National Skills Fund Consultation

Responses to be submitted by 17th September 2021

Suggested WYCA Response:

Recommendation to E&S Committee for Mayor to respond to consultation by open letter and aligned to MCA responses. Consultation responses are limited to questions that are most relevant to MCAs, as detailed below.

Section 1: Free level 3 qualifications for adults

Q10. What do you think will be the key barriers to adults taking up the free level 3 qualifications?

In the current economic context, it is imperative that the National Skills Fund is flexible to local economic need to ensure that upskilling and reskilling opportunities are directed towards those individuals most in need, aiding sectors and businesses to recover from the impact of economic shocks following the COVID-19 crisis. The National Skills Fund should also have a clear focus on re-skilling and upskilling, aspiring to tackle underlying workforce challenges such as 'insecure' work (part-time, zero hours and temporary roles), the ageing workforce, immigration caps and it should also be reflective of the skills needs of the regions. There is also a clear lack of linkage between attainment of qualifications and rationale behind why individuals should take onboard this challenge, so greater clarity to employability would be beneficial.

This last aspect calls into question one of the barriers to adults taking up free level 3 qualifications and that is the lack of clear learning pathways to engage them into this provision, with many regions having a significant number of adults with low degrees of attainment, therefore the gap to level 3 qualifications is a challenge that many will see as difficult to overcome, therefore there is a requirement to support more directly those who in this position with the learning pathway noted.

Learners may also be lacking in the view of the opportunities/benefits these qualifications can bring and as such, bringing career pathways to life with clarity are crucial to engage individuals and ensure the learning opportunities are meaningful and relevant.

Other barriers are that not all of qualifications are eligible and are predominantly technical skills training which may prevent individual engagement.

In addition, there needs to be enhanced flexibility around prior attainment of qualifications, perhaps means testing achieved qualifications from extended timescales prior to encourage more individuals to access relevant L3 courses that are needed now.

Regionally there remains a funding challenge, both re the provision and access to, as well as the fact that the provider base is lacking in readiness to deliver the

required learning program which needs to be addressed and a wider and more robust provider base created.

Q11. **This is a question for providers**: a. How do you currently advertise your learner support offer? b. To what extent does the current learner support offer enable you to address the financial barriers which could stop adults participating or continuing in learning? c. Which financial barriers do you find it hardest to address and what is the reason for this? Please provide examples and/or evidence for your response. - **N/A**

Q12. How easy is it for adults to find out whether they are eligible for the current learner support offer? a. Really easy b. Easy c. Neutral d. Difficult e. Really difficult Please provide an explanation for your answer

D- This is heavily reliant on the providers to explain and there are no simple documents for learners to read or download on learner support. The success of any program will only be driven by ease of access and engagement on a local basis and as such experience regionally indicates the need to simplify and make more explicit the eligibility for the learning.

Success is also reliant upon individuals understanding what a Level 3 qualification is and whether they are eligible and where it is available and none of these aspects are being made easy for all to understand and explore opportunities.

Q13. Are there any other ways through which it would be useful to publicise learner support? Please set out what these other ways are and explain why they might be useful.

It is important that promotion should be appropriate to the needs of the learners within the local market, so this may be as simple as to promote more on .GOV and provider websites for wider outreach. However, to maximise the reach and inclusivity of the offering it is essential to utilise more sector specific routes, such as through trade bodies, but also for those furthest from the workplace organisations such as libraries and community ventures should be provided with awareness to provision. Similarly, engagement through employment hubs and job centre plus sites are a route which can reach many and publicise learner support to those most in need and perhaps the hardest to reach.

Individual information, advice and guidance is important to supporting individuals' ambitions, and for it to resonate it needs to be locally rooted in the local labour market – for local areas to support the take up of learning provision and progress in work. An example of this is through the Futuregoals platform, a locally developed all-ages careers platform which supports greater awareness of career pathways and supports better decisions to be made about careers- campaigns throughout 2019/20

were seen over 2million times by individuals and has subsequently signposted 5500 individuals to re:boot adult retraining courses.

Role of unions can also be significantly expanded to support employee learning and publicise the opportunities available. As a trusted source the engagement is likely to see a stronger take up from members.

Essentially there is an opportunity to better connect the national offer through empowering and enabling regions to work with local areas and communities to tailor and support the uptake of the offer

Q14. How do you think that government can support providers to deliver best practice in communicating and providing the current financial support for adults? Please explain your answer and, where possible, provide evidence for your response.

