

E-learning Strategy August 2008- July 2011

Devon Adult & Community Learning

A Vision for e-learning

"We aim to put learners..... in the driving seat, shaping the opportunities open to all learners to fit around their particular needs and preferences"

Harnessing Technology, DFES, 2005 revised 2007

1.1 Vision Statement

The Service will aim to exploit technology to take forward the Service vision of increased participation, a widened curriculum and an extended learning continuum.

Technology will become integral to the core activities of the Service -

- Identifying local and community learning needs
- Providing a broad range of community-based learning
- Working in partnership to increase the range, engagement and support for learning

1.2 The Devon ACL Context

The South West has the largest land area & the lowest population density of any English Region¹. With four-fifths of the total land area of the region being agricultural & just under a tenth being urban or suburban it is a region that is predominantly rural in character. Rural Devon and its market towns are considered the area of influence of the ACL Service and here over half the population lives in rural areas or towns of less than 20,000 people. Devon has a varied economy, with areas of wealth & areas of considerable deprivation - but at a level of 'micro-statistics' that do not feature in larger scale indices of deprivation. The economy in the Service's areas of influence is overwhelmingly populated by very small businesses and volatile industries such as tourism. There is an ageing population, with a net migration of younger, better qualified people. These factors combine to create a high demand for flexibility in delivering learning for all ages and e-learning approaches offer the widest range of learning opportunities to the greatest spread of learners.

1.3 Devon County Council Priorities and Key Partnerships

The E-Learning Strategy will enable Devon ACL to meet County Council objectives to "provide the best possible public services that meet local needs in a cost-effective way".² increasing choice and access for learners in a rural environment. It will provide a means of addressing concerns expressed in the Devon Rural Strategy that "if accessibility issues are not addressed appropriately only those who are personally mobile will be able to live in rural locations upsetting the natural demographics"³ and will support priorities E1.6 and E 2.6 of the associated action plan.

Local Authorities have a statutory duty to consult local people on the issues that affect them. "In Devon we welcome and value the feedback of the people we serve and positively encourage participation in the planning and delivery of local services."⁴

For Devon ACL this consultation can best be achieved effectively and economically and made compatible with equality of opportunity through the use of electronic media.

¹ The Area is 23,289 square kilometres, with a population of 4,935,700.

² Devon County Council Strategic Plan

³ Devon Rural Strategy 2007 6.1

⁴ DCC Strategic Plan

E-communications will support learners in consulting and informing the service and provide an economic method of both consulting specific learner groups and allowing individuals to give feedback as required by the LSC Framework for Excellence. Adaptive technology will permit a wide range of contributions.

Technology will also allow the Service to lessen the dependence of paper-based resources and duplication of material and support the County Council in its determination to become "England's greenest County"

Through engagement with the work of the Productive Skills for Devon Board, the Service will ensure that e-learning delivery, either directly or through partnership, actively supports the needs of the current and the potential workforce.

Within the County Council area the Service will seek a range of partnerships with organisations which are developing ILT in learning both within the requirements of Local Area Agreements with district councils and with providers in the voluntary and community sector. These partnerships will offer two-way exchanges of information and expertise and, where appropriate, joint development of provision and services to learners and sharing of essential hardware and facilities.

Key partners to all development will be learners themselves as end-users and owners of electronic resources suitable for learning. Developments will take into account the growing public use of digital resources of all kinds, will track trends in social use of ICT and seek to establish the potential of this activity for supporting or enhancing learning.

The Service will also network within the region with organisations responsible for the development of ILT in the sector e.g. JISC to ensure that our practice reflects modern trends and developments.

1.4 Contributing to Social and Community Cohesion.

Devon ACL recognises that e-learning & the accompanying process of acquiring, applying & improving ICT skills is essential to supporting the individual's confidence in engaging in learning and, through engagement, to counteract social, economic & educational exclusion.

Devon ACL is committed to ensuring that there is an appropriate and relevant ILT dimension to all provision which will enhance their learning and give them skills with wider social and cultural applications.

