



THE SUFFOLK ADULT LEARNING SERVICE

STRATEGY 2025-28

EL WILD

Winner of the 2025 Suffolk Adult Learners' Learner Impact & Outstanding Learner Awards

Green Light Trust nominated Eleanor, and this is what they said:

'Eleanor came to GLT in October 2021. Showing a keen interest in survival and bushcraft she completed her first Earth Rebuild & Support programme with ease and went on to complete our Freedom Program. El expressed an interest in volunteering and in 2023 she joined the GLT volunteer team and in January 2024 El was offered paid employment at GLT.

El had the most wonderful connection with nature that she so clearly used to help her move forward, and a spark within her that wasn't going to give up. Her journey through the Freedom program was one of the bravest I have ever seen, never afraid to explore her past and learn to manage how it was affecting her present. She learned skills to cope with, and combat

the trauma, building esteem, confidence and self-belief from a place where none had previously existed, she really did allow nature to heal her. To then go on from participating on the Freedom Program to volunteering on it was a huge step. It is not an easy course to be part of however El's presence was invaluable and she always showed compassion, empathy and conscientiousness when working with participants.

El has continued to grow on her journey with us, her attention to detail, professionalism and energy for the role blow us away on a daily basis and she is reaping the rewards of all her hard work. It has been an absolute privilege to observe her journey and get to know the amazing, courageous and creative lady she is.'



El says:

"I feel seen, heard, understood and celebrated for who I am and all I have to offer. I am more confident, I'm no longer scared to go out, talk to new people, try new things or to take on a new challenge. I am calmer, more grounded, and more myself than I've felt for many years. GLT has helped me to be a better Mum, a better friend, a much-improved version of me! I still have work to do but now I know I can keep on putting one foot in front of the other. To some this may not seem like much, but to me it is everything. I'm looking forward to developing my skills with GLT and it feels good to fulfil a dream that I've always had, to be able help others who may really need it. Thank you"



WELCOME

REBECCA HOPFENSPERGER

SCC County Councillor and Chair of SCC Adult Learning Service Governing Board

‘On behalf of the Suffolk Adult Learning Service Governing Board and Suffolk County Council (SCC) I am pleased to share with you our Strategy and plans for the Suffolk Adult Learning Service 2025-2028.

This Strategy marks the start of a new chapter for the Suffolk County Council Adult Learning Service, and I am delighted that we have such an experienced and capable Governing Board to guide us through the next phase of our development. I would like to thank them and the Local Authority Officers for helping to shape this Strategy.

As we see from the inspiring stories at the Adult Learners Awards 2024, adult learning has the power to change lives – for individuals – for families - and for communities, and our Board is committed to ensuring that we do all within our power to support our Service to do just that.



Adult Learning changes lives. It seeks to play a vital role in supporting residents on their journey to learn skills, to enter, return, or progress in work. Alongside the economic benefits, it reduces loneliness and makes people happier, healthier, more confident, and resilient – making places more inclusive.

You will see from our Strategy that over this next phase in our development we are keen to focus more than ever on supporting learning programmes that will assist the most marginalised from society and employment to access the first steps in learning, make tangible progress towards clear outcomes and move closer to their long-term goals.’

SUFFOLK IN CONTEXT

Setting the scene

Suffolk County Council holds a £2.7m annual contract with the Department for Education (DfE) to provide Adult Learning Programmes across Suffolk.

SCC Adult Learning Service (the Service) is part of the national Adult Skills Fund (previously AEB). The principal purpose is to engage adults and provide them with the skills and learning they need to progress into, or within, work; or equip them for an apprenticeship or other learning. Related to this purpose, it can be used to enable more-flexible, community learning that can support the wider purposes of learning that remove additional barriers to progression, including building confidence and improving wellbeing. The Service supports this principal purpose and delivers learning that follows national policy and DfE funding rules.