A more distinct campaign driven nationally through Government to highlight the current financial support for adults, bringing to life the opportunities can bring to those engaged in learning. The communications must be multi platformed to ensure inclusive engagement, so traditional as well as digital marketing campaigns to inform a wider audience.

This would then be supplemented by a more regionally focused approach to reach out through a range of regional platforms to reach the audience required, this could be through engagement with Job Centre Plus sites, Employment Hubs, Community Ventures to provide awareness and education of the offerings by providers. It is imperative that providers do not simply rely upon a digital marketing campaign due to the number of people who still do not have this degree of digital engagement.

Q15. For the non-financial flexibilities below, please select which you think are valuable: • Flexible start dates • Breaks in learning • Flexible modes of delivery • Weekend and evening learning • Recognition of prior learning • Other which is not listed (please specify)

The ability to have greater regional governance of programs and be able to adapt and flex to the changing needs is a key in grow engagement in programs and deliver impactful learning for more individuals.

- Flexible start dates – providers must be able to provide more flexible roll on roll off programmes, rather than being restrained to term time provision. To ensure greater inclusivity the opportunity to provide at times to suit the local needs and demographics of the learners is hugely important.
- Flexible modes of delivery – blended learning, distance learning and face to face programmes need to be available to accommodate the learners work life balance as well as varying learning styles to maximise the impact for individuals.
- Weekend and evening learning options must be more available as per the previous point. This would encourage more employees to engage and look to

progress learning for enhanced career progression into better jobs, but may also engage parents looking to return to work etc.

- Recognition of prior learning must be more robust, so to avoid repeat in learning and experienced learners. VRQ/NVQ's should be made eligible to observe competition, and then knowledge delivered to fill the gaps.

There are a range of options that can be considered to ensure greater opportunity to engage more people, the potential to accommodate learning around seasonal working maybe a consideration

Q16. Are there any barriers which might make it difficult to use or deliver the existing non-financial flexibilities? Please set out what these barriers are and, where possible, suggest ways that these barriers may be overcome.

Many of the barriers highlighted or the ability to provide non-financial flexibilities are aligned more to the provision from HE/FE as opposed to those independent training providers. The increased flexibility and ability to adapt at pace that ITP's bring over HE/FE provision means they can deliver a wider range of the flex noted above, whereas the HE/FE providers have a more structured approach which makes in more challenging, but still possible to adapt and pivot to meet changing demands.

Q17. **This is a question for providers**: What could encourage providers to deliver these non-financial flexibilities more often? 33 Please set out which of these non-financial flexibilities your answer refers to (e.g., "all the non-financial flexibilities above" or "flexible start dates only").- **N/A**

Q18. If you have any further comments or reflections on 'Accessibility (Section 1: Free level free qualifications for adults)' you can add them here.

The National Skills Fund should focus on flexibly supporting both employed and unemployed individuals to improve their prospects. It must support delivery which has clear line of sight to employment opportunities in the local area and be driven by the local market insight to ensure provision is timely, relevant, and meaningful but not always to be bound to qualifications, with the flexibility to support provision co-designed and/or endorsed by employers. It must also allow local areas to develop programmes to address economic challenges/opportunities, e.g., specific skills gaps and growth sectors

Employer led programmes are key to employee progression. As noted previously the provision must be as much about delivering skills to enhance employability as they are to delivering skills to provide progression into better jobs.

Q19. Different sectors may use the offer in different ways, depending on their skills needs. How do you think different sectors might make use of the offer

and why? If you are answering as an employer, you might want to talk about how your specific sector could use the offer.

Q20. How might we adapt the offer to better meet the needs of employers, including those from a range of different sectors, and a range of sizes? Where possible, please set out the proposed adaptation and which types of employers it would suit.

The focus of the offering remains on level 3 provision, and this will certainly bring significant learning benefits to those that engage. However, the challenge remains in many regions on how to provide for those who don't yet have any qualifications or have low level attainment and to support these individuals into employment or better jobs. As such the offer would meet more of the regional requirements by having greater flexibility in providing Level 2-4 courses to encourage a wider range of individuals to enhance their learning and meet the needs of the regional labour market accordingly.

Q21. How else can we encourage employers to use the free level 3 qualifications for adults to train or upskill their workers? Please set out your suggestion and, where possible, provide a reason and/or evidence for your response.

