

**Report to:** Employment and Skills Committee

**Date:** 13 July 2023

**Subject:** **Devolved Adult Skills**

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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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input 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 type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

## 1. Purpose of this Report

1.1 To provide updates on the Combined Authority's work on adult skills programmes and ask the Committee for a steer on work in this area going forward.

1.2 Specifically, the report:

- Updates the committee on Multiply Project's progress and performance in year
- Outlines the findings and recommendations of our Adult Education Budget Community Learning Review and seeks comments on this.
- Allows the committee the opportunity to comment and endorse on the next steps for UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) funding, its alignment with the Employment and Skills Pipeline and UKSPF Local Investment Plan aims.

## 2. Information

### Evidence Base

2.1 The adult skills paper submitted to the Committee at its [last meeting in March](#), provides an overview of the evidence base pertaining to adult skills. In the following section the focus is on more specific evidence relating to numeracy (linking to the report on Multiply) plus Community Learning (linking to the report on the Community Learning Review).

## Numeracy

2.2 As noted in the adult skills paper submitted to the Committee at its last meeting, West Yorkshire faces a basic skills challenge on a significant scale and a deficit of numeracy skills is a key element of that. According to small area estimates based on the Skills for Life Survey, 746,000 adults (aged 16-64) in West Yorkshire (52% of the total) are equipped with skills at Entry Level and below in respect of numeracy.

2.3 The Multiply programme targets adults (aged 19+) who lack a maths / numeracy qualification at Level 2. Data from the Department for Education shows that 23% of young people reach the age of 19 without achieving a Level 2 (GCSE equivalent) in maths (higher than the England average of 20%), rising to 27% in Bradford.

2.4 This data also highlights significant issues around equality, diversity and inclusion linked to numeracy:

- Women are consistently more likely to achieve a Level 2 in Maths by age 19 than men (WY: 24% vs 21%)
- Young people eligible for free school meals are more than twice as likely to lack a Level 2 in Maths by age 19 than those not eligible (18% vs 43%)
- 57% of young people with a Special Educational Need (SEN) lack a Level 2 in Maths by age 19 – more than three times as high as those without SEN, rising to more than three quarters of those with Education Health Care Plan
- There are big differences between ethnic groups with regard to attainment of Maths Level 2 by age 19. National figures show that nearly 80% of young people of Gypsy Roma heritage lack this qualification.

2.5 There is significant demand among the public for support to improve numeracy skills. According to [national survey data](#) a third of people (36%) say they would like to improve their maths and numeracy skills, with women more than twice as likely as men to be anxious about using maths and numbers. There are a range of motivations for wishing to improve numeracy:

- 29% of people who want to improve their numeracy skills cite better money management as a reason.
- 26% of people who want to improve their numeracy skills cite helping children with homework as a reason.
- One in four people would be deterred from applying for a job if it listed using numbers and data as a requirement.

## COMMUNITY LEARNING

- 2.6 A key purpose of Community Learning is to widen participation in learning, particularly among disadvantaged people who are least likely to get involved in learning.
- 2.7 The Combined Authority's [AEB End of Year Report](#) found that 36% of local participants in Community Learning were residents of the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods nationally. In addition, 22% of Community Learning enrolments were for learners with no prior formal qualifications and 47% were for learners with either no formal qualifications or a qualification below full Level 2.
- 2.8 Local Authorities are key strategic and delivery partners and take different approaches to commissioning - Calderdale, Kirklees and Leeds successfully deliver with a range of grassroots, voluntary sector organisations providing a reach to more reluctant learners often with multiple barriers. 62% of learners engaging with Bradford Adult Learning were resident in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods compared with 41% across all AEB delivery. 28% of learners on AEB provision with Wakefield Adult Learning have learning difficulties and disabilities well above the 17% across all AEB.
- 2.9 There is also evidence of progression. During 2021/22, 11% of learners who enrolled for a Community Learning course subsequently enrolled on an Adult Skills course during that year; this is equivalent to 1,400 learners in absolute terms.
- 2.10 Looking at the broader picture relating to learner participation, [National survey data](#) shows that a minority (42%) of adults are currently in learning or have taken part in learning in the last three years. Social grade is a key predictor of participation in learning. Almost twice as many adults in the DE grade<sup>1</sup> have not participated in learning since leaving full-time education when compared to those in the AB grade (37 per cent compared to 19 per cent). Working status is another key predictor. Whereas the participation rate of those working full-time is 52% and is 49% for people who work part-time, it is only 22% for those who are not working and not seeking work. Moreover, respondents who are not seeking work are the group most likely to have not taken part in learning since leaving full-time education (45%).
- 2.11 Another objective of Community Learning is to improve confidence and to promote willingness to engage in learning. This is because the evidence suggests that those who are furthest away from learning face dispositional barriers and may benefit from support to understand the value of learning and