SCC leads the Service and provides the central management, including the strategic direction, commissioning, safeguarding, management information, and quality assurance. All learning is subcontracted, delivered through a network of local organisations that form a group of adult learning providers. This hub and spoke model enables a very flexible and accessible offer to meet the needs of residents and communities across Suffolk.

Our county

The county of Suffolk offers an attractive place for people to live, work and visit. It is home to a population of 772,966 people with a working-age population of 444,650.

With plenty of places attracting tourists and a varied cultural offer, large areas of farmland, areas of outstanding natural beauty, and a variety of urban spaces, historic market towns and smaller communities, Suffolk can provide a high quality of life.

The county encompasses the four local authority districts of Babergh, East Suffolk, Mid Suffolk and West Suffolk, and the borough of Ipswich. It includes the coastal towns of Lowestoft, Southwold, and Felixstowe; market towns such as Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill, Newmarket, and Stowmarket; many villages and rural communities; as well as the county town of Ipswich.

Our residents

Suffolk has a strong identity based on its agricultural heritage and a proud, long-standing history as a key gateway to the world for the country through operating several key ports. However, it can also boast a strong and diverse business base, spanning several key growth and employment sectors, with both major national and international businesses and a strong local supply chain of well-established and successful SMEs offering a range of career and employment opportunities.

Suffolk's diverse mix of rural, coastal, and urban communities also presents varying social and economic challenges. While some of our coastal communities have some of the poorest health outcomes in England, often alongside particularly high levels of deprivation, people in our rural areas often have limited transport options making access to key services more difficult and potentially limiting social mobility.

Suffolk has lower levels of people living in relative poverty (17.8%) than the UK average (22%). However, the COVID-19 pandemic and the current cost of living crisis have increased both the number of Suffolk residents experiencing poverty, as well as the depth of poverty. More Suffolk residents are now experiencing fuel and food poverty and struggling with low incomes and high housing costs. The 2020 Hidden Needs report indicates Suffolk is becoming less advantaged and more deprived. In 2007, Suffolk was ranked the 115th most deprived upper-tier local authority, by 2019 it was ranked the 99th most deprived.

Over 80,000 people live in the 11% of Suffolk's Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) that are within the 20% most deprived in England. Pockets of greater relative deprivation can be



found in more built-up areas, such as Beccles, Bury St Edmunds, Felixstowe, Ipswich, Lowestoft, and Stowmarket. 33% of Ipswich's and 14% of East Suffolk's LSOAs are within the 20% most deprived in England. Part of the Kirkley & Pakefield ward in Lowestoft in East Suffolk, is the 25th most deprived LSOA in England. In addition, all areas of Suffolk - apart from Mid-Suffolk - contain social mobility cold spots that are in the lowest 20% nationally for social mobility.

Suffolk has relatively high employment levels, with a 77.2% employment rate for those 16-64 compared to the national average of 76%. In 2023, Suffolk's unemployment rate was 3.7%, just lower than both the East of England and England average (3.8%).

The county has a comparably higher proportion of economically inactive people due to early retirement (19% versus 13%). Suffolk also has a higher proportion of economically inactive people due to, looking after family/home, temporary sick, and long-term sick.

Over the last 20 years, the proportion of individuals who are disabled in England has decreased whereas, on a local level, it has increased (2001: England 17.9%: Suffolk 17.1% to 2021: England 17.3%: Suffolk 18.3%.)

Over the last 10 years, Suffolk's economic inactivity rate has also been consistently lower than the national average and this remains the case. In 2023 (Jan-Dec) it was 19.8%, compared to a national average of 21%. In December 2022, 24,740 people (7% of those aged 16-64 who are employed) claimed Universal Credit in Suffolk despite being in work. In-work claimant numbers have increased by 4.6% over the past 12 months, compared to 4.4% for unemployed claimants.

So too has the proportion of Universal Credit claimants that are in-work – an increase from an average of 38% in FY 2019/20 to 44% in FY 2022/23.