The benefits of training at this level need to be articulated more and are clearly evident to employers and individuals. For both parties there must be clear pathways to the learning provision and clear pathways beyond this provision to truly engage all parties. For employers it is important to bring to live the benefits such as enhanced efficiency, greater productivity, reduced costs, increase turnover/profitability, increase in work force confidence and competence, enhanced staff retention and the opportunity grow and expand the business are some of the more obvious "reasons for engagement". These are challenges currently faced in encouraging the growth of digital skills within business, as the lack of a clear learning strategy, a business growth strategy and lack of leadership understanding are holding back growth, therefore greater education on the benefits, the impacts and the opportunities that upskilling employees brings is required as a pathway to greater engagement.

Q22. If you have any further comments or reflections on 'Employer Involvement (Section 1: Free level 3 qualifications for adults)' you can add them here.

Priorities and entitlements for the National Skills Fund should be set nationally but commissioning and implementation should be undertaken at the level of the functional economic area. This will enable delivery to align with priorities set out in

strategic Employment and Skills priorities overseen by elected governance, with a degree of flexibility to develop new provision aligned to local labour market needs. In West Yorkshire only 36% of businesses have training plan and 29% a training budget.

Q23. **This is a question for providers:** What prior learning requirements (if any) do you have for someone taking a level 3 course? Please set out the prior learning requirements and how those requirements differ between different courses and sectors (if at all). For example, you may require an adult to have gained the equivalent level 2 qualification before taking a level 3 course. Do the prior learning requirements differ depending on the sector at which the course is aimed? **N/A**

Q24. **This is a question for employers**: Are there any particular requirements for learners looking to achieve a level 3 qualification in an area that supports your sector? Please set out these requirements and, where possible, provide a reason and/or evidence for your response. **N/A**

Q25. How else can providers best support adults without a level 3 to access the level 3 qualifications available through the Lifetime Skills Guarantee, given that they may lack some prior learning or experience? Please provide evidence and/or examples to illustrate your response.

To support those without a level 3 to access these qualifications, providers can offer progression platforms from sector specific RQF training to progress on to the level 3 qualifications. For many learners, the leap to level 3 qualifications can be daunting and may indeed discourage some from progressing, therefore the clarity in learning pathways, the benefits through career pathways must be evident to the learner to engage and motivate them in equal measures.

There may indeed be interim learning required, for example developing essential digital skills for life or for the workplace as an early stage on the learning pathway, will engage and encourage learners and support their development into more technically developed learning.

Q26. How else can we achieve the best impact for adults with the most to gain from the free level 3 qualifications for adults, alongside funding the courses? Please provide a reason and/or evidence for your response

Supporting adults through level 3 qualifications as noted above will significantly enhance the impact, providing the clarity of learning and career pathways but also providing a flexible and adaptable program of learning to ensure the learning is meaningful and impactful.

Q27. If you have any further comments or reflections on 'Pathways to free level 3 qualifications for adults (Section 1: Free level 3 qualifications for adults)' you can add them here.

Support for adults to achieve level 3 qualifications and beyond will increase their confidence progress into better jobs and to move into emerging sectors such as green or digital and creative and increase their household income and support local economic growth.

Take a broader view of the manufacturing industry and future requirements for Ind4.0 based on traditional skills

Q28. If you have any further comments or reflections on 'Section 1: Free level 3 qualifications for adults', you can add them here.

The Adult Education Budget should maintain a focus on Level 2 and below qualifications, maintaining the basic education entitlements, alongside prioritising funding towards the unemployed and those on the low wage pilots. The Adult Education Budget should provide the core basic training needs to move people to sustainable and progressive employment, while other skills funding unlocks targeted resources and flexibilities which will help meet adult re-training needs, fill skills gaps and tackle inequality.

Section 2: Skills Bootcamps

Q29. Which current aspects of the Skills Bootcamps do you think are most valuable? Select all that apply. • Short, intensive courses • Industry-specific training, designed to meet the needs of employers • Focused on in-demand skills • Fast-track to an interview • Line of sight to a job • Recruitment pipeline for employers • Flexible delivery model • Emphasis on improving diversity in technical skills. • Other – please specify 35 Please explain the reason for your response.

