

## Adult Learning Lewisham LEARNER FORUM SUMMARY

**Chaired by Robert Potter, Business and Operations Manager (Brockley Rise) Sidra Hill-Reid, Head of Service (Online, Granville Park and Grove Park)**

**Notes: Selina Eldridge, Publicity and Communications**

Learner Forums took place across the centres from Tuesday 2 to Thursday 4 November. There was also an opportunity for learners to attend a live online event at 6.30 on the 4 November. The notes from each meeting have been combined as turnout was low at Grove Park and Granville Park and similar themes were discussed.

Sidra welcomed those attending and acknowledged that there were challenges for learners enrolling on courses over the summer using the online enrolment system and the telephone enrolment line. She reported that we have now resolved the issue with online enrolment, which was caused by the over 65 concession being made available for those enrolling online. Sidra reported that we have also introduced a new telephone system that allows us to place callers in a queue for the service that they require. Callers are also notified of their place in the queue, and should the call cut off for any reason we can call the number back.

Learners were also updated on the capital building improvement works and were notified that construction is likely to start in the New Year. Learners were also informed about how we are working with the Council to make our buildings more energy efficient. All buildings will be installed with new LED sensor lighting, Brockley Rise and Grove Park will be fitted with solar panels, air source heat pumps will be installed at Grove Park and Granville Park, and a ground source heat pump will be fitted at Brockley Rise. Emma Bushell, Sustainability Manager for the Council came to the Brockley Rise Centre learner forum to explain more about the project.

### Learner Comments

| Your thoughts   | Our response   |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Learners spoke about the difficulties they've had enrolling online and via the telephone. A learner explained that he got cut off whilst trying to enrol and when he managed to speak to someone the class was full.</b></p> <p><b>However learners also said that when they were able to enrol over the phone they received good customer service.</b></p> | <p>We acknowledge the challenges that we've faced at times over the summer especially during peak enrolment times when the phone lines were very busy.</p> <p>We only have a certain number of staff available to answer calls. We introduced a new telephone system on the 1st November 2021 which allows callers to be placed in a queue; callers are also notified of their</p> |

## Learner Comments

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|---|--|
|   | <p>position in the queue. The telephone system also allows us to allocate calls to different numbers in response to waiting times for each line.</p> <p>Monitoring of call demand during the first few days highlighted the need to increase the maximum number of calls that can be placed in the queue. This has been done and should result in a smoother and more responsive service going forward.</p>  |
| <p><b>A learner asked ‘why are you spending money on maintaining a café service when the money would be better spent on a new telephone system’?</b></p>  | <p>We don't have the money to spend on a new telephone system. We can only work with what the Council are able to provide. However, it is worth highlighting that the changes made to the current telephone system has greatly improved the functionality and we have not received any further complaints about learners not being able to get through.</p> <p>If we closed our cafes we wouldn't be able to offer refreshments for learners who attend classes all day. The café space is also a place where learners can socialize during break time and it is a very important service for a lot of our learners.</p> |
| <p><b>Why can't the name of the tutor teaching the class be published on the online course listing? Other adult education providers make this information available, and provide details about their qualifications and experience as well.</b></p> | <p>Thank you for your feedback. This is something that we will discuss as a team.</p>  |
| <p><b>Why don't you run courses during the holidays if there is demand for them? If the class rooms aren't being used during the holidays can't you rent the space out?</b></p>   | <p>We need to do maintenance and cleaning during the holiday. Tutors also need time off. We can only work within our funding allocation. If we run more courses we'd need more funding to pay tutors.</p>  |
| <p><b>It seems the least popular courses aren't being promoted. For example a lot of the foreign languages courses have closed this term due to low numbers.</b></p>  | <p>We advertise courses using a variety of channels, including adverts in local publications, newsletters, paid advertising on social media, bus shelter billboards etc. We also have a system for Curriculum leads to request</p>   |

## Learner Comments

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|---|--|
|   | <p>additional marketing for classes that have low numbers or further promotion.</p> <p>The majority of language classes that closed were offered online and did not meet the minimum class size to be able to be financially viable. With this in mind we have rescheduled the majority of those classes to run in classrooms for the Spring term.</p> |
| <p><b>What colour LED lighting will be installed? It is particularly important that the art space has something that is as close to natural light as we can get.</b></p>                                | <p>The project team will confirm (I might be able to find out tomorrow when I speak to Emma). Lighting in classrooms will certainly be much improved once the project is complete.</p>   |
| <p><b>Will there be disabled parking available whilst the building works are carried out?</b></p>   | <p>The front carpark will not be accessible whilst the works are carried out. There will be disabled parking available in the rear carpark, but access maybe further restricted at times as the works progress.</p>  |
| <p><b>Will the new heating system at Brockley Rise help regulate the temperature in the building?</b></p>   | <p>Yes it should help regulate the building temperature.</p>   |
| <p><b>I have been attending the stained glass course which is very popular. Can you run additional classes?</b></p>   | <p>Putting on additional courses isn't always possible due to room availability. We run other course subjects in the workshop. We also have to work within our funding allocation so this isn't always an option.</p>  |
| <p><b>How can you manage waiting lists more effectively? I was on the waiting list for a while and wasn't notified when the next enrolment point would be.</b></p>                                      | <p>Curriculum leaders do monitor waiting lists regularly. We will look at how we can communicate to people on the waiting list more effectively to ensure they know when the next enrolment point is for the following term.</p>   |
| <p><b>It seemed that courses were being closed prematurely before they had a change to reach minimum number targets. How do you communicate to learners when and why the class is being closed?</b></p> | <p>We will feed your comments back and look at how we disseminate information to learners whose classes are on closure notices.</p>  |

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**Thank you to everyone who spoke to us about the service – about the great customer service and how you are enjoying your courses. We appreciate you taking the time to tell us when we are doing things well and we do pass these comments on to those mentioned.**

The next forums will be taking place in the spring term. Details will be published nearer the time.

