Aberdeenshire
C O U N C I L

Education & Children's Services

**REPORT TO EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE –
21 MARCH 2019**

LITERACY STRATEGY: UPDATE

1   Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

**1.1   Note and comment on progress regarding the continued
        development of the Literacy Strategy (as detailed in Appendix 1).**

1.2   Approve the ongoing development of the Strategy.

**1.3   Agree to receive a further update report on progress, in
        December, 2019.**

2   Background / Discussion

2.1   The Scottish Government has highlighted the importance of literacy in "creating a more
       successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing
       sustainable economic growth".   This is recognised in the National Performance
       Framework indicator to "reduce the number of working age people with severe literacy
       problems".

2.2   The aims of the Strategy are to recognise and address the need for support and
       development within the wider spectrum of literacies. Literacy needs are often evident
       in transition stages in the life of individuals, families or communities eg change of
       school or job, health and bereavement.

2.3   The Education and Children's Services Committee considered a first draft of the
       Literacy Strategy on 2 March, 2018. The Committee offered comments on the draft
       and instructed officers to revise the Strategy document, to reflect comments made at
       the the Education and Children's Services Committee and at area committees.

2.4   The draft Strategy was tabled at meetings of the Aberdeenshire Learning Community
       Partnership (ALCP) and, in addition, a number of meetings were held with individual
       members of the Partnership. It was agreed to form a sub-group of the ALCP to
       progress the next draft of the Strategy. These discussions included the participation of
       representatives from the third sector, including Linking Education and Disability
       (LEAD) Scotland, the Foyer, Workers Educational Association, Federation of Rural
       Partnerships, the Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership, Alcohol and
       Drugs Partnership, Police Scotland, HMP Grampian, Skills Development Scotland,
       Aberdeen University, Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action, Community Learning and
       Development, Schools and North East Scotland College. The sub-group has been
       meeting to develop the Strategy and to ensure that the comments of the Education
       and Children's Services Committee and the area committees were reflected in the
       document. The Aberdeenshire Learning Community Partnership will continue to
       progress development of the Strategy and the implementation of the action plan, and
       monitor that progress.

2.5   Much of the previous draft has been removed to make the Strategy a more accessible read, and it is proposed to produce an easy read version of the final Strategy. In addition to the redrafting of the narrative, the addition of a plan with key actions, measures and timescales was created to address the comments made by committees. Creating linkages with other plans and strategies helps locate the aims of the Literacy Strategy with, for example, the Parental Involvement and Family Learning and Digital Learning strategies.

2.6   Stakeholders are invited to a Literacy Strategy seminar on 18 March, where they will be invited to contribute further to the Strategy and its action plan, and to be engaged in delivering the actions within it. This will include defining the key literacies that will be the focus of the Strategy, sharing data around current needs and engagement with those who would benefit from strengthening their literacies, and looking at where they can participate in the activity associated in the action plan.

2.7   The draft Strategy will be the subject of consultation with learners by partners involved in the key literacies learning, over the period March to June, 2019, to seek their feedback.

2.8   The timescales to implement the actions associated with the Strategy are within the draft action plan.

2.9   The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report. They are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

3   Scheme of Governance

3.1   The Committee is able to take a decision on this item in terms of Section E.1.1.b of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance, as it relates to Education.

4   Implications and Risk

4.1   An equality impact assessment is not required.

4.2   There are no staffing and financial implications.

4.3   No risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level. At a Directorate Level, failure to implement the Strategy could mean staff inadequately supported to deliver literacy.

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Director of Education and Children's Services

Report prepared by Philip Boath, Adult Learning Team Manager
Date 18 February, 2019

Appendix 1

Draft Literacy Strategy and Action Plan 2019-21

Purpose:

1. Introduction:

Need for the Strategy

A number of partners within Aberdeenshire support learners in their development of literacies in Aberdeenshire. There currently exists no strategic context for those partners to locate their support and seek a progression pathway where appropriate. This strategy sets out to create that context and provides a focus for stakeholders to work together to coordinate support for learners seeking to improve their life chances by developing one of a number of key literacies.