Suffolk's ageing population, relatively low unemployment rates, and high proportion of economically inactive people who do not want a job, all limit the availability of local people for the workforce and can create skills shortages.



OUR ADULT LEARNING SERVICE



ANDY MAWBY

Adult Skills and Employment Lead

The Suffolk Adult Learning Service enrolls over 4,000 learners each year and through its subcontractors delivers a broad and balanced programme of accredited and non-accredited learning opportunities across the County. It has been recognised by OFSTED in 2024 as being a “good” service and has ambitions to be outstanding.

Adult Learning has an important role to play in improving the lives of people living in Suffolk and for some it becomes an essential lifeline. The acquisition of knowledge and skills is a key component of strategies to; reduce barriers to health, life and work, connect families and communities, address inequality and increase economic prosperity. This directly supports SCC Corporate Strategy.

The Service will continue to support the most disadvantaged learners in the County. It will offer engaging “first steps” learning opportunities as a way of increasing participation for people who are hard to reach and prepare learners for more formal programmes of learning. This will result in successfully moving a high number of residents closer to employment. The Service will be inclusive and offer courses in communities that reduce social isolation, poor health, rurality and digital exclusion.

This will in turn support Suffolk’s local economy by reducing inactivity and by preparing and equipping residents with the relevant skills for work. Programmes will reflect the needs of the local labour market which will better connect learning to the needs of employers. In this way the Service widens talent pipelines and supports the economic wellbeing and growth of Suffolk.



The Service will:

- Continue to seek to improve, develop and enhance the offer, connect to other projects in the landscape and avoid duplication.
- Be best positioned to provide targeted programmes of learning that meet the needs of residents in Suffolk.
- Continually be monitored and reviewed to provide learning that is locally accessible and supports the challenges communities face.
- Deliver a quality learning experience through innovative and effective teaching practice that places the learner at its heart.
- Support learners to achieve their goals and progress to fuller and richer lives that impacts them, their community and their local economy.

The Service is proud to set out the following Vision, Strategic Intent, priorities, outcomes and supporting actions:

The Vision of the Service is for Suffolk to be a place where lifelong learning is highly valued and empowers our residents to have more fulfilling lives, take a greater part in society and develop the skills they need to secure sustainable and productive employment.



Service Priorities

The Service will:

1. **Prioritise** and maximise Adult Skills Funding for residents who are vulnerable, disadvantaged and or face barriers to health, life and work.
2. **Plan** a curriculum to support learners with a low prior attainment level.
3. **Maintain** at least a good standard of quality and continually seek to improve.



Curriculum Priorities

The Service will:

1. **Prioritise** the breaking down of barriers to health, life and work for individuals and families.
2. **Improve** essential skills for individuals and families.
3. **Develop** employability, vocational skills, and work readiness.



Service Outcomes

The Service expects:

1. **Residents** who are engaged with the benefits of learning, resulting in them having the skills and confidence needed to meet life's challenges.
2. **Communities** who are supported to better address challenges and see a reduction in certain inequalities.
3. **A Local Economy** that benefits from a reduction in inactive residents and a pathway to further learning, leading to a more suitably qualified workforce.

The Strategic intent of the Service is to provide high quality learning opportunities for those adults in Suffolk who face the greatest barriers to securing employment or playing a full part in society, so that they can make progress in securing a better future for themselves, their families, and their community.



Service Priorities

Action the Service will take:

1. Prioritise and maximise funding for residents who are vulnerable, disadvantaged and or face barriers to health, life and work.

**4000
learner
enrolments
per year**

1. Ensure that the Adult Skills Fund contract is fulfilled to maximise the delivery of adult and tailored learning across the county.
2. Deliver learner engagement activity that results in a high number of enrolments and unique learners each academic year.
3. Focus learner engagement on residents who are unemployed or inactive, who declare a learning need, or a health or wellbeing concern and residents who live in a priority uplift area.