The most valuable aspects are as follows: -

- Industry-specific training, designed to meet the needs of employers
- Line of sight to a job
- Flexible delivery model

The Bootcamp delivery model ultimately should meet the needs of three entities; individuals, employers, and the local economy/labour market in the area in which it is being delivered. Bootcamps must be flexible both in terms of content and delivery to address rapidly changing needs and achieve employment and economic growth. The ability to flex bootcamps to delivery for employers is also crucial in enabling content to change. Providing a flexible offer that works around those in and out of work is also essential with clear line of sight to a job.

The Bootcamp model should be locally defined and endorsed by local employers alongside alignment to other programmes across the local landscape is crucial. The provision of Bootcamps in West Yorkshire has seen high numbers of diverse learners from BAME communities and women undertaking training opportunities in technical bootcamps such as rail. The Bootcamps have provided clear progression pathways for the learners. The providers have been proactive in engaging with employers to challenge their recruitment practices and encourage them to create opportunities for individuals who have accessed the bootcamps, therefore retaining that outcome focused approach throughout.

Q30. **If you have any further comments or reflections on 'Expansion of Skills Bootcamps (Section 2: Skills Bootcamps)' you can add them here.**

Regionally there is lots of positive evidence of performance, data, outcomes, case studies from wave 1 Bootcamp which is currently been provided to DfE and remain in consultation about longer term monitoring/tracking and the success of the Bootcamps due to them being delivered locally and being responsive to local need, versus nationally delivery led programmes. Noting the success of the regionally focused bootcamps, driven by local insight and local employer input, the future desire would be looking for a greater degree of devolved activity in future as we are able to evidence the local demand and the benefit of locally driven provision, through the success from wave 1.

Within West Yorkshire we have a proven track record of designing and delivering effective skills programs for individuals and employers, working effectively with the training provider network. The needs are built utilising strong and effective labour market insight into the learning needs of the region. Examples of this are re:Boot, a program developed to support L2-4 learning in a range of subjects which has seen all courses be over-subscribed and in excess of 150 individuals gain qualifications thus far.

Similarly, the locally developed Skills service for employers, supported and co-designed by West Yorkshire Consortium of Colleges, through provision driven by evaluation of training needs analysis in key sectors, has seen skills provision to over 1400 SMEs, impacting nearly 8000 individuals.

There is national evidence of the need for and access to short, non-accredited, provision with local flexibility and this should very much be considered in any further expansion of Bootcamps.

In West Yorkshire, the Bootcamp pilot has been oversubscribed, just over half of the individuals applying for a bootcamp were able to secure a place.

Bootcamps have attracted high percentages of females and individuals who are BAME and underrepresented in digital and technical sectors across West Yorkshire.

38% of Learners have secured a progression as part of the bootcamp, this includes:

- Formal promotion with current employer
- Continuing in current role with additional responsibilities
- Gaining new role with new employer (including gaining Apprenticeship)
- Becoming self-employed
- Continuing to be self-employed with new opportunities for business growth

The table below provides a breakdown of the bootcamp delivery in West Yorkshire.

Training Delivered by Bootcamp Name	All Totals
Jan - Mar	
Learner Capacity	632
Number of applicants to date	994
Number completed to date	388
% female completed	35.7
% BAME	32.2
Number undertaken interview	156
% undertaken interview	38.4
Number confirmed progression	194
% confirmed progression	52.0
Apr - Jun (Extension)	
Learner Capacity	237
Number of applicants to date	515
Number completed to date	212
% female completed	31.6
% BAME	44.6
Number undertaken interview	32
% undertaken interview	15.6
Number confirmed progression	20
% confirmed progression	9.7
Overall	
Learner Capacity	897
Number of applicants to date	1509
Number completed to date	600
% female completed	33.2
% BAME	36.5
Number undertaken interview	187
% undertaken interview	28.6
Number confirmed progression	214
% confirmed progression	38.1

Q31. **This is a question for providers**: What do you think are the challenges in delivering Skills Bootcamps? Where possible, please provide evidence for your response. **N/A**

Q32. **This is a question for providers**: How best do you think we might help providers to overcome the challenges to delivering a Skills Bootcamp? Please refer to the challenge you have set out in answer to the previous question. Where possible, please provide evidence for your response. **N/A**

Q33. If you have any further comments or reflections on **'Providers** (Section 2: Skills Bootcamps)' you can add them here. **N/A**