2 Translating Vision & Values into Operational Aims

The vision and values translate into one overall operational aim:

To provide an e-learning dimension to all aspects of the learner journey

To make this happen the strategy will be integral to all Service plans and will impact on:

Services for learners

- Information advice and guidance;
- Teaching and learning methods and opportunities
- Supporting adults with additional learning need

Services for Tutors

- Continuous professional development delivery
- Sharing good practice and mentoring/coaching
- Course and individual learner programme management

Services for Managers

- Performance monitoring
- Service communications
- Programme management

3 The Current Position

This is the second E-learning strategy document and much has been achieved in the past three years with particular regard to teaching and learning. The following concepts are well-established within some parts of the provision and are generally acknowledged across the Service

- Good quality teaching and learning will automatically include a blended learning element and web resources should always be considered. Teaching staff need to develop their personal ICT skills to keep abreast of changing teaching methods.
- ILT provides an unobtrusive and interesting method of recording learner progress in some subject areas.
- Information for learner and tutors should be in an accessible electronic format and available to them before, during and after participation in learning.
- ILT provides a good mechanism for quality improvement especially the sharing resources and good practice between teaching staff working in similar subjects across the County.
- ILT provides a good mechanism for allowing learners in the same subjects across the County to communicate and exchange ideas.

A SWOT analysis of the position of the Service at the start of 2008 provides the following perspective.

Strengths

- A designated specialist manager in post with responsibility for managing e-learning development across the curriculum
- Mainstream budget for staff CPD in e-learning and associated skills
- Strong engagement in national and regional networks and developments.
- Growing group of subject "champions" and enthusiasts taking developments forward in key curriculum areas.
- Successfully completed projects which have had an impact on local practice.
- Blended learning as a critical grading factor in grading tutor performance
- Increasing activity on and use of the tutor website by teaching staff
- Key documentation provided electronically for teaching and learning.
- Pre-course information routinely available on the internet.
- Key staff participation in national E-guides training.
- Partner organisations enthused by e-learning and taking a lead in development activity.

Weaknesses

- E-mail communications and internet access not automatically available to all teaching staff; a reliance on tutors' personal access and equipment to communicate
- E-mail communications and internet access not automatically available to all learners; a reliance on learners' personal access and equipment to communicate
- Curriculum Leaders do not automatically include e-learning dimension in their annual delivery plans
- Area plans do not include consideration of ICT facilities
- No planned and mainstream resourcing for hardware/software acquisition or for replacement/upgrading of teaching equipment.
- Wide disparity in the ICT skills of teaching staff
- Limited level of hardware available is a barrier to some teaching staff developing skills and teaching methods.

Opportunities

- New wireless connectivity at main hubs will make internet available for more tutors and learners and raise interest and expectations.
- VLE development offers the opportunity for courses with increased independent learning element and the opportunity to link small numbers of geographically disperse learners across the county into viable groups.
- Potential for improved learner advice, guidance and initial assessment using VLE resources
- Embedded Skills for Life assessment and support available to learners in all subjects through the VLE.
- Increased elements of on-line delivery will attract new and different learner groups into ACL provision.
- Focus on the electronic CPD portfolio for Institute for Learning registration will focus tutors on the need to gain and sustain personal ICT skills.
- Partner organisations will be able to lead developments and disseminate to Devon ACL's direct delivery
- The new DCC partnership for rural ICT development will provide increased facilities for appropriate e-learning provision to be delivered to learners in villages and hamlets.
- Directorate will demonstrate a clear appreciation of the importance of electronic communications for tutors and learners and the need to invest in this.

Threats

- Lack of investment plan for ILT delivery will prevent essential investment.
- Administrative resourcing of ICT to meet DCC requirements will take priority over the resourcing of teaching and learning
- Developing technology used by individuals, including both hardware and software, will follow a route that is not supported by DCC, preventing learners from being taught using their own equipment.
- Rising costs of sustaining suitable ICT suites and software across the provision affects ability to offer up-to-date and relevant courses to learners
- Competition from other providers keen to develop e-learning programmes for rural areas and able to deliver at less cost
- Conflict between the priorities for employers and learners in the skills agenda and the stated priorities of the funding body, meaning that resources are not available to support the courses/learning required.
- E-learning still seen as a discrete responsibility of the E-Learning co-ordinator and not properly embedded in all curriculum planning.
- DACL staff failing to up-skill as needed to make blended learning a reality in all courses.

