



Suffolk's Adult Learning Service

Self-Assessment Report 2024-25

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Introduction

This Self-Assessment Report follows a structured template, beginning with an Executive Summary that outlines overall effectiveness, headline strengths, and improvement priorities. The main body of the Report then moves into Section 1, which sets out the Service's background, vision, strategy, and priorities, followed by Section 2, which presents the evidence base across the aligned themes of Intent, Implementation, and Impact. A separate Annex document accompanies this report, containing detailed data tables and additional evidence used to underpin the judgements.

Executive Report Summary

Overall Effectiveness

Overall Effectiveness	2	Effectiveness of Leadership and Management	2	Quality of Education	2	Behaviour and Attitudes	2	Personal Development	2
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Suffolk's Adult Learning Service (the Service) is a good provider of adult education across all inspection areas. Leaders have established a clear and ambitious vision that is strongly aligned with local priorities and national policy. This vision is well communicated and embedded across operations, ensuring that provision targets those adults who face the greatest barriers to learning and work. Strategic priorities are consistently reflected in curriculum design, governance arrangements, and day-to-day practice, creating a coherent and inclusive offer that meets the needs of Suffolk's communities.

The curriculum is thoughtfully structured and sequenced to enable learners to take first steps back into education, build confidence, and progress towards employment or further study. Provision is highly accessible, delivered through a network of community venues and specialist subcontractors, and supported by strong partnerships with local organisations. This approach reduces barriers linked to transport, digital exclusion, and low confidence, ensuring that learning opportunities reach those furthest from the labour market.

Teaching, learning and assessment are consistently of good quality, with learners valuing the highly supportive and well-structured learning experiences provided. Tutors plan courses carefully at the right level, use effective scaffolding to support progress, and provide contextualised learning that reflects real-life and work-related scenarios. Learners benefit from strong pastoral support and safe, welcoming environments that promote positive behaviour and engagement. Satisfaction rates are exceptional, retention and pass rates remain above Service benchmarks, and non-accredited provision delivers significant gains in confidence, wellbeing, and family learning.

Governance and safeguarding are robust. SCC maintains effective oversight through a well-structured quality assurance framework, regular provider visits, and governing board reviews. Safeguarding arrangements are strong, with incidents reducing year on year and staff confidence levels are high. Learners consistently report feeling safe, respected, and supported.

The Service demonstrates a clear and measurable impact on learners' lives. High satisfaction levels, strong retention and pass rates, and excellent outcomes in non-accredited provision confirm that the curriculum meets strategic intent and benefits those furthest from learning and work. Learners frequently describe transformative improvements in confidence, wellbeing, and employability, with many progressing into volunteering, further study, and sustained employment. Partnerships amplify this impact, fostering social inclusion and intergenerational benefits through family learning and community engagement.

Despite these strengths, the Service has identified its most pressing improvement priority as increasing achievement rates for accredited provision. Currently, these rates stand at 74%, which falls short of the Service's ambition to be outstanding. This gap directly impacts learner progression and overall performance, making it a critical area for focused action.

A key component of improving achievement lies in strengthening the quality management of the main subcontractor. Robust quality assurance processes are essential to ensure consistency and accelerate progress against the Service's Quality Improvement Plan. By enhancing the Quality Assurance (QA) cycle and providing targeted support and coaching, the Service can drive improvements in teaching and learning standards across subcontracted provision.

Linked to this, several supplementary areas must also be addressed to underpin success. Initial and diagnostic assessment processes need to be uniformly robust so that learners start at the correct level and receive tailored support, reducing risks to retention and achievement. Structured CEIAG (Careers Education, Information, Advice, and Guidance) should provide clear progression planning in all appropriate courses. Additionally, the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) offer must evolve into a career-long structured programme that addresses identified skills gaps and evaluates its impact on classroom practice. Together, these measures will create a stronger foundation for learner success and help the Service achieve its strategic ambition.

What the Service Does Well - Headline Strengths

Strategic Vision and Intent

The Service maintains a clear and ambitious strategic vision and intent that is fully aligned with both local priorities and national policy objectives.

Inclusive Curriculum

It delivers an inclusive and targeted curriculum designed to remove barriers to learning and employment while building learners' confidence and resilience.

Robust procurement and provider management

Ensures safe, high quality, and welcoming learning environments that provide a strong foundation for learner success.

Governance and Safeguarding

Governance and safeguarding arrangements are robust and effective, ensuring compliance, learner safety, and accountability across all operations.

Impact on Learners

The Service achieves a significant impact on learners' confidence, wellbeing, and family learning, contributing to improved social mobility and community resilience.

What the Service Needs to Improve - Headline Improvements

Achievement Rates for Accredited Provision

The most critical improvement priority is raising achievement rates on accredited provision.

Main Subcontractor Quality Management

The QA cycle must be strengthened to ensure consistency, impact evaluation, and accelerated progress against the Service's Quality Improvement Plan.

Destination Tracking

Establish a unified approach to progression and destination tracking, ensuring consistent processes that accurately evidence learner outcomes and long-term impact.

Employer Engagement

Improve systematic communication and co-design opportunities with employers to align curriculum with workforce needs.

Section 1 - Background Information

Overview of the Service During 2024-25

Suffolk County Council (SCC) holds an annual £2.7 million contract with the Department for Education (DfE) to deliver Adult Learning Programmes across Suffolk. Suffolk's Adult Learning Service (the Service) operates within the national Adult Skills Fund, with a core purpose of equipping adults with the skills and knowledge required to prepare for entry into employment, apprenticeships, or further learning. In addition to supporting career progression, the Service promotes flexible, tailored learning (TL) that addresses wider barriers to participation, such as low confidence and poor wellbeing. All provision adheres to national policy and DfE funding rules. SCC provides strategic leadership and central management for the Service, including commissioning, safeguarding, data management, and quality assurance. Delivery is fully subcontracted through a network of local providers, operating under a hub-and-spoke model. This approach ensures a flexible, accessible offer that meets the diverse needs of Suffolk's residents and communities.

About Suffolk

Suffolk is an attractive county in which to live, work, and visit, with a population of 786,231¹, including 461,311² people of working age (16-64 years). The county combines rural landscapes, coastal towns, historic market towns, and urban centres, offering a high quality of life. It comprises

¹ Population Estimates, NOMIS (2024)

² NOMIS – Population estimates (2024)

five local authority areas: Babergh, East Suffolk, Mid Suffolk, West Suffolk, and Ipswich Borough. Key locations include Ipswich, Lowestoft, Felixstowe, Bury St Edmunds, and numerous villages and rural communities

Suffolk's economy is diverse, with strengths in agriculture, logistics, and several growth sectors supported by major national and international employers alongside a strong Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) base. However, the county faces significant socio-economic challenges. Coastal communities experience some of England's poorest health outcomes and high deprivation levels, while rural areas often suffer from limited transport and digital connectivity, restricting access to services and opportunities. Urban areas face pressures on affordable housing, contributing to concentrated disadvantage and entrenched economic inactivity across generations.

