



Report to:	Employment and Skills Committee
Date:	19 October 2023
Subject:	Devolved Adult Skills
Director:	Felix Kumi-Ampofo, Director of Inclusive Economy, Skills, and Culture
Author:	Pippa Syers, Interim Adult Skills Manager

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state paragraph number of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, Part 1:	3
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 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:
 - Provides an update on the Combined Authority's application for additional Skills Bootcamps funding from the Department for Education
 - Requests the Committee to discuss possible approaches to national funding rule changes for AEB including options within appendix 2
 - To provide an update on AEB cross-border arrangements and suggested approach

2. Information

Evidence base

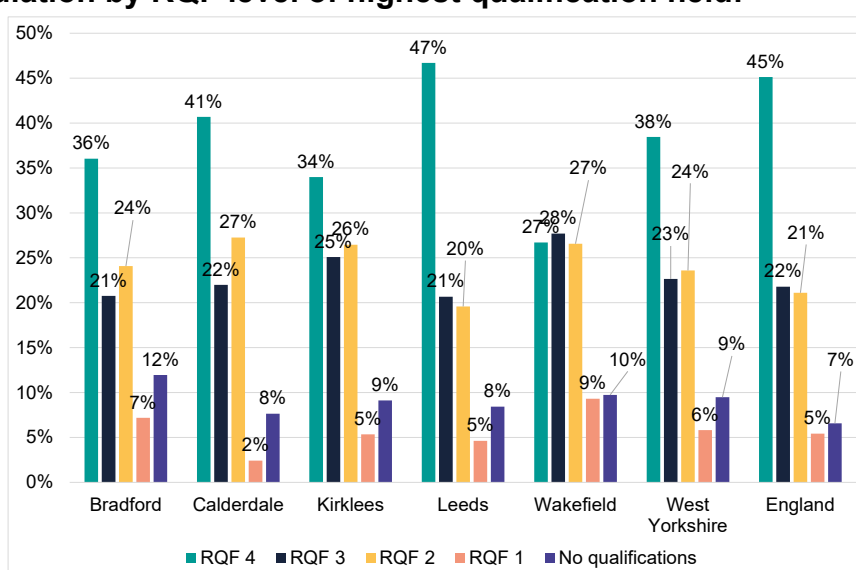
- 2.1 The adult skills papers submitted to the Committee at its previous meetings in March and July, provide an overview of the evidence base pertaining to adult skills, focusing on the

themes of basic skills, technical skills, workforce development, numeracy and community learning. Further intelligence is included in this section where new data is available, including updated information on the qualification profile of West Yorkshire’s working age population. In addition, there is a focus on the need for ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) provision in West Yorkshire, which supports the discussion around ESOL later in the paper.

Qualification profile of working age population

2.2 One of the objectives of adult skills provision is to provide individuals with the skills and qualifications needed to access employment and improve their career prospects and realise their full potential. A key objective of the Adult Education Budget is to enable people to achieve a qualification at Level 2. There is also a legal entitlement for young people aged 19 to 23 to access learning leading to a first full Level 3. There is further provision to enable access to Level 3 qualifications in subjects deemed to be economically valuable.

2.3 Updated figures relating to the level of highest qualification held by the working age population of West Yorkshire have recently been published¹. These show that 15% of the working age population of West Yorkshire has either no or low qualifications. In absolute terms, this equates to 132,000 adults (9% of the total) with no formal qualifications and 81,000 people (6%) whose highest qualification is below level 2. The proportion of people with no / low qualifications rises to nearly one fifth of the population of both- Bradford and of Wakefield. The equivalent proportion nationally is 12%. **Figure: Profile of working age population by RQF level of highest qualification held:**



Source:
Population

Annual

¹ There has been a break in the existing timeseries since, as of 2022, individuals’ qualifications are now mapped to the Regulated Qualification Framework rather than National Vocational Qualification equivalents.

Survey, Jan – Dec 2022

2.4 The proportion of people who have achieved a qualification at Level 3 only is similar to the national average in West Yorkshire at 23% and 22% respectively. However, the availability of people with **higher level qualifications at Level 4 and above** is a key area of under-performance for the region. With 38% of its population qualified to this level, West Yorkshire is seven points below the national average of 45%.