Understandings and definitions of what constitutes Literacies differ. At this stage we are inclusive about the language/terminology being used and the assumptions attached to those definitions and will develop a common understanding of what is encompassed, without dismissing the differences to ensure all literacies are valued and supported.

A helpful inclusive definition is offered by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) which views literacy as a fundamental human right, also stating that:

'Literacy is about more than reading and writing - it is about how we communicate in society.'

Individuals and communities of interest experience challenges that can make them particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of low literacies. Low literacies are an added barrier to accessing and using mental health services effectively. Poor health literacies, mediated by education, culture and language, reduces the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions. Low emotional literacy limits the ability to handle emotions in a way that improves your personal power and improves the quality of life around you. Emotional literacy improves relationships, creates loving possibilities between people, makes cooperative work possible, and facilitates the feeling of community. Engaging with and supporting individuals in those communities is an important strategic goal.

Acknowledging the broad range of contemporary definitions of literacies and the broad range of contexts upon which they can impact, low literacies levels can present as a barrier to learning, employment, family and community life. There is a broad range of individuals and communities of interest who share characteristics associated with higher levels of low functional literacies skills. Improving literacies is a social justice imperative, ensuring learners are supported to maximise their potential, reach their goals and be included.

Appendix 1

Low literacies are associated both as a factor affecting and affected by poverty. The Scottish Survey of Adult Literacy identified that one of the key factors linked to lower literacy capabilities is poverty, with adults living in the 50% of the most deprived areas in Scotland being more likely to have literacies capabilities at the lower end of the scale. There is a multiplier effect for those who have low literacies, for example poorer financial literacy. Inequality and social exclusion of individuals with disabilities, visual impairment, special learning difficulties, those whose first language is not English, gypsy travellers, those who are care experienced and those who are not digitally included through lack of skills or infrastructure all impact on literacies levels. An easy read summary of the strategy will be produced for distribution to public and partners

2. Approach

Our strategic approach to developing a partnership and the action plan will inform the improvement of literacies learning outcomes for all in Aberdeenshire, especially those who are in geographical communities or communities of interest most challenged by low levels of literacies. The goal is to improve literacies levels for all, improving equity of outcomes for those with literacies needs.

The literacies strategy takes a broad view of literacies and acknowledges that to achieve desired national outcomes and indicators in raising literacies and attainment for all, there is an essential requirement to recognise and address the need for support and growth within the wider spectrum of literacies.

The strategy is designed to develop the involvement of all partners who are engaged with those geographic communities and communities of interest with literacies needs and build on that engagement to ensure that appropriate support is offered. This may be driven by existing curriculum and guidance or reinforced by the literacies learning offer available from other partners. It is an important principle that the proper levels and type of support are being offered, and that where appropriate, progression enables people to meet their life goals. The intention is to consolidate and integrate better existing initiatives and programmes in the field of literacies to ensure increased effectiveness and impact. Current literacy programmes can be consolidated and extended further in order to ensure increased effectiveness and added value. Continuous professional development for those delivering literacies support will be an important focus of the strategy.

The strategy reflects the fact that literacy competence is not only the concern of early years practitioners, the primary class teacher and the language teachers in secondary school but is the responsibility of all educators. In schools the whole school community needs to embrace the primacy of literacy competence, requiring the active involvement of parents and the local community among others. Family literacies initiatives will complement classroom literacies programmes. This can be achieved by developing a range of complementary programmes which are targeted to the needs of specific groups such as the emerging literacy programmes of the Northern Alliance. Programmes should seek to improve child literacy and socio-emotional development, while also developing the parents' capacity to support their child's reading ability. Attention needs to be given to the cultural validity of initiatives, in order to ensure that the needs of low-income families and ethnically diverse target groups are met successfully.