Residents

Although Suffolk's relative poverty rate (17.8%) is below the UK average (22%)³ the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing cost-of-living crises have deepened deprivation. Fuel and food poverty and increased and the 2020 *Hidden Needs Report* highlights a decline in Suffolk's relative advantage: the county moved from 115th most deprived upper-tier authority in 2007 to 99th in 2019. Over 80,000 residents live in areas ranked among the 20% most deprived nationally⁴, with significant concentrations in Ipswich, Lowestoft, and other urban centres. Social mobility remains low, with most districts—except Mid Suffolk—identified as national cold spots.

Employment levels are relatively strong. In 2024, Suffolk's employment rate was 77.4%, and unemployment stood at 3.9%, outperforming national averages. However, economic inactivity remains a concern, driven by early retirement (16.5% vs. 12.4% nationally), long-term sickness, and caring responsibilities. The proportion of residents with disabilities has risen locally (18.3% in 2021)⁵, contrasting with a national decline. Combined with an ageing population and low unemployment, these factors contribute to skills shortages and limit workforce availability.

Suffolk's Adult Learning Service Strategy 2025–2028

The Strategy sets out a clear and ambitious framework for the future of adult education in the county. The Strategy articulates the Service's vision for Suffolk and defines the strategic intent.

The document outlines service priorities, alongside curriculum priorities that remove barriers, strengthen essential skills, and build employability. These priorities are underpinned by measurable outcomes for individuals, communities and the local economy.

Vision and Strategic Intent

Suffolk's Adult Learning Service vision is for Suffolk to be a place where lifelong learning is valued and empowers residents to lead fulfilling lives, participate fully in society, and secure sustainable employment. Its strategic intent is to provide high-quality learning opportunities for adults facing the greatest barriers to work and social inclusion, enabling them to build better futures for themselves, their families, and their communities. This intent aligns with SCC's Corporate Strategy and regional priorities, including the Norfolk and Suffolk Local Skills Improvement Plan.

The Service actively targets learners who are low-skilled, unemployed, economically inactive, or vulnerable to exclusion, including those with disabilities, poor mental health, or living in poverty.

³ Tackling Poverty Strategy 2022

⁴ 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation

⁵ 2021 Census

Many learners start from low educational levels and overcome significant barriers to achieve success.

Service Priorities for 2024 -2025

The following service priorities set the foundation for Suffolk's Adult Learning Service in 2024–25. They reflect a commitment to equity, tailored curriculum design, and continuous quality improvement to ensure learners overcome barriers and achieve success.

Prioritise and maximise Adult Skills Funding for residents who are vulnerable, disadvantaged and or face barriers to health, life and work.

The Service is dedicated to maximising the impact of Adult Skills Funding, ensuring that resources reach residents who are vulnerable, disadvantaged, or face barriers to health, life, and work. This commitment reflects a vision of equity and opportunity for all.

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

A curriculum will be strategically designed to support learners with low prior attainment, providing pathways that build confidence, develop essential skills, and enable progression into further learning and employment.

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

Quality remains a non-negotiable standard. The Service will maintain at least a good level of provision and embed continuous improvement, striving for excellence in every aspect of delivery.

Curriculum Priorities for 2024–25

To achieve its strategic vision and strategic intent, Suffolk's Adult Learning Service identified three interconnected curriculum priorities that will shape delivery throughout 2024–25. These priorities are not simply a list of objectives—they represent a holistic approach to empowering individuals and families, breaking down barriers, and creating pathways to sustainable employment and improved wellbeing.

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

This priority addresses health, wellbeing, and life challenges that limit participation in education and employment. Programmes will integrate health and wellbeing support, resilience, and confidence-building to help learners overcome obstacles. The approach aligns with SCC's Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the NHS initiative to improve access to care, and the Department for Work & Pensions' Work and Health Programme, ensuring provision is both educational and transformative.

Improve essential skills for individuals and families.

English, maths, and digital literacy are essential for everyday life, supporting children's learning, and accessing jobs. The Service will deliver tailored programmes to build these skills, reflecting national ambitions in the Get Britain Working White Paper and supporting SCC's economic growth objectives. This priority complements regional strategies, including the NHS Workforce Training Plan, Suffolk SEND Strategy, and Tackling Poverty Strategy, reinforcing efforts to reduce inequality and improve social mobility.

Develop employability, vocational skills, and work readiness.

The third priority focuses on preparing residents for work through practical skills, vocational qualifications, and confidence-building. Courses will align with local employer needs and growth sectors, creating clear progression routes into jobs or further training. This approach supports Skills England, the Norfolk and Suffolk Local Skills Improvement Plan, and the Norfolk and Suffolk Economic Strategy, helping to develop a resilient, skilled workforce for Suffolk's future.

Expected Outcomes for 2024-2025

Suffolk's Adult Learning Service strives to create a lasting impact that reaches far beyond the classroom, shaping individuals, communities, and the local economy. Its expected outcomes reflect a vision of empowerment, inclusion, and resilience.

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

Residents will experience the transformative benefits of lifelong learning. By gaining essential skills and confidence, they will be equipped to overcome life's challenges, seize new opportunities, and participate fully in society. Learning will not only open doors to employment and further education but also foster personal growth, wellbeing, and independence.

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

Communities will become stronger and more resilient. Through targeted support and inclusive learning opportunities, the service will help address local challenges and reduce entrenched inequalities. This approach promotes social cohesion, improves health and wellbeing, and creates environments where individuals and families can thrive together.

The Local Economy will benefit from a reduction in economic inactivity and the creation of clear pathways into further learning and sustainable employment. By developing a skilled and adaptable workforce, the service will contribute to regional growth, support priority sectors, and ensure Suffolk remains competitive in an evolving labour market.

These expected outcomes are not isolated—they are interconnected. As individuals gain confidence and skills, families become stronger, communities grow more inclusive, and the economy becomes more resilient. At the heart of these priorities and outcomes is the learner. Every initiative is designed to create a ripple effect—benefiting individuals, strengthening families, and enriching communities.

For learners, this means increased confidence, reduced isolation, and improved ability to meet life's challenges. Parents will gain the tools to support their children's development, while communities will experience reduced digital exclusion and greater participation in volunteering as a stepping stone to employment. On a broader scale, the local economy will benefit from lower levels of inactivity, clearer progression routes to higher-level learning, and an expanded supply of skilled workers in key sectors.

Delivery Model and Governance

All provision is delivered through a network of locally based subcontractors operating under SCC's commissioning model. This includes:

- [Realise Futures C.I.C](#), offering core skills, family learning, life skills, and vocational pathways. (Main Subcontractor)
- [Green Light Trust](#), providing tailored learning for adults with mental health conditions or learning disabilities.
- [Inspire Suffolk](#), delivering work skills courses for long-term unemployed young adults.
- [Ipswich Community Media & Learning](#), supporting English language development for speakers of other languages.

Strategic oversight and quality assurance are maintained by SCC leaders reporting to the Adult Skills and Supported Employment Board. This governing board provides a robust framework for accountability, ensuring that all aspects of delivery align with the Service's strategic intent and statutory requirements. Board members play an active role in scrutinising performance data, validating self-assessment judgements, and challenging leaders to drive continuous improvement.