2. Plan a curriculum to support learners with a low prior attainment level.

**80%
of Core
Learning Offer
Planned at
Level 1 or
below**

1. Ensure sufficient learning is planned at Level 1 and below and all learning is planned at Level 2 and below.
2. Focus curriculum planning to engage learners with an attainment level at level 1 or below.

3. Maintain a good standard of quality and continually seek to improve.

**OFSTED
'Good'
provider**

1. Deliver a robust system of procurement which thoroughly reviews and systematically assesses subcontractor capability.
2. Create a culture of continuous improvement that is driven by a Self-Assessment process that is robust, transparent and which clearly identifies areas of improvement and supports CPD opportunities.
3. Plan and deliver quality assurance activity that will maintain the current OFSTED rating as a minimum standard.



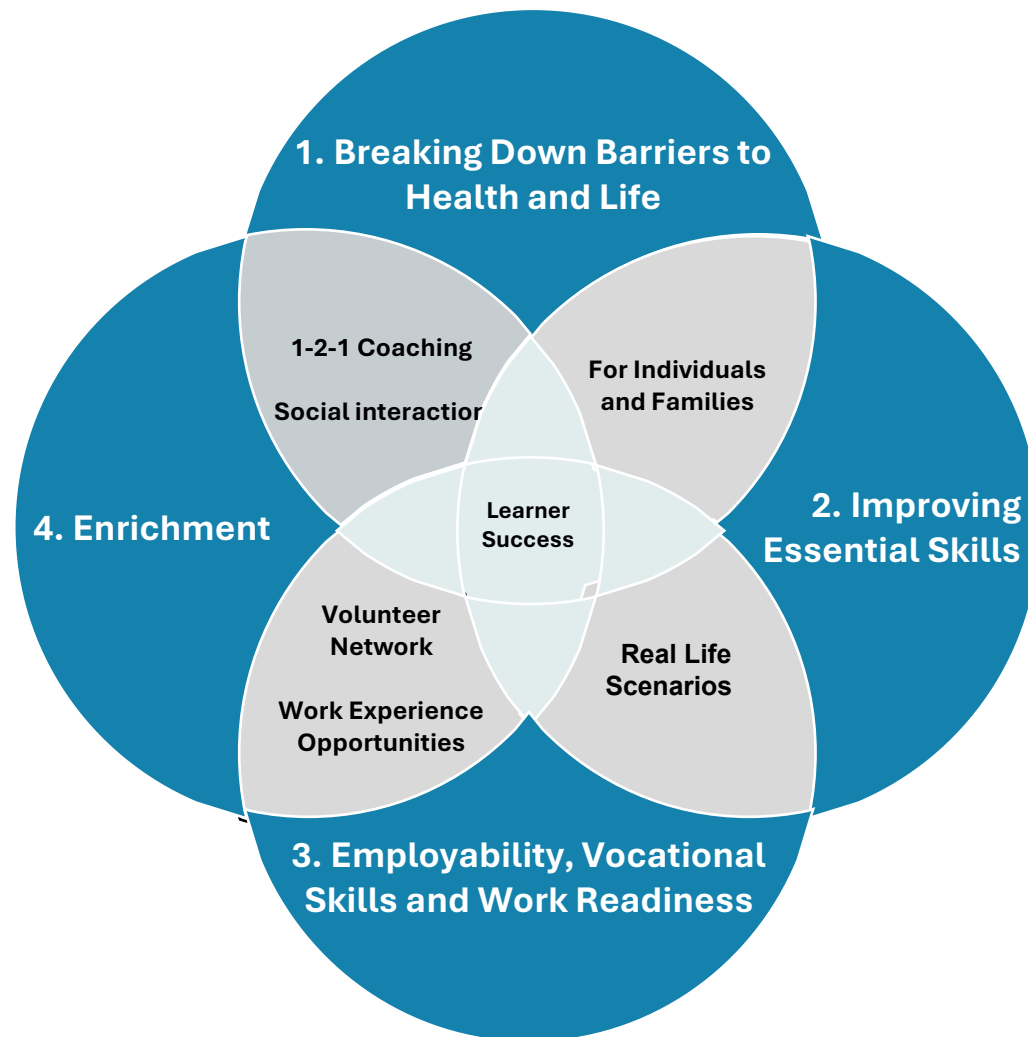
Curriculum Priorities

Enabler 1: Access to Learning

- Fixed Learning Hubs
- Additional Community Venues
- Bespoke subcontracting
- Mobile and Flexible Offer
- Virtual Offer

Enabler 3: Locally Planned Curriculum

- Learner Engagement
- Collaboration with Communities and Employers
- Link with Providers
- Network with other Services
- Delivery Partners



Enabler 2: Wrap Around Support

- CEIAG
- Learning and Learner Support
- Pastoral Support
- Mentoring and Coaching
- Network of Support Agencies

Enabler 4: Connected Communities

- Link with employers
- Understand local skills need
- Dedicated Community Champions
- Partner organisations
- Volunteer network



Curriculum Priorities

Action the Service will take:

1. Prioritise the breaking down of barriers to health, life and work for individuals and families.

A high number of courses planned to breakdown barriers

2. Improve essential skills for individuals and families.

Clear pathways that build on prior learning

3. Develop employability, vocational skills, and work readiness.

High level of scrutiny placed on achievement and progression

For all curriculum priorities the Service will:

1. Allocate sufficient courses in each priority area according to need and ensure that they are of adequate level, size and duration to support learners to achieve no matter what their starting point.
2. Ensure that all course type, content and structure is relevant to local and national priorities and reflects the learners' needs and aspirations.
3. Create clear pathways for learners to progress from Entry Level to Level 2.