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<sup>1</sup> Grade DE: Semi-skilled & unskilled manual occupations, Unemployed and lowest grade occupations  
Grade AB: Higher & intermediate managerial, administrative, professional occupations.

to increase their confidence to learn. National survey data indicates that almost three in ten adults (29 per cent) who have not recently taken part in learning also said that nothing is preventing them from doing so and they don't want to. In addition, 29% of this group indicated that that they feel too old to take part in learning, whilst 10% said they lack confidence.

- 2.12 The same survey data shows that learning provides benefits across a range of areas, including health and wellbeing and developing stronger communities, both of which are objectives of Community Learning. Thirty-five per cent of recent learners said that learning had benefited their health and wellbeing, 22% said that their confidence had improved and 13% that they are more understanding of other people and cultures.
- 2.13 An Adult Skills Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) is in development ahead of procurement of AEB providers to commence delivery in academic year 2024/25. The intention will be to bring funding streams together through a single DPS, ensuring that there is a streamlined offer to the residents of West Yorkshire. The Combined Authority is keen to ensure that a balance is struck between management of risk and funding innovative, niche and locally based providers to deliver training through AEB.

### **Multiply**

- 2.14 Multiply is an adult numeracy programme, led by the Department for Education (DfE) as part of the £2.6bn UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). West Yorkshire Combined Authority has been given an allocation of £12.4m for Multiply across 3 financial years. The funding is to engage more adults with numeracy levels below level 2 (GCSE C/4 pass) in informal learning to boost their maths skills for life and work.
- 2.15 Following consultation, the West Yorkshire Investment Plan was approved in June 2022 and accepted by the Department for Education in August. The Investment Plan outlines 3 key streams of activity:
- Strand 1 - Individual engagement - £4.7 million
  - Strand 2 - Business focussed activity - £3 million
  - Strand 3 - Capacity building for the sector - £3.6 million
- 2.16 The project faced significant challenges in year 1, predominantly based on timescales for implementation alongside lags in data receipt from Department for Education. Just under 2,000 individuals were supported by the fund in around 4 months of project activity. This equates to 82% of the DfE target in terms of engaging with individuals and providing numeracy support. This equates to 58% of the financial profile being met.
- 2.17 A report on the progress and performance made in year 1 is provided in **Appendix 1**.

### **Community Learning Review 2022**

- 2.18 Community Learning is funded through the devolved **Adult Education Budget (AEB)**. The overall AEB fund is £66.4 million for academic year 2022/23, and supports learners through a range of programmes and access points, supporting them to increase their skills, and connecting them to further learning and employment opportunities.
- 2.19 The West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) is committed to reaching into its most disadvantaged communities and breaking down barriers which traditionally make it difficult for residents to engage with the skills system.
- 2.20 Community Learning is seen as a crucial, flexible fund, which is instrumental in engaging with the hardest to reach communities and individual, who will benefit significantly from skills development. The Community Learning allocation for 2022/23 is £8.7 million per annum. This value was protected in the WY AEB Strategy (September 2020), pending review.
- 2.21 In 2022, West Yorkshire Combined Authority commissioned an independent consultant to undertake a review of the AEB funded Community Learning. The aim of the review was to:
- understand more fully the impact of the funding and provision in order to champion its use;
  - Identify areas of good practice; and
  - consider whether additional guidance and more consistent approaches might be introduced into the funding to improve the impact it has across the region.
- 2.22 The review found considerable good practice amongst West Yorkshire providers, supported by skilled practitioners with expertise in learner support and empowerment. There is a strong foundation of quality to delivery upon which to build. A key ambition for WYCA should be to support the partnership to understand its strengths and achieve a consistency of provision across West Yorkshire.
- 2.23 While there is clear evidence of good practice, there is inconsistency of application of the Funding guidance, in part, due to its lack of clarity and the ability to interpret against organisational priorities. Investment would be strengthened through more clarity on how Community Learning should be spent in West Yorkshire, with Local Authority voices forming a key strategic role in this.
- 2.24 The full report can be found at **Appendix A**. The report included 25 different recommendations.
- 2.25 The report and its findings have been shared with strategic stakeholders and delivery partners. Given the importance of the fund in meeting local community needs, Local Authorities have been central to consultation on the priorities and key actions needed to maintain the funds' flexibility while improving the impact of investment.

