projections for the current year also show a deficit position. Alongside this there is very much an intent to reduce the footprint (and costs) of delivery while maintaining the same or increased volume of business/learners across the new reduced network of centres; making better use of partnership and outreach arrangements within local communities.

Centres proposed to close have been enrolling learners this year since September. The pending process is very much intended to involve engagement and consultation with them to facilitate the continuation and conclusion of their learning journey successfully to achievement. This could be through the transfer to a nearby alternative centre, to an online alternative, or to another provider, such as a college.

Consultation and Engagement

We are primarily intending to inform key stakeholders of the changes to our Adult Education Service, the proposed mitigations and delivery models going forward. Our key stakeholders are, but not limited to:

- Our learners – learners will currently be enrolled and engaged in courses. We will inform them of pending potential closures and then consult with them about options to successfully conclude their courses and follow further options – in geographical and online alternatives, and progression to other providers. There are funds available to support increased travel and childcare costs, including any additional needs to support online learning (kit, connectivity). In this process we will also engage with the National Careers Service who can provide Initial Advice and Guidance.
- Local Cornwall Council members – meetings will be held to inform members in closure areas about the budget saving interventions, the proposed mitigations and to seek their advice regarding impact and opportunities for future partnerships and outreach activities. Meeting invites have been circulated to Local Members for the week commencing 4/11/2024.
- Parish and Town Councils in areas impacted by closures – briefings will be sent to Parish Councils, with the offer of a meeting, to inform councils and seek their advice regarding impact and opportunities.
- Subcontracted partners – we have 7 partners who work with us to provide training to young learners with high needs (SEND). We will explain that they are currently outside the scope of this change, how potentially closing nearby centres could affect them, and identify new opportunities.
- Other providers – we will inform other providers of Adult and Further Education and hold a dialogue with them about the relevance of their curriculum options and ability to receive any learners transferring from Adult Education.
- The Council Resettlement Team – Adult Education provides English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) courses to refugees being supported under resettlement schemes in Cornwall (Ukrainians and Afghans). We will discuss with the team options for continuing the provision where a centre which delivers ESOL is proposed to be closed.

Key messages

The Budget Saving Interventions will provide savings to help balance the budget in 2024/25 and create a small surplus in 2025/26. This will help the Council to secure the short-term financial viability of the Adult Education offer provided directly by Cornwall Council.

This will involve an increase in the proportion of online learning without defaulting to it. Online learning will be more cost effective and therefore support the viability of delivering learning while also facilitating the recruitment of healthier numbers of learners as they are not limited by physical numbers in geographic locations. Adult Education will deliver online learning in the mode of groups convening interpersonally online to maximise support and the benefits of communities to avoid learners becoming isolated and disengaged.

We will utilise learner support and additional learning support funds to the maximum in order to facilitate a successful transition to new learning arrangements needed as a result of centre closures, including, to online.

Our priority will be information, advice, guidance and support to existing learners as effectively as possible to enable completion and achievement.

It should be noted that these savings and proposals are separate from the Council's new commissioning powers for Adult Skills Funding which will come into place from the Academic Year 2025/26 (August 2025). These proposals are based on an assessment of financial viability of the internal service delivering contracts currently commissioned by the Department for Education and should not be confused with future commissioning approaches.

Impacts

Local Areas

The table below provides a summary of impacts, access to other centres and alternative providers.

| Centre | Arrangements | Course Offer | Current enrolments | Alternative Adult Education Centre | | | Closest Alternative Training Provider |
|------------|---|------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | | | | Location | Distance Car (Mins) | Distance Public Transport (Mins) | |
| Camelford | Reverts to school, police and family hub also on site | English, Maths, Diploma in Beauty. | 24 | Bodmin | 22 | 49 | Callywith, Bodmin |
| | | | | Bude | 26 | 96 | |
| Torpoint | Private lease, exit at will. Other units occupied. | Maths, ICT, English. | 22 | Liskeard | 27 | 71 | Plymouth City College |
| Saltash | Private lease, exit at will. Other clubs and services book space. | Maths, ICT, English. | 20 | Liskeard | 24 | 38 | Plymouth City College |
| St Austell | Planned move to White River Place. | Maths, ICT, English, ESOL | 63 | St Dennis | 19 | 48 | Cornwall College, St Austell |
| | | | | Bodmin | 25 | 61 | |
| | | | | Truro | 28 | 56 | |
| Launceston | Private lease lower ground floor. | Maths, ICT, English, ESOL | 38 | Liskeard | 34 | 61 | Callywith Bodmin |
| | | | | Bude | 29 | 37 | |
| | | | | Bodmin | 32 | 120 | |
| Penzance | Corporate multi service hub | Maths, ICT, English, ESOL | 58 | Hayle | 22 | 37 | Truro and Penwith College, Penzance |
| | | | | Helston | 31 | 70 | |
| Total | | | 225 | | | | |

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