West Yorkshire Delivery

2.5 The table below shows WYCA's Employment and Skills KPIs which are set and measured each financial year and reviewed monthly. % cumulative target achieved shows progress to date against forecast.

Employment and Skills		23/24 Actual to date	Annual Target	% of Cumulative Target Achieved	Definition
Adults supported to upskill, re-train or access employment/self-employment	Individuals engaged	13,584	53,900	435%	Individuals engaged in the following programmes: AEB, Multiply, Enterprise West Yorkshire, Employment West Yorkshire, Skills Connect, Digital Bootcamps, Apprenticeship Levy.
	Ethnic Minority Learners (AEB Only)	48%	43%	112%	
	Learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties (AEB Only)	19%	23%	83%	
	Unemployed Learners (AEB Only)	47%	43%	109%	
	Female Learners (AEB Only)	60%	67%	90%	Support adults to access employment, self-employment and training, and to progress in work, targeting support at the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups in the region, including prison-leavers
	Female Learners (Non AEB)	57%	50%	114%	
	Ethnic Minority Learners (Non AEB)	49%	20%	245%	
	Learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties (Non AEB)	23%	23%	100%	

Multiply

2.6 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 was allocated £12.4m 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.

- 2.7 Following consultation, the West Yorkshire Investment Plan was approved in June 2022 and has been accepted by the Department for Education. 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
- 2.8 Please note that as the programme progresses and demand is measured by performance, the distribution of these funds will change. A recent change request (detailed in 2.16) now affects the funding distribution as shown below:
- **Strand 1** - Individual engagement - £4.9 million
 - **Strand 2** - Business focussed activity - £3 million
 - **Strand 3** - Capacity building for the sector - £3.4 million
- 2.9 Improving numeracy skills is key to tackling deprivation: 47% of learners in West Yorkshire who enrolled on numeracy courses via devolved AEB in 2021/22 live in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods nationally. There is a strong correlation between neighbourhoods that are “skills deprived” and those that face wider forms of deprivation.
- 2.10 Current Multiply data shows 58% of delivery has occurred in 20% most deprived areas of West Yorkshire. A larger proportion of female (79%) to male (21%) with the vast majority (65%) of learning being undertaken by age group 25-49. 32% are Pakistani ethnicity, 27% White British, the remainder a spread across other ethnicities.
- 2.11 Year 2 data from April to July shows learner engagement to date of 470 against an annual DfE target of 2456 (19% of annual profile) and 173 learners ahead of learner profile to date by 297 (163% against profile to date). Local areas have planned for year 2 with delivery expected to increase from September onwards in line with seasonal trends in engagement with education. All Local Authority areas and FE Colleges are reporting that they expect 100% delivery on all interventions.
- 2.12 Multiply business strand supports employers to up-skill staff in bespoke numeracy training to improve productivity. Delivery is yet to gain momentum therefore to increase engagement from businesses, partners are collecting feedback from employers on the barriers facing engagement, liaising with business engagement teams to promote the offer to employers, engaging with TUC and Union Learning Reps, and a business referral portal is available on the WYCA website. Marketing including social media, radio and bus advertising has taken place to promote this strand.

Skills Connect

2.13 Skills Connect is West Yorkshire Combined Authority's (WYCA) fully funded, non-accredited adult training programme. It offers flexible courses at an equivalent from Level 3 up to Level 5, and has been developed to address employer skills shortages within the region, allowing individuals to access higher level employment opportunities or progression within their current employment. Delivery is progressing well and has supported 1,000 learners to start courses in the technical and health and care sectors, with a digital sector-focussed offer due to launch in early 2024, driving progress towards the target of supporting 4,500 learners by March 2025.