This oversight extends to safeguarding, compliance, and financial stewardship, reinforcing confidence in the integrity and effectiveness of the Service. The Strategy and Self-Assessment Report are formally reviewed and validated by board members, providing assurance that priorities are evidence-based, improvement actions are well targeted, and progress is monitored systematically. This governance model fosters transparency, shared ownership, and a culture of excellence across the Service and its subcontracted network.

Self-Assessment Process

Suffolk's Adult Learning Service maintains a rigorous, continuous self-assessment process as a cornerstone of its quality assurance framework. This approach ensures high standards of delivery and drives evidence-based improvement. The Service's commitment to excellence was reaffirmed by OFSTED's March 2024 inspection, which rated all aspects as *Good*.

The process evaluates how effectively the Service meets its strategic objectives, curriculum priorities, and learner-focused outcomes. It provides a structured mechanism for identifying strengths, addressing areas for development, and fostering innovation. All aspects of provision are covered, including leadership and management, quality of education, safeguarding, learner experience, and subcontractor performance.

Judgements are informed by a comprehensive evidence base, including performance data, subcontractor reports, quality audits, teaching observations, learner feedback, stakeholder input, and external inspection findings. This cyclical process involves:

- [Data Collection and Analysis](#) – Gathering quantitative and qualitative evidence throughout the year.

- **Evaluation and Judgement** – Measuring impact against strategic intent and curriculum priorities.
- **Validation and Governance** – SCC leaders review findings, with final judgements signed off by the Adult Skills and Supported Employment Governing Board.
- **Action Planning** – Agreeing targeted actions to drive improvement.

SCC Leaders and Managers reviewed progress against the previous year's Self-Assessment Report. Progress against the 2023–2024 Improvement Plan shows mixed results. Key actions included:

- **Initial and Diagnostic Assessments** – Digital skills improved by 20% following the introduction of an online tool. English and maths changes were implemented too late to affect outcomes. In 2025–2026, the focus will be on fully embedding changes and using progress data to close gaps.
- **Formative Feedback and ILP/LSP Reviews** – Feedback improved through SCC's moderation tool. Next year, targets will be clearer and reviews more frequent.
- **CEIAG Quality Measures** – Revised sessions boosted learner confidence, and new destination categories were added. Future work will compare models and expand enhanced offers.
- **Attendance and Retention** – Despite policies and follow-ups, retention dipped slightly. Targeted support for high-absence learners will be prioritised.
- **CPD for Pedagogical Gaps** – Logs and subject-focused training increased. Future CPD will address gaps identified through quality assurance.
- **Embedding CEIAG** – Integrated into most courses with action plans; next year's goal is a fully individualised CEIAG offer for all learners.

This process ensures the Service remains learner-focused, responsive to local needs, and aligned with national priorities. It informs strategic planning, commissioning decisions, and professional development, while providing transparency and accountability to stakeholders.

Case Study: Digital and Work Skills Learner, Realise Futures

"My learning journey with Realise Futures began in May 2024 when my partner saw an advert for a mental health course on Facebook. I had already been on a journey of self-awareness at the beginning of the year, so we thought why not!!

I went into the Lowestoft office and spoke to the lady at reception and put my name down for the Level 1 Award in Personnel Wellbeing course starting in September. 10 minutes after leaving I had a phone call to say there was an opportunity to do a Supporting Teaching course in May and was I interested? Teaching had never been anything that have ever crossed my mind, but I thought why not, the rest as they say is history! I am now doing my Level 3 Introduction to Teaching course at East Coast College, I am now on my 5th course with Realise Futures and I volunteer as well. My main reason for doing the courses at Realise Futures was to learn more about myself as a person, but as my journey has progressed, I have found a passion to try and help others to better themselves and their lives.

Having spent all my working life in retail my I.T. skills were quite limited and lacking in places! Through completing a 'Get Going' course my I.T. skills have improved greatly and I now feel more confident doing things on a computer I never dreamed of. I am now doing the DSO Level 1 course and plan to do the Level 2 course next.

Attending the courses with Realise Futures has helped to increase my confidence in every aspect of my life and that what I know and have learnt is worth sharing with others. Volunteering is an enjoyable experience and when you see a learner have a 'lightbulb' moment and grasp an idea it is rewarding and satisfying."

Section 2: Service Self-Assessment Evidence Base

This section evaluates how effectively Suffolk's Adult Learning Service achieves its strategic objectives through a fully subcontracted delivery model. It examines the role of the SCC Commissioning Team in setting the strategic framework, overseeing performance and quality, and ensuring subcontracted partners deliver provision aligned with the Service Strategy.

The assessment is structured around three core themes—**Intent, Implementation, and Impact**—providing the rationale and evidence base for judgements during the 2024–25 academic year. It highlights key strengths and outlines an action plan for the SCC Commissioning Team to drive improvement.

Rather than duplicating subcontractor self-assessment reports, this document addresses three headline questions:

- **Intent:** Are the Service's vision, priorities, and expectations clearly defined, communicated, and embedded across operations?
- **Implementation:** How effectively does the subcontracted model translate strategic intent into practice?
- **Impact:** To what extent does the curriculum deliver learner-focused outcomes that meet the Service's priorities and expectations?

Intent: Are the Service's vision, priorities, and expectations clearly defined, effectively communicated, and embedded across all operations?

Leaders have established a clear and ambitious vision that is firmly aligned with local priorities, national policy, and the needs of learners. This vision is articulated through Suffolk's Adult Learning Service Strategy 2025–2028, which sets out measurable objectives that provide clarity and direction for staff and stakeholders. Leaders demonstrate strong capacity to anticipate future challenges and opportunities, ensuring the Service remains responsive and forward-looking. Staff survey data confirms that 87% of staff agree or strongly agree that they understand the vision, reflecting effective communication and shared ownership across the Service.

The Service's intent is rooted in a commitment to empowering residents and strengthening Suffolk's social and economic fabric. By prioritising lifelong learning and targeting adults who face the greatest barriers—such as low skills, unemployment, and social exclusion—the Service ensures that education acts as a catalyst for personal growth and community resilience. It aligns closely with SCC's Corporate Strategy and regional priorities, focusing on improving health, wellbeing, and employability while addressing systemic challenges such as poverty and digital exclusion. Through inclusive, tailored programmes that build confidence, essential skills, and pathways to sustainable employment, the Service not only enhances individuals' prospects but also contributes to reducing economic inactivity, supporting families, and fostering a skilled workforce that meets local labour market needs.

Suffolk's Adult Learning Service plays a distinct role within the county's learning landscape by providing accessible, community based first step and entry level opportunities for adults with low prior attainment or significant barriers to learning. Its subcontracted delivery model enables

engagement in familiar local venues, supporting adults who may not yet be ready for mainstream college provision. Further Education (FE) colleges complement this offer by delivering higher level and more substantial programmes, including Level 2 and above. The Service therefore sits alongside colleges as an essential entry route, enabling adults to build the confidence and core skills needed to access wider learning opportunities when they are ready.

Leaders communicate the Strategy effectively through staff networking briefings, digital platforms, and stakeholder forums. Strategic priorities are consistently reinforced in operational decisions, creating strong alignment between long-term goals and day-to-day practice. Leaders actively involve staff, partners, and learners in shaping strategic intent through consultation events and feedback mechanisms, fostering shared ownership and coherence. Governance arrangements are strong; board members work collaboratively with leaders to position the Service to support those facing the greatest barriers to employment. OFSTED has noted that governors have worked closely with leaders to develop the Adult Learning Strategy and that leaders and managers have thought carefully about the role of their provision within the wider skills system.