To address these issues and maximise these opportunities presented the following steps will be essential:

ICT approaches must become fully embedded in both the strategic and the day-to-day thinking of the organisation so that sustainability is fully addressed. The implications and opportunities offered by technology should always be considered in decision making. In particular, Equality Impact Needs Analysis should focus on the potential for ICT to promote inclusion and to provide alternative communications.

Curriculum and CPD plans must show how technology will be used to incrementally increase learner access, thereby attracting new and different learners.

There must be a clear message communicated to all staff and to all learners of the service commitment to e-learning and communication, which emphasises the benefits which will result for all concerned and makes it clear that all staff are expected to contribute appropriately to make the strategy a reality.

The Service ICT resource plan must include a dimension related to teaching and learning.

Objectives of the three year strategy:

Managing the Vision and Implementing the Strategy			
Objective	Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
Planning for E-learning will be integral into all relevant Service plans	E-learning developments in annual curriculum plans	December 2008	Quality Manager
	E-learning development will be an annual priority for CPD plans	December 2008	Systems Manager
	Discrete budget for resourcing for the development of ILT facilities including, hardware and software is identified.	April 2009	
	Additional external resources for ILT will be regularly researched and secured.	September 2008	Quality Manager
	Partnerships to secure access to ILT for learners identified and established	July 2009	Area Manager
E-learning development is continuously reviewed at the highest levels	ILT development will be embedded in the wider ACS Directorate planning through the ACS IT panel.	3 meetings per annum	Systems Manager
	E-learning development will be managed by a member of the Senior Management Team	December 2008	Quality Manager
	Regular annual reports will be given to SMT on e-learning progress and issues/challenges for the Service.		
A commitment to e-learning is embedded in all structures and activity	Discrete post for the development and management of e-learning across the curriculum with development targets		Quality Manager
	Classroom observations will regularly assess the effectiveness of e-teaching and learning		Quality Manager

	across the curriculum. Learners in all subjects will be given the opportunity to develop e-learning skills within or alongside mainstream provision		Skills Managers, PCDL & Business
Teaching and Learning			
Objective	Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
Blended learning is available to learners in all provision	Materials available via VLE to offer extension/challenge to individual learners in Languages (grammar), Arts/Crafts (design) and BSL	March 2009	E-Learning Co-ordinator
Partial/full on-line learning courses are an option for learners in key qualification courses.	Underpinning knowledge for NVQ CCLD levels 2 &3 offered online as integral part of course	September 2009	Quality Manager
	Modules of one or more ICT qualifications available on-line	September 2009	Team Leaders ICT
The learner journey is effectively managed using electronic resources.	Electronic format for learner progress records created and piloted	July 2009	Skills Manager, PCDL
	All learners on NVQ programmes with electronic progress records	September 2009	Skills Manager, Business and Employment
Learner Support and Guidance including consultation			
Objective	Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
Feedback mechanisms are available for all learners via the internet	Learner survey accessible in electronic format and promoted as part of the learner welcome pack	September 2008	Quality Manager
	Alternative communications arrangements for learner survey in electronic format	December 2008	Skills Manager, Engagement and Inclusion
	Learner consultation e-group established and reviewing key service issues	March 2009	Skills Manager, Engagement and Inclusion
On-line pre-course assessment materials available for all learners	Skills for Life diagnostic assessments available for use by intending SfL learners	September 2008	Skills Manager, Engagement and Inclusion

enrolling for qualification courses	Pilot ITT pre-course assessment materials available on-line	September 2008	Quality Manager
	Skills for Life assessments available for use by all learners on qualification courses	July 2009	Skills Manager, Engagement and Inclusion
	Pre-course preparation activity for all NVQs in Area 1 available on-line	September 2009	Skills Manager, Business and Employment.
	Pre-course assessment/preparation activity for all other qualification programmes	September 2010	Skills Manager, PCDL
Study skills additional support materials available electronically	Pilot of Study Skills area and materials for ITT programmes	September 2008	Quality Manager
	Study Skills resources, including Portfolio building advice, available for all relevant learners	July 2009	
Learner electronic support groups	All learners on NVQ and ITT courses with email and access to online discussion groups	March 2009	Quality Manager/E-learning Co-ordinator
	E-mail and electronic learner interaction available to learners on all courses	September 2010	