- 2.26 The report's 25 recommendations have been considered and simplified into four themes, with key actions to be taken. The table overleaf summarises the actions that are proposed for adoption in West Yorkshire, indicating where strategic and operational decision need to be taken to progress further.
- 2.27 Through the devolution of funds, the Combined Authority aims to continuously improve the impact of the investment of funding. This includes focussing the funds on disadvantaged areas and individuals most in need of support, and focussing on impact for residents. The actions below combined aim to make incremental improvements to the impact that this funding has on West Yorkshire residents and the economy.
- 2.28 Actions 16 and 17 require a strategic decision to be made regarding the use of funding and the commissioning process. While these decisions would be taken by the Combined Authority Board, Committee members are invited to give their views. These actions include moving towards a needs-based methodology to allocating Community Learning funding.
- 2.29 The UKSPF proportions of funding levels are recommended, which allocates 70% of funding based on population and 30% of the funding base on Productivity, Skills, Unemployment Rate, Population Density and Household Income.
- 2.30 The Employment and Skills Committee are asked to review all actions, providing comment and recommendations.

### **Guided Learning Hours (GLH)**

- 2.31 Following recommendation at Employment and Skills Committee, the Combined Authority approved a 10% increase to the AEB formula funding rate in Feb 2022. As part of the rate increase, the Combined Authority approved the following: Strengthen the AEB funding rules to address 'cost-cutting' tactics employed by some providers and ensure that the rate increase is aligned to improved impact for learners, including wrap around support and achievement rate increases.
- 2.32 Recent audits undertaken by WYCA have found common practice where qualifications are delivered less than 50% of the recommended GLH. The audit has identified a systematic reduction, and not adjustment based on the learner's assessed needs and starting point. This isn't consistent with the ambition to fund quality learning through devolved arrangements.
- 2.33 A provider roundtable was held to discuss findings, gain a clearer picture in relation to data and understand the sector challenges, specifically understanding the programme design rationales for:
- Sector Based Work Academies (SWAPs)
  - Distance Learning

2.34 *Appendix 5 Guided Learning Hours - WYCA position and next steps* is a notification of the rule change following a provider consultation held in April. The recommendations have been discussed with LA adult skills colleagues as well as with providers, and officers have engaged with other MCAs to explore the approaches taken elsewhere.

2.35 Recommended actions for West Yorkshire

- Planned guided learning hours to be entered onto the national learner database
- Introduction of a traffic light tracking system where approval is required for delivery below 70% of GLH and reduction of funding when planned hours is below 50% of GLH
- Introduction of specific Sector Based Work Academy approved codes with set funding value piloted in 2023/24
- Removal of pure distance learning to be considered for introduction in 2024/25, following evaluation of the changes implemented and impact on range of provision.

### **UKSPF**

2.36 Pillar 3 of UKSPF funding for interventions to support People and Skills will commence delivery from April 2024. A paper for consultation based on the Employment and Skills pipeline was taken to the Local Partnership Group as the advisory Board to UKSPF on 15 June 2023. This was followed by a sounding group held online on 28 June 2023 on the proposals including adult skills. A verbal update on both meetings will be shared at the Committee.

2.37 A Local Investment Plan for UKSPF has been agreed with government. In line with the priorities of this Committee it was agreed that the focus would be on work and health, support for individuals furthest from the labour market. The focus of this funding is to remove barriers to work, this may include skills support.