4. Drive achievement rates to be at least comparable with national levels and or Service benchmarks.
5. Provide effective learning and support that enables learners to achieve their course outcome and work towards their personal goal and identified progression route.



Curriculum Enablers

Action the Service will take:

1. Access to learning.

Over 70
locations
across Suffolk

1. Provide sufficient and adequate coverage across the County to support the required participation levels, balancing the focus on areas with the greatest identified need with being flexible and responsive to cold spots and rural areas.

2. Wrap around support.

Over 90%
of learners
report they
are well
supported

2. Plan and deliver effective support that meets each learners' need throughout their entire learner journey, from initial engagement to progression.

3. Locally planned curriculum.

Courses
planned
reflect local
priorities

3. Plan a curriculum in collaboration with learners, stakeholders, providers, organisations, employers and local communities, which results in an offer that reflects and supports local need and avoids a duplication.

4. Connected communities.

A network of
voluntary work
opportunities

4. Work with communities and develop effective links and connections which enhance the information, support and opportunities for learners.

WHAT OUR LEARNERS SAY:



'I'm starting university on Monday thanks to the course, Realise Futures were really amazing and helped me get into university. I was disappointed before I started Realise Futures, and I started the course late, but they helped me catch up and they adapted to what I needed exactly. The small group gave me the chance to listen and talk about work for the future. Lots of communication from the team, they really care, talk to you the way you like and treat you nicely.'

'I feel a part of my community. I've met new people and made friends.'

'I loved this course, it's the only course I have enjoyed and ever completed' 'I wish school had been like this and I would have achieved so much more.'

'Green Light Trust has helped me achieve more than the 5 years of help under the mental health team have been able to do. IDT therapy wasn't right for me and my health just went from bad to worse whereas the forest therapy has given me a purpose in life...'

'I'm confident I will be able to compete school homework and be helpful with the new skills I have learnt.'

'Confidence was on the floor before the course.' 'The tutor has stripped back and helped me with my maths confidence, this has reduced my levels of stress.'