The Service demonstrates a strong commitment to inclusivity, prioritising support for those furthest from employment. Leaders collaborate with stakeholders to identify local labour market needs and barriers faced by disadvantaged learners, tailoring programmes to build confidence, essential skills, and progression pathways. The fully subcontracted delivery model enables comprehensive county-wide provision through strong partnerships with multiple subcontractors across diverse locations. A hub-and-spoke structure ensures governance, compliance, and quality assurance at the centre, while specialist subcontractors deliver targeted learning. This approach allows for flexibility and rapid deployment of new programmes in response to labour market trends.

Leaders communicate service outcomes, performance benchmarks, and strategic priorities effectively through structured network meetings, targeted quality assurance visits, and robust contracting processes. These mechanisms ensure that expectations are consistently understood and applied across all delivery partners. Service priorities—such as maximising Adult Skills Funding for disadvantaged residents and maintaining high-quality provision—along with curriculum priorities focused on removing barriers, strengthening essential skills, and building employability, are reinforced through these channels. Evidence from provider feedback and quality reviews confirms that this approach fosters shared ownership, drives alignment with strategic intent, and supports continuous improvement, resulting in measurable gains in learner confidence, essential skills, and progression outcomes.

Intent Summary:

Leaders have established a clear, ambitious, and forward-thinking vision that is effectively communicated and embedded across all operations. Strategic priorities are consistently reinforced through governance, curriculum design, and day-to-day practice, ensuring alignment with local needs and national policy. Inclusive consultation processes foster stakeholder engagement and shared ownership, while robust systems maintain high standards of quality and accountability.

The Service demonstrates a strong commitment to inclusivity and responsiveness, targeting those furthest from learning and work and adapting provision to meet emerging labour market needs. This intent is underpinned by measurable objectives and supported by a fully subcontracted delivery model that enables flexibility and reach across Suffolk.

The Service's intent is well-defined, widely understood, and firmly embedded, creating a coherent framework that drives improvement and delivers meaningful outcomes for learners and communities.

Despite these strengths leaders recognise that aspects of external engagement require improvement. Communication with employers is not yet systematic, limiting opportunities to co-design the curriculum and ensure alignment with emerging workforce needs. Continued efforts to strengthen employer partnerships and enhance external communication of impact will further consolidate this strong foundation and position the Service to achieve its ambition of becoming outstanding.

Implementation: How successfully does the subcontracted model translate strategic intent into practice?

SCC's leaders and managers implement the subcontracted delivery model effectively so that the Service's strategic intent is consistently translated into practice. The curriculum is accessible, relevant, and pitched at the right level, enabling adults furthest from the labour market to re-engage with learning, sustain motivation, and make tangible progress.

SCC demonstrates strong and effective management of quality assurance, contracting and compliance, and data processes. These systems are well-structured, integrated, and consistently applied across the delivery network, ensuring high standards, transparency, and accountability. Through rigorous oversight, clear contractual frameworks, and robust data reporting, SCC maintains compliance, mitigates risk, and drives continuous improvement, resulting in a secure and high-quality learner experience.

SCC's quality assurance (QA) framework is rigorous and provides strong oversight, support, and challenge across the delivery network. It drives consistency between subcontractors and enables leaders to identify and address emerging risks promptly. Leaders and managers use data, learner voice, and on-site visits effectively to test implementation against strategic priorities, intervening proportionately with coaching and support where needed to secure improvement.

Performance monitoring is systematic and granular. Leaders track learners, enrolments, demographics, retention, pass and achievement each month, disaggregated by accredited and non-accredited provision, levels, and funding type. This includes the newly introduced Tailored Learning (TL) Fund, which leaders have implemented effectively as the replacement for Community Learning, ensuring continuity of access for adults needing barrier-removal and wellbeing-focused learning. The level of detail captured across all funding streams enables leaders to identify emerging risks promptly and apply targeted quality assurance interventions that sustain high standards and learner success.

A planned calendar of quality visits—typically 4–5 per subcontractor annually—combined with Network and Moderation meetings, Governing Board reviews, and quarterly performance meetings ensures iterative improvement and transparent accountability. This cadence reinforces high standards and sustained progress across a diverse delivery network.

SCC's contracting and compliance processes are robust and ensure high-quality, accountable delivery across the subcontracted network. Leaders monitor performance systematically and use

data intelligently to identify risks and intervene promptly. Alongside managing core providers, SCC also procures small, targeted contracts to respond to emerging needs or fill gaps in provision—for example, commissioning Inspire Suffolk to deliver focused support for younger adults. This flexible approach strengthens responsiveness and helps ensure the offer continues to meet local priorities.

This disciplined and transparent system ensures that SCC mitigates risk effectively, maintains legal and funding compliance, and delivers a consistently high-quality learner experience across a diverse supply chain.

SCC's data management processes are robust and highly structured, ensuring timely, accurate, and transparent reporting across all delivery partners. The organisation operates a centralised data system that captures key performance indicators and learner progress. This enables leaders and managers at SCC and across each subcontractor to maintain a clear line of sight on contractual performance against strategic priorities.

Regular reporting cycles are embedded within the framework, with subcontractors required to submit validated data at agreed intervals. SCC consolidates this information into comprehensive reports, which are shared with subcontractors to drive accountability and continuous improvement. SCC leaders use these reports effectively to identify trends, spot emerging risks, and benchmark performance across the network.

Where anomalies or gaps are detected, SCC acts swiftly - initiating data audits, providing guidance, and implementing corrective actions to maintain integrity and compliance. This systematic approach ensures that decision-making is evidence-based, risks are mitigated early, and learners receive a consistently high-quality experience.

SCC's contract management processes provide strong support to subcontractors, enabling them to implement high-quality delivery effectively. Through clear contractual frameworks, regular communication, and proactive oversight, SCC ensures that subcontractors have the guidance, resources, and accountability needed to meet standards and achieve positive learner outcomes. This results in the heightened ability of each subcontractor to successfully implement the strategic intent into practice.

Over 620 courses are carefully planned and delivered at appropriate levels by subcontractors so that learners can participate confidently and build success from their starting points. 87% of accredited aims are at Level 1 or below, and non-accredited provision is similarly focused on entry and foundation learning. Tutors use this structure well to scaffold progress, beginning with barrier-removal and confidence-building before moving learners on to essential skills and employability pathways. The curriculum mix reflects curriculum priorities: 53% of courses remove barriers to health, life and work; 25% strengthen English, maths, ESOL and digital skills; and 22% develop employability and sector-specific readiness. This careful sequencing enables learners to take first steps back into learning and then progress to accredited or vocational routes that are relevant to local labour market need.

The subcontracted model is community-rooted and responsive. Subcontractors collaborate with more than 70 local partners and deliver provision through over 75 venues, reducing travel barriers and providing learning in familiar, trusted settings. Schools and community partners value the Service's low-burden, high-impact approach to engagement. Headteachers highlight the positive effect of workshops on parental involvement and school-home relationships. External

stakeholders, including Jobcentre Plus and health organisations, endorse the Service for its responsiveness and quality, citing tangible outcomes such as improved employability and health literacy. These partnerships amplify reach and reinforce the Service's strategic intent.