Q34. **Skills Bootcamps currently run for up to 16 weeks. Other than the length of the courses, do you think we could adapt Skills Bootcamps in any other way to: a. Support adults to access this training more easily? b. Support adults who are self-employed to access this training and use what they learn to benefit their business? c. Better meet the needs of employers, including those from a range of different sectors, and a range of sizes? Where possible, please detail the proposed adaptation and which types of employers it would suit. Please provide a reason and/or evidence for your responses.**

The allure of the Bootcamps is their flexibility; short, sharp interventions designed specifically around the needs of a cohort of learners or around the skills needs of a group of local employers to address current vacancies or develop a talent pipeline. Some Bootcamps will 'design themselves', where a particular skills need can be identified and addressed in a shorter delivery model with Bootcamp graduates moving directly into vacancies. Other Bootcamps will need to be broader, addressing a mixture of underpinning knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours.

These, building block, 'taster' Bootcamps would be effective in addressing entrenched recruitment issues through a lack of sector awareness, in particular health and construction. Health care is about doctors and nurses, and all construction employees are bricklayers.

We are investigating the potential of some taster Bootcamps initially in care where we would screen participants for the values for care and address value-based competencies. Input from a wide range of healthcare professionals would highlight the myriad roles within the sector and further aptitude and skills input would identify potential job roles and entry routes for progression. We would develop content pitched around Level 3 in line with DfE aims (noting previous comments on the benefits of broader provision to L2-4) and tailor the practitioner input to roles that do not need extended, formal qualifications as a traditional entry route. These may include digital roles in health informatics and data analytics. The Bootcamp would be joined-up

through collaboration between NHS and private healthcare service providers and associated employers ensuring participants can be signposted to their most appropriate next step be it further bespoke or individualised training, or into employment.

We see this model as a particularly attractive option for career changers and those returning to the workplace, possibly after their own caring responsibilities have ended. A similar model with multiple taster elements would be equally effective for the construction sector.

Progressions into employment from the taster Bootcamps would undoubtedly be fewer and slower than those from the more targeted versions but we would be addressing historic recruitment issues within two of the region's key sectors. Accreditation could also be problematic, but we are investigating where individual units of a taster might form part of an 'accredited' employer recognised, qualification as part of an evidence portfolio which would follow the learner.

One additional flexibility we might want to see allowed through the funding would be the opportunity for a participant to attend two Bootcamps. This would be an exception where the taster Bootcamp 'unearthed a gem' who would benefit from an additional fast-track Bootcamp into employment.

The current provision and structure of the Bootcamps in West Yorkshire has worked well thus far and has been well received by individuals, employers, and providers alike.

Noting this success, future programmes will benefit by being more adaptable to the changing needs of the learners, the demographics, the sectors etc. We need to ensure we do not exclude the holistic, pastoral and softer skills elements of the Bootcamps. These are seen as equally important by employers as the skills and competencies. for those that have been away from the labour market for a while, pastoral support might include a greater emphasis on CV building and interview skills

Adaptions to current bootcamps can be made to support the self-employed. A self-employed Bootcamp might include training around pitching to a client or social media marketing optimisation.

Bootcamps are designed with the participant and employer at the centre. We have tried to ensure that teaching and learning methods are as inclusive as possible, although a 100% virtual delivery model does have its limitations. We have also trialled a condensed format keeping the GLH the same but reducing the number of weeks to complete. This increased flexibility is attractive to both learner and business allowing learning to fit around work and life patterns.

Q35. Skills Bootcamps are designed to give adult learners the skills they need to fast-track them to an interview for a specific job. Do you think Skills Bootcamps courses should continue to be a maximum of 16 weeks long? Please explain and provide evidence for your answer.

Through the experiences we have had thus far16 weeks could be too long – the economic landscape can change at a rapid pace and employers engaged in the bootcamps so far have voiced a reluctance to "hold" vacancies whilst waiting for participants to complete a bootcamp.

There should be the option once again to have a more regionally nuanced offering to be able to provide for a flexible offer that meets the needs of the employer or the labour market relative to sector, needs, skills required etc.

Q36. What is the minimum length of time that you think a Skills Bootcamp course should be? Please provide evidence for your response. Providing evidence: If you are an adult learner, you might want to think about how much time you would be willing to commit to training through a Skills Bootcamp, including how many hours per week. If you are an employer or provider, you might want to give an example of a technical skills needed for a specific job and set out how many weeks it would take to learn that skill on a full-time basis.