Skills Bootcamps

2.14 Delivery is currently underway for Wave 4 (financial year April 2023-March 2024) with 16 courses available by mid-September 2023. The current provision is predominately in the Digital Sector, with content delivered at equivalent to Level 3 up to Level 5. Examples of these courses currently include Skills Bootcamp in Web Design and Development, and Skills Bootcamp in IT Support with Cyber Security. To date, 186 learners have enrolled on courses out of a target of 950, which is in line with our performance profile with further registrations taking place until March 2024. Courses that are available for registrations can be accessed [here](#) via the FutureGoals platform.

2.15 A proposal has now been submitted to the DfE to set out what the Combined Authority intend to commission under the next phase (Wave 5) of Skills Bootcamps (April 2024-March 2025). The high-level submission will focus on the core sector areas set out by the DfE, including Construction, Engineering and Digital, with additional flexibilities introduced including Childcare, Creative and Design and Project Management. The proposal has been submitted in collaboration with Local Authorities to scope out the specific skills needs in each local area. The Skills Bootcamps will be positioned under Wave 5 as a business facing offer, to continue to encourage co-investment in high demand skills by employers through the co-design of courses available and also through the recruitment of course graduates. A change request to extend the delivery of the programme into Wave 5 is currently going through the Combined Authority's assurance process, with the anticipated outcome due by December 2023.

AEB and Free Courses for Jobs

2.16 West Yorkshire has now entered its third year of devolved AEB funding. 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, i.e., with low or no qualifications, unemployed, on low wages. The aim is to make transformational improvements to the impact that the fund has.
- 2.17 Exempt Appendix 1 – AEB Performance Data September 2023 (the Combined Authority is not permitted to release data publicly ahead of DfE) demonstrates the current reach of the Adult Education budget for Year 2. Over 47,000 West Yorkshire residents have been supported in upskilling across a range of sectors and in preparation for life and work in year 2.
- 2.18 Early indications show there has been a significant increase of Free Courses for Jobs utilisation from 20% in 21/22 to over 80% in 22/23. This has resulted in 593 learners achieving a level 3 qualification. For 87% of these learners this was their first level 3 qualification, enabling them to reskill or upskill.
- 2.19 Once the data collection has been completed in November, a full report on Year 2's performance will be provided to the January 2024 Employment and Skills Committee to consider the impact that has been made through funding devolution.
- 2.20 Year 3 performance data has not been appended, as returns are partial at this point in the year, with the majority of grant holders providing their first return in November (R03).

National Funding Changes

- 2.21 The Government has introduced changes to funding rates in 24/25 which are part of the further education (FE) funding and accountability reforms set out by Skills for Jobs white paper.
- 2.22 Appendix 2 outlines the implications of the national funding changes and the possible approaches to consider for West Yorkshire.
- 2.23 The Employment and Skills Committee is asked to consider the options and recommended approach as detailed in appendix 2.

Route 2 (Out of area) Grant Providers and cross border arrangements

- 2.24 The West Yorkshire AEB Strategy detailed the commitment to support Grant providers from the wider Leeds City Region that support travel to learn patterns and/or delivery directly into West Yorkshire communities.
- 2.25 Under Route 2 the Combined Authority contracts with four Colleges, one Local Authority and a Specialist Designated Institution from South and North Yorkshire, as well as the Workers Education Association (WEA) a national adult education charity who have a Leeds base and deliver across the region. Total allocation of these providers is £3,233,927 of AEB (5% of total allocation).

- 2.26 As outlined in the AEB strategy and as two years of AEB delivery performance is now available, it is time to review if the arrangement for all the out of area providers is still appropriate.
- 2.27 Coinciding with this review is the unique position that West Yorkshire is one of the first MCAs to soon be surrounded by devolved authorities. There is a risk of negative consequences to a learner who lives or works close to a border and those wishing to travel to learn for specialist provision. Engagement is underway with South Yorkshire, North Yorkshire and Lancashire authorities to consider cross border arrangements.
- 2.28 The DfE are running a workshop in October with all MCAs to discuss methods to address cross border arrangements. After this session Officers will undertake a consultation with out of area providers.