Subcontractor leaders consistently demonstrate high expectations of their learners and are ambitious for their success. They set clear standards, provide strong support, and foster a culture of aspiration that drives learners to achieve their goals and progress to positive destinations.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is strong across subcontractors. 99% of teaching is judged good or outstanding, with well-sequenced programmes and contextualised delivery tailored to learners' needs. Tutors use clear pre-course information, which 93% of learners rate positively, to set appropriate expectations and help learners understand the purpose and progression opportunities of their courses. Consequently, learners report very high satisfaction; 99% rate their experience as good or excellent. Learners develop the confidence and core skills they need to access further training or employment pathways, in line with the Service's intent.

Centres are safe and welcoming, often staffed by individuals drawn from the communities they serve, which fosters trust, positive behaviour, and sustained engagement. Induction arrangements are thorough and embed Safeguarding, PREVENT and British Values effectively, setting clear expectations for conduct and participation.

Learner attendance is closely monitored against a service-wide threshold of 80%, providing an important indicator of engagement and programme viability. However, the Service places greater emphasis on retention and personalised support rather than punitive measures. Where learners face challenging personal circumstances, staff intervene promptly with flexible solutions, encouragement, and access to additional resources to help them persevere and succeed. This approach reflects a commitment to inclusivity and resilience, ensuring that learners are not disadvantaged by temporary barriers and can achieve their goals despite difficulties.

Implementation Summary:

Leaders and managers implement the subcontracted delivery model effectively so that the Service's strategic intent is consistently translated into practice. Provision is accessible, relevant, and pitched at the right level, enabling adults furthest from the labour market to re-engage with learning and make sustained progress. Courses are delivered in community settings by skilled staff and supported by robust quality assurance arrangements that maintain high standards across the network.

Leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of where implementation requires improvement. They are taking purposeful and well-targeted action to strengthen initial and diagnostic assessment, improve the quality and impact of formative feedback, embed structured careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG), and develop a coherent, career-long CPD offer for tutors. They are also prioritising enhanced oversight of subcontractor quality assurance processes to ensure consistency and accelerate improvement.

These actions are well considered and demonstrate leaders' strong capacity for improvement. As they embed, the Service is well placed to secure greater consistency and deepen the positive impact of learning on learners' confidence, wellbeing, and progression into employment or further study.

Impact: To what extent does the curriculum deliver learner-focused outcomes that meet the Service's priorities and expectations?

The impact of Suffolk's Adult Learning Service is good and sustained. Leaders' strategic intent consistently translates into real gains in confidence, essential skills, and work readiness for adults furthest from education and employment. Ofsted's March 2024 validates the Service's commitment to inclusive, high-quality provision and its focus on adults with the steepest barriers to participation.

Engagement and Reach: The Service engages a high proportion of disadvantaged adults and sustains strong participation across Suffolk.

Reach is deliberate and evidence based. In 2024–25, the Service successfully earned over 99% of Adult Skills Funding, avoiding clawback and demonstrating precise targeting and strong financial stewardship. The learner profile confirms deep reach into disadvantage: 67% were unemployed, 30% lived in uplift areas among the 10% most deprived nationally, and 43.1% declared a learning difficulty, disability, or health condition—a proportion that continues to rise year on year. [These figures show leaders directing provision to those facing the greatest barriers and sustaining participation where it matters most.](#)

The Service performs strongly in engaging learners with additional needs. The proportion of learners declaring a learning difficulty or disability (LLDD) is almost double the national average, evidencing a clear commitment to inclusive provision and effective outreach. National data shows LLDD learners account for 22.9% of the cohort in 2024/25 (up from 21.8% the previous year), whereas the Service significantly exceeds this benchmark—[indicating that learners with LLDD are well represented and supported within the curriculum offer.](#)

The Service's reach into deprived communities is equally notable. While national data reports that 28% of adult learners come from the most deprived category, Suffolk's Adult Learning Service serves 30% of learners living in the 10% most deprived areas. This demonstrates a positive impact on widening participation and tackling barriers to learning for those in disadvantaged circumstances. Although definitions of deprivation differ, [the contextual comparison evidence strong alignment with strategic priorities for equity and access.](#)

Despite ongoing funding constraints, the Service continues to demonstrate resilience and reach. In 2024–25, more than 2,300 adults engaged in learning, generating over 4,000 enrolments—a clear sign that demand remains strong and learners trust the offer. This figure represents an increase in learner numbers compared to 2023–24 (2,258) but remains broadly consistent with previous years, confirming stability despite external pressures. [Enrolments have held steady across three years \(4,003 in 2022–23; 3,935 in 2023–24; 3,949 in 2024–25\), evidencing resilience in participation.](#)

Community Model of Delivery: The hub-and-spoke delivery model is highly effective in reducing barriers and embedding learning in trusted local venues.

Provision is community rooted, delivered through 75+ venues and partnerships with 70+ local organisations, placing learning in trusted settings—schools, community centres, and outdoor spaces—reducing travel and confidence barriers and extending reach into high deprivation

areas. Stakeholders, including schools, Jobcentre Plus, and health partners, endorse this low burden, high impact model, [reporting tangible gains in confidence, health literacy, and employability for residents who might otherwise be excluded](#).

Strategic partnerships amplify access and progression. The collaboration between BSC Multicultural Services (BSCMS) and Ipswich Community Media and Learning (ICML) is a good example which strengthens access for migrant, refugee, and BME communities, creating volunteering and employment opportunities, building confidence, and promoting social inclusion. [Staff benefit from professional development and networking; learners gain pathways into work and further learning](#).

[Alicia's journey exemplifies this: initially joining to improve her English, she progressed to become a volunteer and Community Champion at ICML. Her multilingual skills and empathy now support ESOL learners and enable her to act as an interpreter at careers fairs and health events, ensuring inclusivity. Alicia's contribution extends beyond the classroom—she inspires peers and staff, demonstrating how confidence and skills gained through learning can lead to leadership, volunteering, and strengthened community cohesion.](#)

Curriculum Sequencing: The curriculum is well-structured and sequenced to build confidence, essential skills, and employability in a logical progression.

Learners consistently report increased confidence, improved wellbeing, and renewed hope for the future, demonstrating how learning experiences are designed to remove barriers, rebuild confidence, and progress capability in a deliberate sequence. The curriculum follows a clear journey: first tackling barriers and restoring confidence, then strengthening essential skills (English, maths, ESOL, digital), and finally developing employability and vocational readiness through short, purposeful routes linked to local opportunities. These three curriculum priorities sit alongside service priorities—targeting disadvantaged residents, maintaining at least good quality, and pitching learning at entry and foundation levels—so adults with low prior attainment can succeed. Staff and partners understand and reinforce this alignment, embedding it in day-to-day practice.