There needs to be a distinction in this question between guided learning hours (GLH) and self-directed learning hours (SDLH). Any bootcamp, to provide adequately in-depth training, would need to be a minimum of 12 GLH, with that at least matched by an equal number of SDLH. However, this could be spread over anything from 1 to 12 weeks as dictated by the urgency of the skills need and requirements of the demographic of the participants as well as the complexity of the learning.

It should also be noted that in addition to the above, each Bootcamp should offer several hours of pastoral support to participants to enable them to have a positive progression and to meet the needs of the regional labour market.

Q37. If you have any further comments of reflections on Accessibility (Section 2: Skills Bootcamps) you can add them here.

It has been referenced throughout, but the ability to have locally led programs, which are driven by the needs of the local labour market, have the needs of the local employer and learner at its heart and have a flexible approach that again meets the requisite needs at that time, meets the needs of the sector and provides added value to the employer and the learner alike in providing employability opportunities.

The style of learning must also be reflective of the needs of the sectors, with a greater degree of flexibility to provide modular and industry recognised provision including micro-credits, therefore delivering the skills that are most in demand within the industry at that point in time.

Q38. **This is a question for employers**: We understand that how an employer is required to make this financial contribution could have an impact on them – for example whether employers are required to make an upfront payment before the start of the course. Are there any ways that we could make the mechanism for contributing as easy as possible?   N/A

Q39. **For all stakeholders, it may be valuable if employers could also make non-financial contributions to training. These non-financial contributions could be made by both those employers who are using a Skills Bootcamps to retrain their current workforce, in addition to the 30% contribution where they are using Skills Bootcamps to train existing employees, and by those who are not. Please select the non-financial contributions below that you think it would be most valuable for employers to make, and add any other contributions not listed that you think would also be valuable. • Providing space for training. • Providing technical equipment for learning. • Helping delivery of the training – e.g., providing some learning materials or teaching part of the course content. • Giving their workers time to learn. • Any other additional non-financial contributions not already listed that you think would be valuable. Please specify**

The non-financial contributions are all relevant, but the actual value would be driven by the actual employer and their current circumstances, as such once again the benefit of being able to flexible in the provision/offering is critical to engage as many employers as possible.

In the current climate, many employers are cutting back on employee CPD, therefore the opportunity to utilise non-financial contributions may be seen as a positive step towards supporting skills development of employees.

Other aspects that may be included within the options, could be supporting learning through learner mentoring to support the embedding of learning but also to reaffirm the clear learning pathways towards "better jobs" that these programs deliver. The knowledge of the local partners will be critical in being able to offer such additional support.

Q40. **This is a question for employers**: Would you be willing to make a non-financial contribution to training? Please explain your response. **N/A**

Q41. **How do you think that we can encourage more employers to make non-financial contributions? Where possible, please give examples and explain your answer.**

Employers need to have a clarity on the additional value they will derive from these programs, the fact that the programs have been designed and built to match the

local needs and deliver to a bespoke regional challenge and that the skills being developed are needed by the employer, which is being evidenced through the successful provision in Wave 1. As always, the benefits must be meaningful for the employer to engage, and the opportunity must have the flexibility that allows a broad range of employers to engage and contribute in a manner appropriate to their business.

Q42. If you have any further comments or reflections on 'Employer Involvement (Section 2: Skills Bootcamps)' you can add them here.

Employers should continue to have a real and proactive involvement in the codesign of bootcamps and be able to show clear line of sight to jobs through the provision, therefore ensuring they address their own skills gaps and derive direct benefit whilst ensuring that the learners receive the learning required for future employability and are motivated to be engaged due to the line of sight to jobs evidenced.

Q43. What further learning do you think a Skills Bootcamp should enable adults to progress onto? • No further learning. • Job-based training in the workplace. • A higher technical qualification. • An apprenticeship. • Other further training and/or learning opportunities not already listed which you think a Skills Bootcamp should enable adults to progress onto. Please specify.

As part of the desire to grow life-long learning, skills bootcamps should not be seen as the end of the learning journey. For all learners there must be a vision and clear view of the learning pathway, which in turn must be meaningful through the clarity of a career pathway, whether this be through new employment of progression in current role.

