**Stakeholder Consultation Policy**

**2021-22**

**The Context**

Using local intelligence and consultation to determine need and interest, Cheshire West and Chester Council’s (CW&C) Skills and Employment team will commission and deliver a programme of learning and skills opportunities that will enable adults to develop the skills, attitudes and attributes to grow both economically and socially and lead fulfilling, independent lives and in turn support the development of vibrant communities in which they live and work.

**What is Consultation?**

Consultation is a 2-way dialogue that allows learners, potential learners, employers and partners from public, private, voluntary and community sectors a realistic and timely opportunity to:

1. Influence commissioning, curriculum and programming decisions being made by CW&C Skills and Employment team.
2. Contribute towards the quality assurance and improvement of adult education provision across Cheshire West and Chester.
3. Ensure that adult education provision is meeting the needs of CW&C residents.

**Why Consult?**

Consultation and external involvement are at the heart of good decision-making and strengthens the relationship between us and our learners, potential learners, employers and partner organisations. We are committed to improving consultation as part of its transparent and open way of working.

**Different Types of Consultation**

**Identifying Need – Employers, Partners and other Stakeholders**

A key priority for CW&C Skills and Employment team is moving people into work so it is vital that the curriculum we offer meets the needs of local employers. We want to clearly hear the voice of employers in our curriculum so employer engagement is high priority for the service. We link with employers through;

* Personal relationships with employers, e.g. those who we have supported to recruit staff
* Employer networks, e.g. working with Skills for Care
* Partnership working with DWP Job Coaches and Employer Engagement Officer
* Partnership working with DWP, National Careers Service and Cheshire East and Warrington Borough Councils as part of the Redundancy Action Support Team (RAST)
* Links with our Locality, Regeneration and Business teams as well as teams in Young People’s service, SEND team, Care Leavers and Adult Social Care.
* Supporting Capital Projects team to ensure construction companies deliver on their social value obligations with regards to skills and employment.
* Links with the Cheshire and Warrington LEP and Growth Hub

We also work with a range of other partners including health and housing to ensure we are responsive to need.

**Community and Voluntary Sector Voice**

CW&C Skills and Employment Team works closely with around 25 community and voluntary organisations who support key groups of adults e.g. adults with learning difficulties and disabilities, mental health issues, people living in specific target wards, older adults or BAME communities. These organisations are well placed to identify the needs of their particular target group and are encouraged to bid for funding to deliver provision to support these individuals through our AEB commissioning process.

The Community and Voluntary sector also have a workforce made up from a mixture of both paid and voluntary staff. These staff have professional development needs and through annual training needs analysis, we are able to identify these and respond accordingly.

Alternatively, community and voluntary feedback is collected via the teams work with the locality staff within in the Council. This can be used to inform and target provision in line with need.

**Establishing Interests – Learners and Potential Learners**

Consultation with learners and potential learners has many benefits. When undertaken successfully, it can provide better access to an appropriate range of learning opportunities that reflect local needs and aspirations. People participating in consultation can also become more confident and believe that providers do want to develop a curriculum which will respond to their requirements/ interests. They also use and may develop their skills, for example, articulating and presenting their learning needs and aspirations.

From the provider perspective, those consulted are the best source of information about what would attract them to or inhibit them from participating, as well as what provision would best meet needs and/or interests.

The ways in which we engage and consult with learners and potential learners are through:

* Web based consultation channels on the council websites/ social media
* Participating in national satisfaction surveys.
* Networks supporting specific communities of interest eg BAME network, Mental Health network, Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities.
* Feedback posters displayed in public venues inviting views.
* Publicise how to make complaints, compliments or comment regarding our service and promote the council’s formal feedback procedures.
* In course feedback forms completed by all learners and summarised by tutors.
* Termly ‘have your say’ forums with learners.
* Collecting learner complaints and actions taken at the end of each year
* Follow up on learners where course MI statistics give cause for concern e.g. where a number of learners have left a course and retention appears to be an issue.
* Discussion with learners recorded at observed teaching and learning sessions and learner feedback being graded as part of the observation process.
* Longitudinal progression monitoring
* An annual graded Self-Assessment Report that summarises how effective we are at meeting the needs and interests of our local community.

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## Identification of Target Groups for Engagement and Consultation 2020-21

Based on consultation with partners and the local employment and inclusion picture, our priority groups for conducting deeper engagement and consultation in 2020-21 have been agreed as:

* Long Term Unemployed and those at risk of becoming long term unemployed due to the barriers they are facing.
* Recently redundant adults and those on furlough
* People in work on low incomes
* Adults with learning disabilities
* Adults with mental health conditions both in primary and secondary mental health care looking to enter and sustain employment
* BAME communities
* NEET/ Young People at risk of NEET
* Young people, parents and teachers considering work experience opportunities
* Parents accessing our priority schools and Children’s Centres
* Employers
* Health partners
* DWP