'I have taught/ passed on knowledge to my mother and used these skills to practise with my child' 'I played maths games at home with my children and our relationship getting more better' 'I have been able to talk to my son about more and understand what he is talking about.'

'I have gained self-confidence; I feel more motivated and hopeful about the future. I have improved my resilience and mental wellbeing.'

'I've developed skills and knowledge which may be useful in my life in England. Maybe for a job too.'



Service Outcomes:

The Ripple Effect of the Service



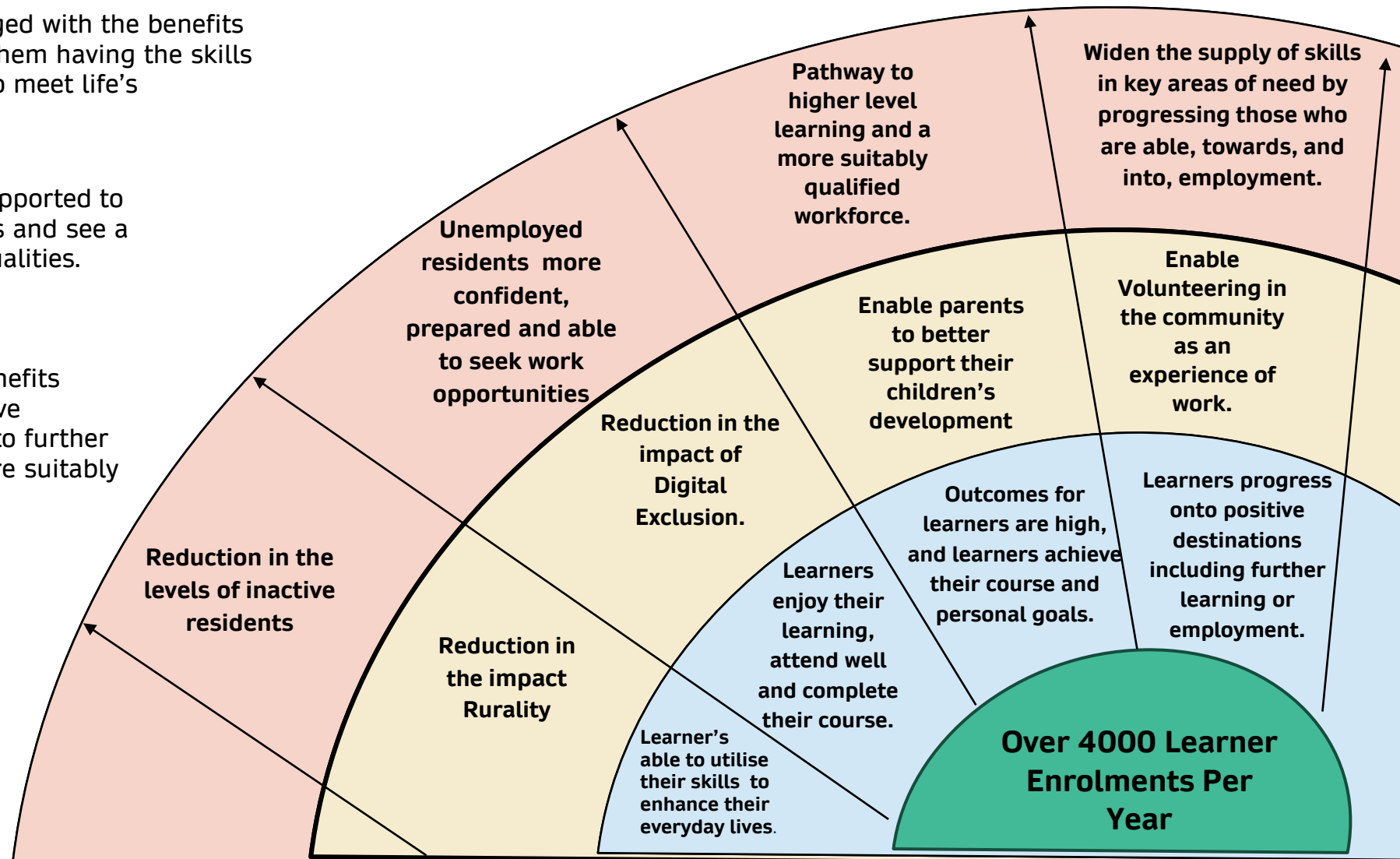
Residents who are engaged with the benefits of learning, resulting in them having the skills and confidence needed to meet life's challenges