English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL)

- 2.29 According to Census 2021, there are 51,000 adults in West Yorkshire whose main language is not English and who either **cannot speak English or cannot speak English well**. Bradford has the sixth largest number of people with English language needs (21,000) of any local authority in England and the proportion of the adult population with these needs in the city is more than double the national average. Leeds also has a high absolute number of people with English language needs (14,000), whilst Kirklees has a prevalence of English language needs (2.7% of adults) that is well above the national average of 2.1%.
- 2.30 According to the Census, working-age people with English language needs in West Yorkshire are twice as likely to be economically inactive as the overall average for the region (58% versus 27%) and are barely half as likely to be in employment (37% versus 68%). Moreover, 68% of adults in West Yorkshire with English language needs hold no formal qualifications, more than three times the overall average of 21%, further limiting their employability.
- 2.31 There are continued reports of high demand for ESOL provision, with waiting lists. Early indications from 22/23 show a further increase in ESOL enrolments of year to date of 18%.
- 2.32 Discussions continue with the Department for Education, sharing intelligence on demand and uptake. While it is important to support this need, there are many calls on the budget.

- 2.33 The Combined Authority has taken an innovative approach to support ESOL learners using funding available under the Department for Education-funded Skills Bootcamps. A lack of ESOL tutors across West Yorkshire has amplified the need for provision and a lack of capacity within the sector to deliver much needed support to learners. Under a pilot programme, the Combined Authority is working with Shipley College to initially deliver training to 20 learners to provide a CELTA Level 5 qualification for teaching English as a foreign language, with scope to potentially increase this based on course performance and future demand. This will provide additional capacity within the sector and help to support ESOL learners.
- 2.34 A pilot programme, has been delivered to support the underemployment of Hong Kong migrants. Co-designed with Migration Yorkshire, Path Yorkshire will support training to a small number of skilled Hong Kong migrants with key workplace language skills and employability skills. The aim of this programme is to support learners into better roles with higher earnings, to fill vacancies and to reduce underemployment.

Adult Skills Procurement

- 2.35 An Adult Skills Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) has been developed and launched at the beginning of October 2023 ahead of procurement of Adult Skills providers to commence delivery in academic year 2024/25. The intention will be to bring adult skills opportunities together through a single DPS, ensuring that there is a streamlined offer with clear progression opportunities for the residents of West Yorkshire.
- 2.36 The Combined Authority is launching two significant tender opportunities under **Skills Connect**. Procurement exercises in both digital courses and supporting targeted groups and sectors across West Yorkshire will be valued at approx. £1mil, respectively.
- 2.37 A contract is due to be awarded in October 2023 under the **Skills Bootcamp** programme, to deliver various Skills Bootcamps supporting the creative and cultural sectors. These courses will look to upskill 175 participants to access new and / or improved employment opportunities in response to the future skills needs of the region and in preparation for events such as Bradford 2025.
- 2.38 Multiply Capacity Building for front line staff tender was published via open and competitive tender and is now closed. The Frontline Staff Numeracy Ambassadors programme provides training to support wider sector professionals and front-line staff to develop a positive culture of reference, and a framework for supporting customers to recognise and address their own numeracy skills needs. The programme will support individuals within

an organisation that has direct contact with members of the public, to become positive numeracy ambassadors, avoiding negative connotations with the subject of maths/numeracy when advising potential learners, and upskilling their ability to signpost to the correct programme and/or provide buddying/mentoring support at point of access. Numeracy Ambassadors are not direct beneficiaries of Multiply but act as intermediaries who engage with the target audience and signpost them to further learning and support with improving numeracy skills, breaking barriers, and building confidence.

Future AEB Procurement

2.39 In 2021, the Combined Authority procured AEB for Contract for Service providers on initially one-year contracts with the facility to issue subsequent contracts each year up to 3 years. 23/24 is the final year of this procurement round therefore a new process will be launched for academic year 24/25 onwards.

Responsiveness

2.40 It is anticipated that the responsiveness pot for the academic year 2023/24 will be around £2 million. It is intended to be utilised as per 2022/23, with the following activities: Commissioning responsive activity based on economic and sector intelligence.