From the outset, learners can trace this sequence in their own progress: barrier removal builds confidence; essential skills consolidate capability; vocational routes convert readiness into progression. As one learner summed up, [“This course has given me the confidence to apply for and gain employment.”](#) Another reflected on the wider benefits, [“Probably the best thing I have ever done,”](#) while a participant in community-based provision shared that they [“always leave the woods smiling and laughing,”](#) describing [“a magic that happens”](#)—testimony to the effect of trusted, community settings. The design enables anxious or disengaged adults to re-enter education, stay the course, and make steady progress into work or further study. Learner voice mirrors this cumulative impact: [“I have made good progress; I feel more confident in my ability to do more courses,”](#) showing how confidence gains sustain participation.

Service Performance: Overall performance is strong, with retention, pass rates, and learner satisfaction consistently above Service benchmarks.

Strong implementation of the subcontracted delivery model and a carefully sequenced curriculum have resulted in consistently high performance across the Service. Robust quality assurance, effective governance, and a learner-centred approach underpin this success,

ensuring that provision remains accessible, inclusive, and aligned with strategic priorities. These foundations [have driven improvements in retention, pass rates, and achievement, while maintaining exceptional learner satisfaction and safeguarding standards.](#)

Performance continues to trend positively at whole service level: over three years, retention has moved from 90% (2023–24) to 91% (2024–25); pass from 95% to 96%; and overall achievement from 86% to 87%, evidencing stronger learner persistence and successful outcomes despite a marginal dip in headcount (2,258 → 2,205) and a stable volume of enrolments (3,935 → 3,949) year on year. [This progress occurred during a year of significant delivery changes, including shifts in funding streams and a notable increase in non-accredited learning compared to accredited learning.](#)

Provider data show this headline is underpinned by [consistent subcontractor performance](#): Realise Futures (main subcontractor) delivered 92% retention, 95% pass and 87% achievement in 2024–25; Inspire Suffolk achieved 98% retention, 100% pass and 98% achievement; Green Light Trust sustained 88% retention, 98% pass and 86% achievement; and Ipswich Community Media & Learning recorded 86% achievement with a 100% pass rate, validating strong delivery quality across the network.

Equity of outcomes is sustained across priority groups. Learners declaring a learning difficulty, disability, or health condition achieved 86%, with 90% retention and 95% pass, broadly in line with the Service's overall achievement of 87%, validating inclusive practice. Analysis by ethnicity shows White British learners achieving 89%, White ethnic minorities 86%, and all other ethnic minorities 83%, with pass and retention consistently at or above 90–96%. Gender (sex at birth) analysis reflects similar parity: female learners achieved 88% and male learners 87%, with pass rates above 95% and retention around 90–92% across both groups. [These patterns confirm that the Service delivers a consistently high-quality experience, with modest, explainable variations linked to cohort profiles and aim types.](#)

[Learner satisfaction is equally compelling.](#) Almost three-quarters rated their experience as 'Excellent', with a further 26% marking it 'Good'. In fact, 98.7% of learners said they would recommend the Service, a powerful endorsement of its quality and impact. These figures do more than measure performance—they tell a story of adults overcoming barriers, staying the course, and achieving outcomes that matter for confidence, skills, and future opportunities.

Learners narrate the line of sight from safety and confidence to employability: *[“I feel more confident to talk and to apply for a new job,”](#)* followed by *[“I can take my increased confidence into work.”](#)* Confidence is converted into labour market behaviours—CV building, applications, interviews, and workplace readiness—supported by work skills courses that equip learners with practical tools for job applications and interviews. As one learner reported, *[“This course has given me the confidence to apply for and gain employment.”](#)*

Curriculum Areas: Tailored learning is highly effective and delivers outstanding outcomes, while accredited achievement remains below ambition.

Suffolk's Adult Learning Service delivers a curriculum deliberately structured to remove barriers, strengthen essential skills, and develop work readiness. This approach is evident across both non-accredited and accredited provision, each playing a distinct but complementary role in the learner journey.

Non-Accredited Provision: Removing Barriers and Building Confidence

Non-accredited learning acts as the foundation for engagement, enabling adults furthest from education and employment to overcome personal, social, and health-related barriers. In 2024–25, this strand reached 1,817 learners with 2,763 starts, achieving exceptional results—96% retention, 99% pass, and 95% achievement. Courses focus on confidence-building, wellbeing, and family learning, creating safe, supportive environments where learners can re-engage with education. Tailored Learning (TL) exemplifies this impact: 24% of participants joined to build confidence, 30% to support children’s learning, and 17% to prepare for employment. Outcomes mirror these intents, with learners reporting improved confidence, resilience, and mental health—critical enablers for progression into essential skills and vocational pathways. Non-accredited learning plays a vital role in supporting personal and family development. One in five enrolments focus on health and wellbeing, with learners reporting transformative experiences.

Health and wellbeing programmes help learners overcome isolation and mental health challenges, fostering positive attitudes towards learning and life. One participant reflected, *“This course has helped me grow as a person and got me used to being around people again. It gave me the confidence to be part of the world again.”* Learners report increased confidence, resilience, and wellbeing—key factors enabling them to sustain learning and progress towards employment.

Case studies and learner voice consistently confirm that participants feel more motivated and hopeful about the future, with many citing improved ability to manage everyday challenges. As one learner put it, *“When I started my course I was at a very low point in my life. The help and support I received really kept me going. My social skills have improved, I’ve made new friends, and now I have hope for the future. If I had received this kind of support 25 years ago, I would be in a much better place today.”*

Family learning expanded significantly, with almost two in five non-accredited enrolments helping parents and carers support their children’s development. Feedback from both partners and learners highlighted the positive impact: schools valued the low-stress, high-engagement approach, while parents gained practical tools to assist with schoolwork and personal growth.

These programmes amplify their effect by equipping parents with strategies to support literacy and numeracy at home, fostering intergenerational learning and breaking cycles of disadvantage. Alongside this, health and wellbeing courses reduce isolation and restore motivation, while Work Skills programmes provide practical tools—such as communication, teamwork, and digital literacy—bridging the gap between confidence-building and employment readiness.

Additionally, one in eight non-accredited enrolments were first steps into adult learning for Suffolk residents, *demonstrating the program’s reach in engaging new learners*. Crucially, more than half of respondents who completed courses expressed confidence to continue learning—either with their current provider or elsewhere—underscoring the effectiveness of CEIAG and learner-centred provision.

Accredited Provision: Strengthening Core Skills and Work Readiness

Accredited learning builds on this foundation, focusing on essential skills—English, maths, ESOL, and digital—that underpin independence, family life, and employability. Provision is carefully pitched to learner need: 96% of accredited aims are at Entry or Level 1, enabling adults with low prior attainment to succeed. In 2024–25, accredited provision supported 665 learners across 1,186 starts, achieving 81% retention, 86% pass, and 70% overall achievement. While these outcomes confirm progress, they also highlight the challenge of sustaining achievement at early levels. Leaders have diagnosed the key constraints and have put action in place to improve.

Accredited pathways consolidate essential skills and prepare learners for vocational routes aligned to local labour market needs. Digital skills programmes, for example, enable progression from beginner to Level 2, equipping learners for modern workplaces. ESOL courses build language confidence and community participation, creating a platform for accredited study and employment. [These routes convert confidence into competence and readiness for work, supported by careers guidance and employer engagement activities that connect learning to real-world opportunities.](#)

Quality of Teaching: Teaching, learning, and assessment are consistently good or outstanding, with lessons contextualised to real-life and work scenarios.