Skills bootcamps needed to be signposted to for those who have not yet achieved level 1 qualifications and provision should also look to address these gaps but beyond the bootcamps there needs to a range of opportunities that are relevant and meaningful for the individual but also the potential or current employers. The examples noted above are all potential routes, but once again the specific routes need to be identified and developed based up local knowledge and insight and engagement with the employers.

The desire to drive greater life-long learning should also mean that the future learning must also be reflective of the learners and their aspirations, needs, learning styles etc, so may be online learning which can be completed remotely to suit lifestyles, maybe interactive to match learning styles etc to ensure an inclusive and engaging approach and ensuring any barriers to future learning are removed.

Q44. We welcome any further comments on how we can best enable progression from Skills Bootcamps onto further training and/or learning, such as apprenticeships or higher technical education.

A ringfenced proportion of the fund should be focussed on L3+learning. This is likely to provide more relevant/needed technical skills within sectors and should help to dovetail with Adult Education Budget and other regional provision. This will provide additional learning pathways for individuals participating in Bootcamps allowing them to progress on to apprenticeships etc.

This learning progression will also be reliant upon the engagement of the employers within the bootcamp program supporting the further training and providing opportunities for their "new" employees to continue their learning.

The future learning must continue with the principles of addressing the local market challenges as well, and not simply be a non-specific provision to ensure the impact is a positive one for local labour market, the employer and individual alike.

Q45. If you have any further comments or reflections on 'Pathways leading on from Skills Bootcamps (Section 2: Skills Bootcamps)' you can add them here

need to be developed with employers – line of sight to employment vs taster sessions for larger employers such as NHS for example

Q46. If you have any further comments or reflections on 'Section 2: Skills Bootcamps', you can add them here.

Skills Bootcamps can and should provide huge benefit to both employers and learners alike if we can ensure the needs of both are met and that the flexibility of delivery and design is built into future offerings, and they are reflective of the local needs in their provision. It is also imperative that they complement the alternative skills programs across the region and must not simply act as a "top-up" to adult education budget activity for example.

Section 3: Meeting critical skills needs

Q47. Are there any current critical skills gaps below degree level and in particular sectors, occupations, or locations that you think the skills system will not meet, either now or in the next five years? For example, some sectors might have specific skills needs which have emerged since exiting the European Union, whereas other sectors might encounter skill needs in the future – for instance, because of new technologies linked to transitioning industries or our ambition to reach net zero by 2050. a. What are these skills gaps? Please set out what these skills gaps are and specify whether they apply to a particular sector, occupation, or location. b. What level are these skills gaps at? c. Is this a current skill gap, or something that you see emerging in the future? If in the future, please detail when you think this skill need is likely to arise. Why do you think the skills system does not meet this skills gap?

Skills gaps will always be a constant, however the ability to react and adapt to these is critical in the provision of learning. There is an increased focus at present on Level 3+ qualifications, however through pandemic impact and Brexit impacts, the need for lower-level skills is becoming even apparent and not just in emerging sectors.

Current insight indicates that there are a range of skills lacking in lower-level tech skills, with elements such as Microsoft suite learning being one of the highest in-demand skills by employers, at a level equivalent to L1-2. In addition, lower-level skills in more traditional sectors such as construction are seeing skills gaps, along with high profile shortages at present for HGV drivers. Manufacturing is another sector which is seeing a level of skills shortages at present driven by both Covid and Brexit.

In all these instances the skills gaps are at the lower level (L1-2) as opposed to the focus of L3+.

Looking beyond the present skills gaps, the changing needs of the labour market will constantly evolve, and insight indicates a significant move towards automation and the need for skills provision to adapt to these demands, noticeably within digital and green skills provision, but within these technical skills there also needs to be a focus on the softer skills requirements to match the projected needs of the labour market.

Once again, these skills needs are below degree level in the first instance, as the base point for learners is low and therefore provision needs to reflect the needs of the learners, to provide the clear learning pathways based around local insight and local labour market needs.

Q48. If you have any further comments or reflections on 'Critical Skills (Section 3: Meeting critical skills needs)' you can add them here.

Q49. Are there any particular sectors or occupations which would benefit from improved access to shorter courses? Please set out which sector or occupation and, where possible, provide a reason and/or evidence for your response.