This is likely to include (but not limited to):

- Targeting underrepresentation in local authority areas, e.g. 'cold spots' where participation is low in deprived areas
- Responding to the needs of the Digital Skills Plan
- Skilled sector ('good jobs') with vacancies
- Supporting ex-offenders
- Supporting care leavers
- Emerging economic needs

2.41 Utilising the AEB responsiveness pot, we are soon to procure bespoke training packages which include the licence to practice certificate that individuals require to gain employment in some key employment sectors, previously these were not available for AEB funding. This provision will be roll-on-roll-off and will include sector specific employability skills as well as the opportunity to achieve SIA badge (Security), CSCS card (Construction) or Forklift truck certificate (Warehousing) with guaranteed links to recruiting employers.

2.42 The specification has been co-designed with DWP due to significant demand for these competencies and large numbers of vacancies across West Yorkshire. Delivery will commence by late 2023.

Adult Skills Provider Engagement

- 2.43 A West Yorkshire AEB Conference was held on 6th July 2023, hosted by Kirklees College. The event incorporated a Q&A session with the Mayor, a West Yorkshire Skills update from the Chief Executive of the Combined Authority and a range of workshops to provide sector updates and support best practice across West Yorkshire.
- 2.44 Feedback from providers was positive, particularly hearing from the Mayor and valuing the opportunity to network and the workshops, many of which were delivered by WY delivery partners.
- 2.45 The 2024 conference will be widened to include all Adult Skills providers, removing the focus on specific funding streams and encouraging progression pathways between funding.
- 2.46 A Multiply conference took place on 5th October where delegates attended and share good practice. All providers who would like to upskill their workforce by improving their numeracy skills received an invitation. This was not limited to providers who are delivering Multiply therefore widening participation and access to CPD to practitioners across West Yorkshire. Further events of this nature are planned for the remainder of year 2 and into year 3. The first conference was delivered in partnership with Luminate Group (Leeds City College) and White Rose Maths.
- 2.47 Quarterly provider “round table” sessions have been taking place throughout the year with providers delivering under the Skills Bootcamp and Skills Connect programme, to share best practice and discuss programme updates. Providers have since been invited to team meetings across the service, including with business-facing staff to understand better the wider skills offer available across West Yorkshire.

Employer Focussed Skills

- 2.48 Multiply **Business Training** contracts have been issued to three successful providers with delivery due to commence in September 2023. Delivery included embedding a numeracy champion within each business to support the workforce on a continuing basis and to triage skills needs identified.
- 2.49 Businesses are referred to the **Skills Bootcamp** co-funded offer, where employers can upskill their staff for either 10% or 30% of the programme cost, in digital provision. To date the Combined Authority has created 42 co-funded places for West Yorkshire employers

addressing employers' digital skills needs in the region. The service is running a promotional campaign to promote further courses available under Wave 4.

- 2.50 Under the **Skills Connect** programme, the Combined Authority is directly supporting businesses across West Yorkshire through a "Train the Trainer" type approach, where an individual in an organisation receives increased responsibilities as a result of training and can then disseminate this information to colleagues, creating a legacy programme and increasing the benefit across the organisation. Examples of this include the Sustainability Champion programme to increase the number of Green ambassadors within organisations and also Train for Care – Elevating Training Skills in Health and Social care.

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. 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 Multiply year report outlines that £1.4 million funding that was allocated to West Yorkshire, but was unspent due to implementation challenges. The DfE have confirmed that there will be no opportunity to apply for growth in year 2 despite earlier communications at the beginning of year 2 that there would be opportunity for growth, therefore it is highly important that we look to flex the fund between intervention lines where possible to maximise impact on individuals trained.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1. The information contained in Appendix 4 is exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 to Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person including the Combined Authority. It is considered that the public interest in maintaining the content of Appendix 4 as exempt outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, as publication could prejudice the financial or business affairs of the Authority.

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 proposed approach to national funding rule changes for AEB
- 10.2 The committee is asked to consider and endorse the approach on next steps on moving towards a needs-based allocation methodology.

11. Background Documents

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

12. Appendices

Appendix 1 – [Exempt Appendix 1 – AEB Performance Data September 2023](#)
Appendix 2 – [National Funding Changes](#)