Impact is sustained by a rigorous quality assurance cadence—4–5 quality visits per subcontractor annually, network and moderation meetings, quarterly performance reviews, and Governing Board scrutiny—which drives consistency, transparency, and timely intervention across the network. Leaders are reinforcing this further: the main subcontractor has appointed a dedicated Quality Manager for 2025–26 to embed a more systematic QA cycle and accelerate progress against the Service’s Quality Improvement Plan.

Observations confirm that most teaching is judged good or outstanding, with well-planned lessons that scaffold progress from starting points and contextualise learning to real life and work related scenarios. Learners validate this experience: 80.4% rate teaching ‘Excellent’ and 18.9% ‘Good’; pre-course information—critical for setting expectations and commitment—is rated 46.9% ‘Excellent’ and 47.5% ‘Good’, helping learners understand the purpose of their course and progression routes into further learning, volunteering, or employment. Overall satisfaction reflects the consistency of delivery: 73.3% ‘Excellent’, 25.8% ‘Good’, and 98.7% would recommend the Service.

Personalised guidance is a consistent thread, translating aspiration into next steps. One learner explained: *“Lauren made me feel so comfortable from the get-go... She helped me to contact West Suffolk College about an English course, and I will be starting Level 1 Functional Skills with them in 2026. I will also be starting Digital Skills too. I am now more hopeful for the future and am looking forward to my learning next year.”* The pedagogy itself is experienced as inclusive and transformational: *“This course has completely changed my life for the better. I feel more confident... My tutor is doing a great job to help everyone and understand how we all learn different.”*

Safeguarding and Support: Safeguarding arrangements are robust and effective, creating a safe and supportive environment for learners.

Safeguarding secures participation and confidence. Reported incidents reduced markedly from 22 to 12 year on year; partners commend timely interventions and clear reporting that protect learners and maintain trust. Learners confirm they feel safe, respected, and supported—93.6% felt well supported and 91.6% enjoyed their course. Staff confidence is high: 94% agreed/strongly agreed procedures are robust and that they can support learners to be safe and feel safe. This secure climate allows adults to focus on building skills and confidence, and learners explicitly tie safety to employability: *“I enjoyed the course because I feel more confident to talk and to apply for a new job,” and “I can take my increased confidence into work.”*

The Service exceeded its 80% (84%) attendance benchmark, reflecting strong engagement. Leaders prioritise personalised support and retention over punitive measures, recognising barriers such as low confidence, poor mental health, caring responsibilities, and economic disadvantage. Staff respond quickly with flexible solutions, encouragement, and resources to help learners succeed.

Withdrawals have reduced year-on-year, confirming that these actions work. Most withdrawals result from illness or caring responsibilities, not service failure, and retention remains strong at 91%. Positive withdrawals to employment account for 7%, evidencing progression into work. Importantly, withdrawals due to course expectations fell from 8% to 5%, and unknown reasons declined, showing improved pre-course advice and follow-up. *Financial and transport issues are negligible, confirming accessibility measures are effective.*

Progression and Destination: Most learners progress into further learning, volunteering, or employment, though destination tracking for employment requires strengthening.

Learners make good and sustained progress from their starting points. Most begin with significant barriers to learning, including low prior attainment, poor confidence, and limited engagement with education. The curriculum is carefully sequenced to enable learners to take first steps back into learning through short, confidence building courses before progressing to longer, more substantial programmes. This approach is highly effective in supporting learners to develop essential skills in English, maths, ESOL, and digital literacy, alongside employability and vocational skills.

Progression is evident across multiple pathways: many learners achieve at least one level of progression in English and maths, with some achieving two levels over successive years (e.g. Entry → Level 1 → Level 2). Digital skills pathways lead from introductory workshops to accredited Level 2 qualifications, enabling learners to meet digital competency requirements for modern life and work.

While Suffolk’s Adult Learning Service does support learners to progress closer to employment, the evidence demonstrates that adult learning serves a much broader purpose for learners. For some, the primary motivation is not immediate entry into the labour market but rather personal development, confidence-building, and improved wellbeing.

Delivery models reinforce this approach. Courses funded through Tailored Learning (TL) focus on mental health recovery, family learning, and life skills, enabling learners to re-engage with education in safe, supportive environments. For example, Green Light Trust provides

programmes for adults with mental health conditions or learning disabilities, helping them take a more active role in society rather than prioritising employment. Similarly, family learning courses empower parents to support their children's education, fostering intergenerational benefits and reducing isolation.

Case studies and learner voice consistently highlight transformative impacts such as *“feeling part of the world again”* and *“gaining confidence to manage everyday challenges,”* underscoring that adult learning is as much about personal empowerment as economic progression.

The non accredited provision demonstrates a strong and measurable impact on learners' lives. The most significant outcome is that learners feel empowered to support their children's education, aligning directly with the intent of the Learning in Families curriculum and contributing to Suffolk's wider strategic focus on improving educational outcomes for children. *This evidences that ALS courses are highly effective in meeting their stated aims.*

Across all non-accredited curriculum themes, increased learner confidence emerges as a consistently high-impact outcome, ranking first or second in significance. This improvement reflects the transformative effect of acquiring new skills and knowledge, fostering positive attitudes towards learning and increasing the likelihood of sustained engagement and progression. *Notably, Digital Skills learners report confidence as their most significant gain, indicating enhanced ability to navigate the digital world.*

Improved skills for work represent the third most significant outcome, particularly within the Work Skills curriculum, confirming successful delivery against funding priorities and curriculum intent. Analysis of outcomes beyond family learning delivery further reinforces this impact: of 1,873 aims where supporting children was not the primary focus, 26% reported improved confidence and 22% reported enhanced skills for work. *These findings demonstrate that ALS provision not only meets its core objectives but also delivers broader benefits that support learners' personal and economic progression.*

Volunteering is a stepping stone, strengthening community engagement and work readiness. Although direct progression into employment from initial courses is less common, the Service effectively moves learners closer to the labour market through essential skills development, vocational training aligned to local opportunities, and CEIAG support. Learners frequently describe transformative journeys—from isolation and low confidence to active participation in learning, volunteering, and work—*demonstrating impact on social mobility and economic resilience.*

Leaders have reset destination measurement for 2024/25 to ensure reporting more accurately reflects the impact of learning. Revised categories now capture changes in learner status, establishing a new and reliable baseline year. This shift is particularly important given that the funding authority has removed destination capture from the ILR, increasing the need for a robust local model.

Across the Service in 2024/25, 57% of in scope learners achieved a positive progression (excluding those not contactable). Of these over 11% moved into employment or self-employment, and the remainder continued their learning, *evidencing strengthened focus on meaningful learner outcomes.*

Leaders will confirm a clear service wide direction for destination capture, ensuring full alignment across SCC and subcontractors. Contact and follow up routines will be strengthened to reduce unknown outcomes. The revised framework will be fully embedded, [ensuring clarity between primary progression and secondary impact measures](#).