Appendix 1

There can be concern about the long-term benefits of intervention programmes and what can be done to ensure that there is not a 'fade out' of effects. The goal in educational intervention is to have lasting effects. The action plan to support the strategic aims will develop comprehensive interventions that span multiple years and target key transition points. These will be crucial elements of programmes addressing the learning needs of children. Educational services and literacy programmes will be more integrated with other strategic goals with services offered achieving greater continuity where literacy programmes are an integral part of or complement the educational programmes in schools

Literacies challenges often emerge at transition points for adults. These transitions can be in relation to personal, work, community or family contexts. These transitions can include entering the workplace for the first time, responding to new challenges in or loss of employment, becoming a (young) parent, becoming a carer for a child or children, children progressing through school and seeking assistance from parents/carers, or in response to barriers presented to engaging more in community life.

Our ability to use language lies at the centre of the development and expression of our thinking, our learning, our emotions and our sense of personal identity. Recognising the importance of delivering literacies learning in people's own language or dialect will reflect best practice and is an important aspect of the shift in the "culture" of thinking about enhancing individual and community literacies through this literacies strategy. We wish to promote a literate community which provides opportunities for learners to make sense of their experiences and to make connections with their histories, cultures and communities. Through increased access to books and the language arts participatory democracy is strengthened The development of this literacies strategy is informed by raised awareness of the social practice and situational models which emphasise the broader understanding of literacies as literacies being 'situated' within a learner's life, i.e. employment and / or family life / family learning to support learning in schools, or community activities. Language and literacies are important in the personal, social and economic contexts. Overall the strategy will contribute to a number of the National Outcomes within the National Performance Framework including tackling inequalities, living longer healthier lives, improved life chances, realising full economic potential and more skilled and successful citizens.

3. Measuring impact of the Action Plan

Measures of improvement and progression will be developed within the context of learners engagement, and agreement of use of data in the action plan outcomes. The use of evidence based measures is central to identifying the learning outcomes achieved by literacies learners, as is how those achievements have impacted on the life improvements sought by learners.

Given the broad definition of literacies which is now appropriate, there are no simple measures of need for the improvement of literacy levels. Partners in Aberdeenshire use measures associated with their area of work to add information to the context, for example literacy achievement and school, English as a second language, literacy levels identified on admission to prison, levels of poverty and social disadvantage, numbers of speakers of Scots language and Doric, levels of financial literacy and associated levels of debt and indicators of the number of people whose health literacy does not enable them to follow well-being guidance.
A key activity to increase the understanding of the type and level of literacies learning needs will be awareness raising within partnerships, communities and workplaces to encourage an awareness of the range of literacies and their proxy indicators, and the opportunities that exist to

Appendix 1

strengthen those which are creating barriers to progression. A number of the actions in the action plans are associated with establishing baseline measures of need and agreeing measures of improvement.

4. Adding Value

Activity to support the development of literacies exists across Aberdeenshire, provided for example, by Aberdeenshire Council, NHS, Trades Unions, the third sector, employment support and those who constitute broader partnerships such as the Northern Alliance and Aberdeenshire Learning Community Partnership, Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership etc. and existing priorities align with the aims of this strategy. The strategy will support those engaged in those partnerships pursuing current activity guided by existing policy and strategic guidance such as the Mental Health Strategy, Parental Involvement and Engagement Strategy, Digital Skills Strategy, STEM Strategy, Health and Social Care. This will improve opportunities for learners through developing greater coherence of delivery, referral and progression pathways by providing a more focused literacies context.

5. Key Aim of the Strategy

The key aim of the Aberdeenshire Literacies Strategy is to improve literacies skills and learning outcomes of people in Aberdeenshire improving equality and equity of outcomes.

This will be achieved through actions which will meet the aims of:

- Developing a partnership approach to improve the literacies skills and learning outcomes of learners in Aberdeenshire.
- Strengthening the leadership capacity of literacies learning providers.
- Improving the professional knowledge and skills in delivery of literacies.
- Enhancing the use of data and systems to plan for, monitor and report on the performance of Adult and Children's Services.
- Encouraging and supporting communities to engage with literacies and the learning journey.

