Business Support

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

BRIEFING NOTE – No. 03/23

Date: October 2023

Briefing paper to: All Members of the Business Support Overview & Scrutiny Committee

**Purpose: Medway Adult Education Services Measure of Success**

1. **Do we measure how many people that attend our work courses move into work?**

In 23/24 – all learners that finish studying (completed or withdrawn) at MAE will be emailed a destination survey one month after end date.

A lot of focus is being put on improving our destination data, it is a challenging and resource hungry task, however we are trying some new methods this year. For example entering people into a prize draw who respond to our survey.

So far 8 people from the 50+ Course have moved into work.

1. **What consideration is given to AI in the development of courses?**

We offer courses from pre-entry Level to Level 2 and GCSEs in English and maths. MAE adjusts the number and location of courses in response to demand. Over the past year, demand for maths courses has increased. This is in part due to recovery from the pandemic, but it is more accelerated than the increase in demand for English, potentially due to the impact of Multiply funding and it promotion.

The area of AI is evolving rapidly. The introduction of ChatGPT and similar AI products has generated opportunities that educators are looking to explore further. It has features that could adapt learning content to make it more accessible. For instance, by adapting the language in questions or providing solutions to math problems. However, there are also concerns that it may negatively affect the development of language and problem-solving skills by creating a reliance on recall rather than deeper learning and conceptualisation.

Another aspect of concern in this area is the increased risk of plagiarism. To reduce these risks learners, receive guidance on the importance of submitting their own work and the implication of plagiarism. This also forms part of our approach to British Values in terms of respect and rule of law. Alongside this, learners are taught online safety and are encouraged to develop critical thinking skills, such as being aware that search engines may generate results that are biased.

We are currently open minded and keen to understand more about the increased use of AI and its potential. This includes finding out more on how it might be used to reduce tutor workload. We are continuing to share good practice and concerns with colleagues across the country and in HOLEX as the landscape develops.

1. **How do we know that our programmes are value for money to the tax payer?**

Pound Plus approach – Community Learning courses are designed to be cost effective and impactful. They do not generate an income as such but the income generated for courses that people pay for are used to support funding for other courses to make them more accessible to learners who may be the hardest to reach and furthest from education.

* Funding – there has been very little uplift in funding rates in the last ten years. Qualification courses are funded using a formula set by the Education Skills Funding Agency. These do not enable a provider to make a profit from the courses. Therefore, we offer courses that meet demand and ensure the qualifications offered are relevant, of high quality and meet the needs of learners and employers.
* We only enrol learners onto courses that are suitable for them. When learners join MAE we establish their starting points and ensure they are placed on courses that are suitable for their needs. This ensures we can assess the progress learners make and that learners are challenged and stretched appropriately. This approach is also used with apprentices. We analyse their prior learning and skills to design a programme that is bespoke to their needs and adjust the funding claimed per apprentice accordingly.
* The curriculum is designed in consultation with the community, employers, learners and other stakeholders to ensure that it meets the community needs. We are required to have a rationale or ‘intent’ behind each course and we monitor our effectiveness in terms of ‘impact’. For example, the purpose of a Tai-Chi for Dementia class can include to reduce social isolation, maintain physical and mental health and support cognition. We assess the impact of such courses through end of course surveys but also through speaking to learners and their carers/support networks. Feedback is strong and indicates we are meeting our aims.

MAE provide excellent value for tax payers money as the courses have lots of positive social impacts that can be much harder to measure. Here are just a few:

* Developing learners awareness and maintenance of healthy and active lifestyles, which has the potential to reduce costs to NHS and other services.
* Reduction in social isolation which can have mental health benefits and reduce the need for intervention.
* Developing skills to support career progression – MAE’s courses provide stepping stones to progression routes that ensure learners develop solid foundation skills prior to specialising. Our strong links with other learning providers and employers mean we can signpost learners to partners who can support them to progress further.
* To manage budgets and obtain support through the cost of living crisis.
* To ensure people know how to keep themselves safe – understanding how to stay safe online, at a festival, reducing the risk of radicalisation and knowing where you can go if you have concerns about an adult or a child.
* To support learners in understanding how they can help their children to learn and become more involved in their family’s education which has the potential to improve the life chances of our younger generations.
* Improve awareness of climate change and green issues leading to greater commitment to the Medway community and pride in Medway.
* Develop learners’ potential which can lead to learners’ improved earnings and spending power within the local economy.
* We listen to learner voice to understand the impact of courses from learners’ perspective. Approaches used include surveys, speaking to learners in the centre and during lesson visits, forums, etc. End of course surveys demonstrate very high rates of learner satisfaction consistently across programmes.

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