Communities who are supported to better address challenges and see a reduction in certain inequalities.



A Local Economy that benefits from a reduction in inactive residents and a pathway to further learning, leading to a more suitably qualified workforce.





Service Outcomes:

What the Service expects to achieve:

1. Residents who are engaged with the benefits of learning, resulting in them having the skills and confidence needed to meet life's challenges.

Over 90% of learners state they achieve what they set out to do

1. Learners that report being able to utilise their skills successfully to enhance their everyday lives.
2. Learners that enjoy their learning, attend well and complete their course.
3. Outcomes for learners that are high, and learners achieve their course and personal goals.
4. Learners progress onto positive destinations including further learning or employment.

2. Communities who are supported to better address challenges.

Most Learners travel under 5 miles to their learning venue

1. Access to learning that supports a reduction in the impact of rurality.
2. Delivery that supports a reduction in the impact of digital exclusion.
3. Parents who report being better able to support their children's development.
4. Volunteering enabled and utilised in the community as an experience of work.

3. A local economy that benefits from a reduction in inactive residents and a pathway to further learning, leading to a more suitably qualified workforce.

Learners feel more confident & able to search for & gain employment

1. A reduction in the levels of inactive residents.
2. Unemployed residents who are more confident, prepared and able to seek work opportunities.
3. The creation of a pathway to higher levels of learning, leading to a more suitably qualified workforce.
4. Widen the supply of skills in key areas of need by progressing those who are able, towards, and into, employment.

HETTIE HAMMOND

Winner of the 2025 Suffolk Adult Learners' Functional Skills Award

Realise Futures nominated Hettie, and this is what they said:

'Michelle (Hettie) is both a colleague and currently a learner in my maths class. She has previously been a learner in an English class I was tutoring. In both, she has worked harder than any other learner in any other courses I have taught. A good example of this came recently when she was given 2 booklets, totalling over 170 pages full of practise questions and answers. Within 1 week she had attempted every question, checked the answers, retried any that were wrong and identified which ones she needed to talk through with me in the next class.

It came as no surprise to me that she passed her English L2 and Maths L1 after

just 1 term, despite finding maths 'difficult', and is expected to pass her L2 (we are currently awaiting results). Michelle doesn't find maths easy, but her perseverance and dedication has considerably improved her ability to solve mathematical problems.

As well as being an excellent learner, Michelle's other main strength lies in her ability to inspire other learners around her. It is no accident that she finds herself flanked on either side by other L2 learners in the classroom. I have observed learners asking her for help in exercises and seen them working harder than I can inspire them to do by themselves. As well as getting herself through exams, she has certainly improved the chances of those around her.'



Hettie says:

"I now feel more confident in moving forward career wise and am happy to tackle whatever comes – I know that if I put my mind to something and I put the effort in, I will get results – I can relate this experience to learners and hopefully inspire them to achieve too "

FURTHER INFORMATION

Email: Andy Mawby

Adult Skills and Employment Lead:
andrew.mawby@suffolk.gov.uk

[Website: Learnsuffolk.org](http://Learnsuffolk.org)

The Adult Learning Service supporting:

[Norfolk and Suffolk Local Skills Improvement Plan – May 2023](#)

[SCC-Economy-Strategy-24.pdf](#)