4

Appendix 1

Outcomes of this Strategy:

The strategy is intended to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Communities and individuals improve literacies through more easily accessing literacies learning opportunities that meet their needs
2. Learners improve their life opportunities through being supported to undertake high quality learning aligned to their personal goals
3. The participation of stakeholders, particularly learners, improves the coherence and effectiveness of the literacies learning and support offer in Aberdeenshire.
4. Literacies provision is improved and increased through more effective utilisation of the data available.

To achieve these outcomes, partners will be engaged in undertaking the action plan in annexe 1 in the period from January 2019 to January 2020. Progress will be supported by the Literacies sub group of the Aberdeenshire Learning Communities Partnership.

Annexe 1

Literacy Strategy Action Plan

Outcome 1: Communities and individuals improve literacies through more easily accessing literacies learning opportunities that meet their needs

What are we going to do?	What are our measures of success?	By who?	By when?	Resource required	Progress
Engage with learners (+potential) voice to identify barriers to participation in literacies learning opportunities	Numbers of learners engaged Needs identified Barriers identified Evaluation of engagement outputs	All ALCP and strategy partners	June 2019 October 2019	Staffing to engage Identified opportunities for engagement	
Establish register/mechanism to record literacies needs and provision and signpost need to provision	Determine mechanism. Establish ICT requirements. Identify budget for register. Agree support partner.	All ALCP and strategy partners	Agreement April 2019 ICT established July/August 2019	Stakeholder participation Budget ICT requirements Admin support	

Appendix 1

	Measure	Partners	Timescale	Resources
	Establish admin support. Identify stakeholders to participate. Database of literacies support in place and shared with partners. Referral processes in place and being used by partners. Progression pathways identified. Launch event and networking event for partners has been held. Levels of use of mechanism/ register. Number of learners linked to learning opportunities		Admin support Identified May 2019 October / November 2019 October 2019	
Establish mechanism to improve needs identification/targeting e.g. Social Prescription process	Number of stakeholders participating in SP scheme Number of learners and opportunities recorded on register through SP scheme	All ALCP and strategy partners	August 2019	Staff time for Development of SP scheme Admin support for development of SP scheme Physical resources for SP scheme Outreach visits/ seminars to develop awareness of SP scheme
Establish opportunities for enhanced provision through partnership working and/or the development of new	Numbers of enhanced opportunities for literacies learning Number of new literacies provisions in targeted areas	All ALCP and strategy partners	January 2020	ALCP sub group meetings Engagement with LLCPs

6

What are we going to do?	What are our measures of success?	By Who?	By When?	Resource Required	Progress
provision where data suggests under provision					
Undertake review of which opportunities currently exist for literacies learning in the workplace of ALCP partners and other key local employers.	Completed review of key local employers / Record of literacies learning opportunities available in work places.	All ALCP and strategy partners	January 2020 / August 2019	Support of ALCP in securing participation of their organisations in review / Staff time to construct consultation method and undertake consultation	
Promotion of literacies learning opportunities (Link to Social Prescription and mechanism/register launch)	Level of activity promoting literacies learning opportunities / Levels of awareness of literacies learning opportunities	All ALCP and strategy partners	May 2019 / September 2019	Staff time to develop promotional material/ resources / Budget for production of resources/. Advertising/ Social media presence. / Staff time to manage social media.	

Outcome 2: Learners improve their life opportunities through being supported to undertake high quality learning aligned to their personal goals.					
What are we going to do?	What are our measures of success?	By Who?	By When?	Resource Required	Progress
Establish agreed range of literacies to be included in strategy aligned with need and national/local policy	Range of literacies (3-4 key) agreed with stakeholders / Literacies strategy launched	All ALCP and strategy partners	April 2019 / May 2019	Seminar for stakeholders / Staff time to organise and deliver seminar / Venue / Staff to facilitate seminar	
Establish skillset in / types and levels of literacies supported by partners	We have a matrix of type and levels of literacies	All ALCP and	September 2019	Staff time to map support and conduct skills audit	

