



<b>toReport to:</b>	Employment and Skills Committee
<b>Date:</b>	14 March 2024
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Devolution Level 4</b>
<b>Director:</b>	Felix Kumi-Ampofo - Inclusive Economy, Skills & Culture
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Is this a key decision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information or appendices?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state paragraph number of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, Part 1:	
Are there implications for equality and diversity?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

## 1. Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 To provide information relating to the business of this Committee on the recent application submitted by West Yorkshire for Level 4 Devolution Framework offered by central government.

## 2. Information

### Background

- 2.1.1 On 22 November 2023, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) released a technical paper outlining the new [Level 4 Devolution Framework](#).
- 2.1.2 The Framework marks a move towards greater devolved funding and powers to eligible institutions who choose to participate and provides a stepping stone towards a single settlement through the offer of consolidated funding at the next multi-year Spending Review. The Framework aims to standardise English devolution, moving away from the previous approach of agreeing bespoke region-specific deals. Whilst this approach does

not meet the partnership's full aspirations for devolution in West Yorkshire, the opportunity to pursue deeper devolution is welcomed.

2.1.3 Mayor Tracy Brabin and all West Yorkshire Local Authority Leaders submitted an application for Level 4 Devolution to DLUHC on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2024 (Appendix 1).

### **Level 4 Devolution**

#### Proposed Level 4 Devolution - employment and skills'

2.2.1 Below are highlights of some specific aspects of Level 4 Devolution guidance which are relevant to the remit of this Committee. *(A comprehensive summary related to Employment & Skills offers outlined in the Level 4 Devolution framework is available in Appendix 2):*

Governance: Convening a Regional Labour Market Partnership Board - to include relevant senior officers, including DWP.

Adult Skills: Devolution of non-apprenticeship adult skills function:

- Devolve and remove ringfence for Free Courses for Jobs (FCFJ), first level 3 qualification for adults aged 19+, the unemployed and low earners<sup>1</sup>
- Sector flexibility for 100% allocation of skills bootcamps from 25/26<sup>2</sup>

Careers: Central convening role for MCAs, with a greater role in shaping future national specifications and policy development.

Employment Support: DWP will consider the appropriate role for MCAs in the design and delivery of programmes.

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**<sup>1</sup> To access this part of the framework, the following condition must be satisfied:**

The eligible institution demonstrates spending 80% of its available funding for the FCFJs offer on delivering high value Level 3 qualifications across an academic year, and has a track record of delivering the current 'core offer' criteria or using the agreed 50% flexibility to address needs in the local labour market to eligible learners, addressing any barriers to Level 3 learning where necessary.

**<sup>2</sup> An eligible institution must satisfy the following conditions to access this part of the framework:**

- The eligible institutions must retain the core purpose, policy intent and branding of Skills Bootcamps, consistent with the national model and maintaining this model integrity including while using sector flex.
- The eligible institutions must meet performance thresholds and achieve 80% starts and 60% outcomes, to be agreed in a side agreement with local areas.
- The eligible institutions must have delivered Skills Bootcamps for at least a full year, and the DfE will need to have confidence in their assurance process. The eligible institutions must maintain regular engagement with DfE and fellow eligible institutions.

Data Sharing: DWP and eligible institutions will work together to explore feasibility and potential for proportionate data sharing arrangements with MCAs for programmes and services operating in the region, dependent on the work in Trailblazer areas.

Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs): Review to align boundaries of LSIP with MCA boundaries, and consideration of a future role in LSIPs and Local Skills Investment Fund (LSIF).

### Trailblazers and Next Steps

- 2.3.1 'Trailblazer' Devolution deals were established in Greater Manchester and West Midlands in 2023, granting further powers and funding settlements to MCAs in these areas.
- 2.3.2 The recent Level 4 Framework specifies that certain aspects of future/deeper Devolution in West Yorkshire will be contingent on the success of Trailblazer Deals in Greater Manchester/West Midlands – particularly those related to data sharing agreements. There are currently no specifics offered around these dependencies, or what may be considered 'success' in a Trailblazer area (in order to affect change in West Yorkshire).
- 2.3.3 West Yorkshire has previously met rigorous readiness conditions in becoming an MCA (e.g. to receive devolved Adult Education Budget).
- 2.3.4 Appendix 1 shows the Letter of Submission tendered by Mayor Tracy Brabin and Local Authority leaders to DLUHC for Level 4 Devolution. **The Secretary of State for DHLUC announced at the Convention of the North on 1<sup>st</sup> March that the West Yorkshire Level 4 submission had been accepted.** Detailed discussions will now begin with individual government departments to develop detailed proposals for each policy area. This will include discussions on whether consultation or statutory changes are required to implement the individual components of the framework

## **3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications**

- 3.1 There are no climate emergency implications directly arising from this report.

## **4. Inclusive Growth Implications**

- 4.1 The Level 4 of the devolution framework could support the Combined Authority aspiration to achieve its priorities around inclusive growth by enabling greater freedom on decision making that could deliver better outcomes for local people, businesses and communities across all areas of the region.

## **5. Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 5.1 Accessing the opportunities afforded through the Level 4 of the devolution framework will enable the Combined Authority to deliver on equality and diversity priorities.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report. If the decision is taken to proceed with Level 4 Devolution, this will result in financial implications for the Combined Authority, including the move towards a DLUHC single settlement and devolved adult skills budgets.

## **7. Legal Implications**

- 7.1 Although there are no direct legal implications at this stage, statutory processes will need to be followed as appropriate to progressing different elements of the framework. This will become clearer upon advice from government as the process progresses.

## **8. Staffing Implications**

- 8.1 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

## **9. External Consultees**

- 9.1 No external consultations have been undertaken.

## **10. Recommendations**

- 10.1 That Committee members note the propositions related to Employment & Skills outlined in the Level 4 Devolution framework
- 10.2 That Committee members provide views on how the CA and partners can maximise the opportunities offered by Level 4 Devolution, specifically as pertains to:
- Careers
  - Employment Support
  - Adult Skills

## **11. Background Documents**

[Technical Paper on Level 4 Devolution \(.gov\)](#)

[Finance, Resources and Corporate Committee Paper on Level 4 Devolution Framework – 18](#)

## **12. Appendices**

Appendix 1 – [Devolution Level 4 – West Yorkshire Letter to DLUHC](#) (published with Combined Authority Committee papers for 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb 2023 Meeting)

Appendix 2 – Devolution Level 4 Framework – Employment & Skills

## Appendix 3 – Devolution Level 4 – Known Next Steps