Skills fund should include unitised, modular and industry-recognised provision – including micro credits / qualifications that can be combined. Funds should be targeted to increase staff skills and capacity to develop more flexible methods of delivery, taking advantage of learning technology and can be complemented by providing and developing small, locally determined, innovative pilots which test new methods and tackle skills deficits

The recent pandemic has truly highlighted the importance of utilising the differing forms of delivery and how the use of learning technology can engage a more diverse and inclusive range of learners which will have wider benefits to the local labour market.

In addition, employers are beginning to be reflective of the change in learning styles and becoming more accepting of bespoke modular learning, most notably in the digital sector but not exclusively, where modular learning is addressing specific skills gaps and providing employment opportunities as result.

The needs of the labour market will continue to change over the coming years with much more focus on automation and embedding of technology, therefore skills needs will need to be adaptive at pace to these changing needs, which lends itself to a greater focus on intensive shorter courses or more modular learning programs.

The evolving markets such as green skills will also benefit from a similar approach to be adaptive and reflective of local needs and allow courses to be developed and designed to meet the specific local needs.

Individuals currently working in high carbon sectors would benefit from improved access to training which supports upskilling and re-training in the use of new and emerging green technologies. This is particularly important in supporting a just transition to a net zero carbon economy, ensuring that high carbon workers are supported to progress or re-train, and that skills shortages are minimised.

There are constant emerging needs; the recent pandemic has demonstrated how quickly a skills response is needed. Working with key partners and employers MCAs are well place to quickly pivot to respond to these changing needs and it is key that as bootcamps continue to evolve through the pilots MCAs continue to have a role in their commissioning and roll out so that they respond to local labour market needs.

Q50. Could more options for shorter courses or more modular learning opportunities help adults to overcome barriers to learning? Please explain your answer and, where possible, provide evidence for your response.

The recent pandemic has highlighted that the use of a range of learning provisions, whether these be modular learning, unitized learning etc have attracted a more diverse audience of learners. The use of broader learning technology platforms has also removed many barriers to learning, allowing more under-represented sectors to engage in learning which has significant benefits to inclusion and providing a more diverse workforce.

Providers being more flexible in their provision, whether this be through use of technology, length of course, style of learning, specific timings of course (evenings/weekends) also assist in removing barriers to learning and supporting those furthest from the workplace.

It is also important that recognition is made for other sectors such as those with disabilities and those where English is not a first language to ensure they are provided with equal learning opportunities.

Q51. **This is a question for providers**: Are you currently delivering short courses (under 12 months) or modules outside of full qualifications? If you answered yes, please specify a. What courses/modules you are delivering. b. What level these

short courses/modules are. c. Why you chose to deliver these short courses or 39 modules. d. How you designed these short courses or modules. For example, did you work with employers to do so?   N/A

Q52. **This is a question for employers**: Have you funded short courses (under 12 months) or modules outside of full qualifications? If you answered yes, please specify a. What short courses/modules you have funded, and why. b. Whether you worked with the provider on the design of any of these courses.   N/A

Q53. **This is a question for employers**: Do you have any skills needs that you think might be met by a short course or module outside of a full qualification? If you answered yes, please set out what these are.   N/A

Q54. Considering the provision, we have already made available through National Skills Fund investment, do you think there are any further gaps below degree level in adult skills provision which would benefit from targeted support? If you answered yes, please: a. Specify what these gaps are. b. Provide evidence for your answer, including evidence on the impact of this gap. c. Suggest ways that these gaps in provision might best be met

As noted previously, the provision remains focused at L3 skills and there is a substantial number of people regionally and nationally who as yet do not have L1 or l2 skills, therefore the challenge to achieve L3 qualifications can be daunting for many, so as part of the wider offering, development of clear learning pathways to engage learners and steer to L3 qualifications is critical. Alongside this is ensuring that there is a wraparound support through National careers Service which is coordinated locally and meets the labour market needs.

The National Skills Fund must allow for local flexibility and focus to drive support to those that are most in need and for those looking to reskill/upskill as well as looking to return to employment. It should also allow flexibility to engage those on zero hours contracts and in temporary roles to support progression into better jobs.

The nature of the labour market at present is volatile due to recent impacts from Brexit and Covid and as such the local lens will be hugely important in being able to identify local needs, engage providers and support those most in need to engage in learning.

Q55. If you have any further comments or reflections on 'Shorter Courses (Section 3: Meeting critical skills needs)' you can add them here.

Q56. If you have any further comments or reflections on 'Section 3: Meeting critical skills needs', you can add them here.