2.38 The current proposals include a c.£4m community grants call split between two themes of work and health and support for those furthest from the labour market.

2.39 Given the strategic commissioning role of the CA in the adult skills landscape, officers will work closely to ensure complementarity of any new provision with the current adult skills landscape wherever possible, and in particular through CA commissioned activity.

### **Creative**

2.40 There are several offers available in the creative space under the Skills Connect (gainshare) and Skills Bootcamp (DFE-funded) programmes commissioned by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. The Department for Education has approved additional flexibilities, and there is an intention to utilise 30% of our funding outside of the core areas of Digital and Technical

provision to deliver creative and cultural provision, in recognition of the rapid growth of this sector in West Yorkshire.

- 2.41 A procurement exercise is scheduled in July 2023 to procure specific Skills Bootcamps to deliver training within the creative and cultural sector, ready for delivery from September 2023. This will support up to 175 individuals to upskill in the creative and cultural sector and access new employment opportunities.
- 2.42 Delivery is currently underway on a Skills Bootcamp in Virtual and Augmented Reality. This course will support 75 individuals to upskill within Virtual Production, transforming traditional filmmaking methods by combining real-time digital elements with physical production. This is currently being delivered by the Academy of Live Technology and a case study video is currently in production, demonstrating the success of the programme.
- 2.43 The programme is also contributing to the part funding of film production and screenplay writing training on a drama series, with filming due to start in Quarter 2 of financial year 2023. This is in partnership with Bradford Council. Officers of the Combined Authority are also working with the Piece Hall in Calderdale to fund training to support individuals to access training in the live events sector, working in partnership with Live Nation and the Piece Hall.
- 2.44 In April/May, the LEEDS23 WOW Barn project provided skills training for women, girls and non-binary people in construction, arts and crafts, events management and curation (final evaluation report pending).
- 2.45 Delivery is about to commence on the newest iteration of the Mayor's Screen Diversity Programme, helping individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to access opportunities in the creative and cultural sector. Two cohorts are planned, with the first due to start from July 2023.

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

- 3.1. Skills development is a critical component in tackling the climate emergency implications. Each adult skills programme provided by the Combined Authority, and the majority commissioned nationally provide a level of support in increasing green skills. Locally, the Green Jobs Taskforce will inform programme development.
- 3.2 The decision and discussion topics of this paper do not pose any immediate change to climate change curriculum or programmes.

### **4. Inclusive Growth Implications**

- 4.1. All adult skills programmes aim to support those residents who have a skills deficit and need to access learning opportunities to progress them towards further learning, employment or a better way of life. Through delegated and devolved funding, we specifically target investment of funds towards



disadvantaged areas and underrepresented groups where the skills deficit is most pronounced

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

- 5.1. As per 4.1, all adult skills programmes aim to support those residents who have a skills deficit and/or tackle economic challenges. The range of programmes frequently support underrepresented groups through training provision.
- 5.2. All programmes have an Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment with relevant actions identified. Proportionate uptake amongst demographics is closely monitored, with targeted action taken to address any identified imbalance. Community Learning in particular, is aimed to outreach in communities who do not traditionally engage with learning and support their further progression in life, work and learning.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1. The Multiplier year report outlines that £1.4 million funding that was allocated to West Yorkshire, but was unspent due to implementation challenges. The Combined Authority continues to push DfE to reallocate the underspend back into West Yorkshire, and will be looking to secure growth in year 2 to counterbalance the loss of investment.

## **7. Legal Implications**

- 7.1. There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

## **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 the Committee comment on and recommend the actions proposed following the Community Learning review.
- 10.2. That the Committee notes the Multiplier programme year 1 performance.

## **11. Background Documents**

[West Yorkshire AEB Strategy \(September 2020\)](#)

## **12. Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Multiply End of Year 1 Report
- Appendix 2 – [Community Learning Review 2022](#)
- Appendix 3 – Community Learning Action Plan 2023
- Appendix 4 – Adult Skills Case Studies
- Appendix 5 – [Guided Learning Hours – WYCA position and next steps](#)