Staff Development

Objective	Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
Good practice in teaching and learning is shared via electronic media	Examples of good practice teaching materials and case studies of e-learning available online in Skills for Life, ALDD and Family Learning	December 2008	Skills Manager, Engagement and Inclusion
Tutors have greater access to a range of learning and assessment materials to meet SfL needs	Tutors trained in access and use of online materials and forums in Skills for Life, ALDD and Family Learning	March 2009	
Tutor interaction	Tutors engaged in online forums in Skills for Life,	July 2009	

across the County is supported through on-line activity	ALDD and Family Learning		
Team Leaders and Senior Practitioners support tutors with maintaining their licensed status	Managers able to support teaching staff in preparation and use of CPD electronic portfolio	December 2008	Quality Manager/E-Learning Co-ordinator
Managers routinely manage learning resources through the VLE	MfL, Humanities, ICT SfL managers with skills to upload and manage resources on Moodle	July 2009	Quality Manager/E-Learning Co-ordinator
	All other curriculum managers with skills to upload and manage resources on Moodle	July 2010	
Learners have access to on-line SfL assessment with Learning Support Co-ordinators at all hubs.	All LS Co-ordinators trained and competent in SfL on-line assessment	December 2008	Skills Manager, Engagement & Inclusion/E-Learning Co-ordinator
Co-ordinators operate effective on-line tracking of learner admissions.	All Co-ordinators tracking learner progress using electronic system.	September 2009	Skills Manager, Engagement and Inclusion
Administrators able to support tutors with resources available on VLE	Administrators familiar with Moodle and able to download materials as required.	July 2009	Area Managers
Skills Managers routinely use the VLE as a CPD and communication tool with Team Leaders and Tutors.	Pilot mentoring training package and resources available to support development of mentors in all curriculum areas	March 2009	Quality Manager
	Skills Managers trained in the management of the VLE	July 2009	Quality Manager/E-Learning Co-ordinator
	Element of annual "core training" delivered via VLE in key curriculum areas	July 2010	Quality Manager
	Elements of CPD delivered via VLE for tutors in all curriculum areas, including partners'teaching staff.	July 2011	Quality Manager

Infrastructure and Equipment			
Objective	Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
The Service has planned investment in the development of ILT	Annual plan for the purchase and up-date of ILT resources	First plan December 2008	Systems Manager
	Annual budget for delivery of ILT/e-learning training	First annual budget July 2008	Systems Manager
Access to VLE is available for all learners on all courses in main centres	Wireless Internet access to all classrooms in hubs	December 2008	Systems Manager
	All partner organisations with facility to access VLE	December 2009	Skills Manager, Business and Employment
	Mobile connectivity piloted for outreach provision in key curriculum areas e.g. SfL	July 2010	Area Managers
	Mobile connectivity available for provision in all curriculum areas	July 2011	
Up-to-date equipment in ICT suites is provided for learners in direct delivery and for learner support in all main hubs	Development and purchasing plan for up-grading/developing facilities	September 2008	Systems Manager
	Prioritised 3 year programme of up-grades	December 2008	Systems Manager
	First review of upgrades	December 2009	
Key/essential adaptive technology is available within the Service for learner support and improved accessibility for learners with disabilities.	Adaptive technology for learners with disabilities identified and evaluated for cost/benefit.	March 2009	Skills Manager, Engagement & Inclusion
	Indicative annual budget for the purchase of adaptive technology (hardware/software) established.	March 2009	Skills Manager e& I/Systems Manager
	Annual review of needs and demand	March 2010	Skills Manager Engagement & Inclusion
Curriculum development in all specialist areas in place for the	Key staff in each curriculum area with a "lead" role/expertise in e-learning - " E-learning	July 2009	Quality Manager/E-learning Co-ordinator

embedded development of e-learning across the provision	Champions" All partners with named individual responsible for liaison on e-learning developments	September 2009	Skills Managers, Business & Employment/PCDL
	Team Leaders Include e-learning element in annual programme of provision	September 2010	Quality Manager
Prompt and professional technical support for ILT facilities, including mobile equipment, which ensures that learners have full access to ILT.	Technical support mechanism identified for each main ILT centre and for equipment used on outreach basis.	March 2009	Area Managers/Systems Manager
	Support in place for the management of VLE facilities and learner/tutor access.	September 2009	Area Managers/Systems Manager