Appendix 1

What are we going to do?	supported (as evidenced by mechanism/register)	By Who?	By When?	Participation/support of ALCP/LLCPs	
Review\explore training and professional development opportunities available, including for those with specific learning difficulties, those whose first language is not English, those whose confidence or mental well-being may be reduced.	A CLPL programme is developed to share and build skillsets. Information shared with stakeholders	All ALCP and strategy partners	January 2020	Staff time to undertake review and develop programme	
Work with communities and learners to create community and personal learning plans	Personal/Community Learning Plans created	All ALCP and strategy partners	May 2019 - Ongoing	Staff time in planning and delivery of learning	
Increase take-up of learning opportunities where accredited outcomes are offered	Percentage of learning opportunities offering accredited routes Percentage of learners achieving accredited outcomes.	All ALCP and strategy partners	November 2019	Assessor and Internal verifier capacity within partners	

Outcome 3: The participation of stakeholders, particularly learners, improves the coherence and effectiveness of the literacies learning and support offer in Aberdeenshire.

What are we going to do?	What are our measures of success?	By Who?	By When?	Resources required	Progress
Establish sub group of the ALCP to develop a literacies partnership within Aberdeenshire	Sub group established and co-ordinating development of action plan	ALCP	February 2019	Participation by ALCP members, schools, libraries etc.	
Ensure participation of /representation of learners'	Agreed mechanism for learners voice in place	All ALCP LLCP partners	Sept/Oct 2019	Staff time to engage learner voice	

Appendix 1

What are we going to do?	What are our measures of success?	By Who?	By When?	Resource Required	Progress
voice on literacies sub group of ALCP/LLCPs	We have qualitative examples of how learners are shaping the work of the literacies sub group			Mechanism to support learners voice (social media/ ICT solution, meetings)	
Identify opportunities for joint work\additionality and progression in existing plans and policies.	Opportunities identified References in plans	All ALCP and strategy partners	July 2019		
Joint management of literacies mechanism/ register to match need to provision	Stakeholders regularly update and use mechanism and are aware of its content	All ALCP and strategy partners	August/September 2019	Staff time, ICT/ admin support	

Outcome 4: Delivery of Literacies provision is improved and increased through more effective utilisation of relevant and appropriate data.					
What are we going to do?	What are our measures of success?	By Who?	By When?	Resource Required	Progress
Partners identify and share datasets and sources most useful to establish literacies learning needs/progress	Baseline datasets identified and shared to inform measures in year two. Identify proxy indicators	ALCP members/ ALCP Data subgroup	May/June 2019 Jan 2020	Staff time Access to datasets	
Use data to identify literacies needs and gaps in provision	Mechanism/Register established and populated	All ALCP and strategy partners	August 2019	Staff time ICT package resources Budget Admin support	
Identify any gaps in data in relation to geographical communities or communities of interest such as care experienced young people, members of the travelling community,	Baseline data gathered in year one to help identify gaps in data. Information gathered to cover gaps	All ALCP and strategy partners ALCP data subgroup	September 2019	Staff time	

9

Appendix 1

10

those whose first language is not English, Gaelic/Scots/Doric speakers, prisoners and ex prisoners or points of transition associated with increased demand for literacies learning				
Map partners existing processes for the evaluation of impact of literacies learning.	Mechanisms understood and documented	All ALCP and strategy partners	April/May 2019	Staff time, ALCP sub process MIS information
Establish shared/agreed measures for evaluating learning progress and impact which can inform reporting/ management information systems	Agreed measures used to establish effectiveness of evaluation progress. MIS information used by all stakeholders.	All ALCP and strategy partners	July 2019	Staff time
Support partners to ensure that literacy outcomes/targets are appropriately embedded in planning and partners action plans	Development session with partners held to support understanding of literacies outcomes and targets. Partners report outcomes embedded in plans	All ALCP and strategy partners	August/ September 2019	Staff time Access to plans/action plans
Establish realistic but challenging targets for participation and achievement of literacies learning outcomes	Targets agreed by contributing partners. Mechanism for recording performance against targets established.	All ALCP and strategy partners	August/September 2019	Staff time, Partner involvement