Leaders have therefore established a clear baseline, improved the clarity and purpose of destination classifications, and committed to a unified strategic approach. These actions position the service to demonstrate more consistent and meaningful impact from 2025/26 onwards.

While current destination capture processes meet the compliance requirements of the funding authority, they do not enable leaders to fully understand the true long-term impact of the Service. [This is because much of the real effect on learners' lives occurs over an extended period and often involves multiple interventions](#).

Progression into sustainable employment or higher-level learning typically follows a cumulative journey—starting with confidence-building, moving through essential skills, and culminating in vocational or accredited pathways. Capturing destinations at a single point in time provides only a snapshot, at times misses the ripple effect that unfolds over years as learners continue to engage, develop, and progress. To evidence this deeper impact, [leaders will discuss how longitudinal tracking and richer qualitative data that reflect the sustained outcomes of adult learning beyond initial course completion can be achieved](#).

Michelle's journey exemplifies lifelong learning and transformation. Beginning as a learner with Realise Futures, she progressed through digital skills courses from beginner to advanced, achieving a full diploma alongside Business Administration and SAGE qualifications. She transitioned into a Learning Administrator role—a pivotal career change showing how adult learning fosters employability and economic resilience. Her commitment continued with English and Maths, overcoming personal challenges to achieve Level 2 qualifications and earning 'Learner of the Year'. Michelle subsequently gained First Aid and Mental Health First Aid, completed Level 2 Supporting Teaching and Level 3 Education and Training awards, and now contributes as both administrator and educator. This progression illustrates the Service's ability to nurture talent, build professional capacity, and create pathways into teaching, strengthening the local skills ecosystem. Her story reflects the Service's ethos: empowering individuals to overcome barriers, achieve personal and professional goals, and inspire others.

Ripple Effect: Adult learning generates a significant ripple effect, improving lives, strengthening communities, and supporting inclusive economic growth.

The impact of Suffolk's Adult Learning Service is systemic and far-reaching. It begins with individual transformation—building confidence, resilience, and essential skills—and extends into families, communities, and the wider economy. This is not a narrow intervention; it is a strategic lever for social mobility and economic resilience.

For residents, adult learning restores confidence, improves wellbeing, and equips individuals with practical skills for modern life and work. Learners move from isolation to active participation, gaining the ability to manage everyday challenges, support their children's

education, and pursue new opportunities. These changes reduce dependency on public services and foster independence.

For families and communities, the effect is intergenerational and cultural. Parents become better equipped to support children's learning, breaking cycles of disadvantage and embedding a culture of lifelong learning. Communities benefit from increased volunteering, stronger social networks, and reduced isolation, creating environments where collaboration and resilience thrive.

For the economy, adult learning reduces economic inactivity and strengthens the local workforce. Adults progress into employment, further training, or volunteering, creating a pipeline of motivated, locally rooted talent aligned to Suffolk's growth sectors. As household incomes rise and reliance on benefits falls, spending power supports local businesses, productivity improves, and Suffolk remains competitive in an evolving labour market.

This ripple effect compounds over time: individual gains translate into stronger families, cohesive communities, and a resilient economy. Adult learning is therefore not only an educational service—it is a driver of inclusive growth, social cohesion, and long-term prosperity for Suffolk.

Impact Summary:

Suffolk's Adult Learning Service demonstrates a strong and sustained impact on learners, communities, and the local economy. The curriculum is deliberately structured to remove barriers, rebuild confidence, and progress adults into further learning, volunteering, and employment. Its reach into disadvantage is intentional and effective, with performance indicators—retention, pass rates, and learner satisfaction—consistently above benchmarks. Safeguarding and quality assurance remain rigorous, creating a safe and supportive environment where learners thrive.

Learner voice and case studies, vividly illustrate this transformation. These stories show how tailored, community-rooted provision enables adults to overcome isolation, improve wellbeing, and develop essential skills that lead to meaningful progression. They highlight the Service's ability to turn aspiration into achievement and foster resilience across families and communities.

However, the main constraint on overall performance is achievement in accredited learning. Leaders have accurately diagnosed the underlying causes—variable initial and diagnostic assessment, formative feedback that is not consistently action-focused, and uneven embedding of CEIAG—and have initiated targeted improvement actions. These include strengthening subcontractor quality assurance, refining assessment processes, and evolving CPD to ensure consistent, high-impact delivery. Addressing these areas will be critical to closing achievement gaps and realising the Service's ambition to move from good to outstanding.

Driving Improvement: Priorities for 2025–2026

The SCC Commissioning Team will play a central role in supporting improvement priorities and ensuring the Service moves closer to its ambition of becoming outstanding. Its focus will be on strengthening achievement, quality management, and strategic enablers that underpin learner progression and impact.

Achievement Improvement

Raising achievement rates in accredited provision—particularly at Entry Level and Level 1 in English, maths, and digital skills—is the Service’s most critical priority for 2025–26. Digital Functional Skills qualifications at Entry Level 3 and Level 1 and Maths Functional Skills at Level 2 are identified as key focus areas. Current achievement stands at 70%, below the Service’s ambition to be outstanding. To address this, the Commissioning Team will implement enhanced oversight through granular data monitoring, targeted challenge, and coaching during quality visits. Early risk identification and timely intervention will be supported by clearer progression pathways and more impactful formative feedback, enabling the main subcontractor to close gaps and accelerate learner success.

The Commissioning Team will support the strengthening of the subcontractor QA cycle to ensure consistency and impact across the delivery network. This includes embedding sustainable quality management practices that accelerate progress against the Service’s Quality Improvement Plan.

To underpin achievement and quality improvements, the Commissioning Team will also focus on three supplementary areas: Structured CEIAG; CPD Development and Initial and Diagnostic Assessment

Employer Engagement

Employer engagement is essential to align provision with workforce needs and create clear progression routes into employment. The Commissioning Team will convene or join sector-specific employer forums and facilitate curriculum development workshops with subcontractors and local businesses. These actions will strengthen links between learning and labour market opportunities, ensuring that vocational pathways reflect emerging skills demands and improve employment outcomes for learners.

Destination Capture

The Service will establish a unified, long-term approach to progression and destination tracking, moving beyond compliance. The Commissioning Team will lead on developing a consistent framework across all subcontractors, providing clear guidance and templates.

Case Study: 2025 Suffolk Adult Learners’ Awards, Runner-up, Jacqui Payne, Realise Futures

“My learning has made such a difference to my capabilities. When I first started, I did not think I was capable, but now I know that I am more capable than I thought. I feel I am able to do whatever I want as it has given me the confidence

to try new things. It has also given me direction, rather than feeling overwhelmed, and a new sense of purpose... it has given me that drive again and I want to get going. I now have options and plenty of ideas.

I would never have taken the steps to learn more where I am at my current job, especially the fact that it involves numeracy. I have previously shied away from anything to do with maths, due to a very poor attendance at school and lacked education as a result. But since returning to study Maths and English and learning new computer skills, my life has changed considerably. I am forever grateful to Realise Futures for the opportunities I've been given and the confidence this has given me to look forward to my future with positivity and renewed excitement."

Further Information

2024-25 Self-assessment Report

The full Report can be found here: [About Us - Learn Suffolk](#)

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Suffolk Adult Learning Service Strategy 2025-28

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