



Report to:	Employment and Skills Committee
Date:	15 February 2024
Subject:	Devolved Adult Skills
Director:	Felix Kumi-Ampofo, Director of Inclusive Economy, Skills and Culture
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Is this a key decision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information or appendices?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state paragraph number of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, Part 1:	
Are there implications for equality and diversity?	<input 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 will update on:
 - The year 2 performance of Adult Education Budget (AEB)
 - Skills Bootcamp Wave 5
 - Changes to the residential uplift
 - Community Learning allocations

2. West Yorkshire Adult Education Budget

- 2.1 The devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB) is targeted at individuals who have low level skills and/or are unemployed or on a low wage. The fund is £66.8 million for academic year 2023/24. It 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.

- 2.2 The delegated Free Courses for Jobs funding (£4.7 million in academic year 2023/24) is managed alongside AEB, given the significant alignment. This funding supports level 3 (A level equivalent) courses only, with flexibility on 50% of provision while 50% of courses are approved centrally by the Department for Education.
- 2.3 As with 2021/22 the West Yorkshire AEB operated on a substantial scale in 2022/23.
- There were around 81,000 starts (new enrolments on courses) during the year. Nearly three-quarters of starts (73%) were in the Adult Skills strand, a quarter in Community Learning and 2% in Free Courses for Jobs.
 - 44,000 individual learners enrolled on new courses during the year (“new learners”), rising to 47,000 learners participating on the programme when continuing learners from the previous year are also included.
 - Around 55,000 course achievements have been recorded to date during 2022/23.
- 2.4 There has been significant growth in starts and learners during 2022/23 compared with the previous academic year.
- The total number of starts increased by 5% or around 3,900 in absolute terms.
 - The total number of new learners grew by 3% (+1,300).
- 2.5 The growth in starts was driven primarily by the Adult Skills strand (+3,900 or +7%) whilst the number of starts on Community Learning fell by 5% or 1,200 year-on-year. Free Courses for Jobs starts grew by more than 300%, albeit from a small base, reaching a total of 1,500.
- 2.6 An important piece of context is that a 10% funding uplift was implemented during the 2022/23 academic year to offset increasing costs of delivery faced by providers. In spite of this, delivery volumes, in terms of starts and new learners, increased compared with the previous year which is a testament to the effectiveness of the West Yorkshire AEB programme in supporting learners.
- 2.7 All five local authority areas saw growth in the number of residents engaged through Adult Skills in 2022/23 compared with the previous academic year, with the growth rate ranging from 4% in Calderdale to 22% in Kirklees. The number of learners engaged in the remaining authorities grew by 6% in Leeds, 17% in Bradford and 13% in Wakefield.
- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 The AEB Strategy detailed the following key outcomes, the table below details how we are applying the funds to address these.

Key Outcomes	Evidence of Impact
<p>Support the unemployed to gain and sustain employment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The employment status profile of Adult Skills learners shifted slightly, with unemployed individuals accounting for a bigger share in 2022/23. • The proportion of unemployed learners increased from 49% of learners to 51% year on year. • Employed learners accounted for a reduced share, decreasing from 35% to 33% • The proportion of economically inactive learners remained the same at 14%.
<p>Unlock progression opportunities and career adaptability through skills, particularly for those on low wages and with insecure work.</p>	<p>The devolved AEB programme makes special provision for learners in employment who are paid below the Real Living Wage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6,660 Adult Skills starts were supported through the low wage pilot during the academic year. • A further 510 starts were supported through the low wage offer for Free Courses for Jobs (level 3) learners.
<p>Make learning more inclusive to support disadvantaged residents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proportion of learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability and/or health problem remained the same at 17%. There is recognition across providers that this number is not a true reflection as learners do not always disclose whether they have a learning difficulty or disability. Analysing Learning Support usage alongside this will demonstrate a more accurate picture of engagement. • The proportion of learners residing in the most acutely deprived neighbourhoods (IMD decile 1) was 41%, the same percentage as in 2021/22.
<p>Increase the supply of skills to support key sectors in West Yorkshire</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telecoms and Rail Engineer skills training delivery with industry links and high levels of progression into jobs. 85% of individuals who achieved a qualification in Telecoms Engineering gained employment. • Collaboration with DWP has led to bespoke skills training in construction, logistics and security with progression targets into employment.
<p>Improve West Yorkshire's resilience by identifying and delivering the skills needed for the future</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital skills are increasingly essential in the modern workplace. • Starts on Essential Digital Skills courses, which the target the fundamental skills needed for work and life, grew by

	<p>more than 80% compared with the previous year, rising to 1,290.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The broader digital subject area saw the biggest increase in starts during 2022/23, growing by 1,600 across all programme strands compared with the previous year and increasing its share of total starts from 6% in 2021/22 to 8% in 2022/23.
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2.10 Skills Bootcamps

Approval has been granted at the Combined Authority Board on the 7th of December 2023, to proceed with an additional year's funding of the Department for Education grant-funded Skills Bootcamp programme, with delivery due to start from April 2024.

- 2.11 The approval at Combined Authority Board followed a request for permission to apply for the funding opportunity, to upskill 1,000 additional learners and to accept £5,000,182.38 of grant funding to support learners across West Yorkshire. The funding can be used to provide upskilling support across a number of core sector areas, stipulated nationally by the Department for Education, including Digital, Construction, Creative and Design and Project Management.
- 2.12 Engagement has taken place with Local Authority colleagues to ringfence £450,000 of funding per Local Authority area, and to develop a Skills Bootcamps programme, representative of the skills needs within their local area.
- 2.13 This ringfenced allocation will either be procured by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority on behalf of Local Authority areas or will be granted to Local Authorities to procure courses. Ongoing engagement will ensure that there is no duplication in provision across the West Yorkshire region and that the offer for learners is clear and accessible.

2.14 Residential Uplift

Northern College is one of two residential Colleges in England which receive 4.7 uplift for eligible individuals who stay residentially. Residential uplift has been under national review for two years, and on 16 October 2023 the DfE confirmed that a phased reduction of the 4.7 uplift will be implemented.

- 2.15 Northern College receives an AEB allocation to support West Yorkshire learners who would benefit from an immersive residential adult experience.

2.16 The AEB Funding Rules mean that West Yorkshire will mirror the national approach and provide:

- A continuation of the residential uplift of 4.7 for new learners in 2023/24,
- Replacement of the residential uplift with a nightly rate in 2024/25, and
- A commitment that the College will not be financially disadvantaged through changes to the funding regime in both 2023/24 and 2024/25 and will receive AEB indicative allocations for the remainder of both years.

2.17 It is proposed that additional conditions are applied, including:

- Reviewing Community Learning throughout 2023/24 to measure impact and value for money.
- Reviewing Community Learning Allocation in 2024/25.
- Exploring cross border arrangements with South Yorkshire MCA for 2024/25.

2.18 This approach will maintain some stability for the provider in line with ESFA and South Yorkshire MCA, while also providing clarity and a timeline for action.

2.19 Community Learning

The Employment and Skills Committee recommended in July 2023 to move towards a needs-based methodology for allocating Community Learning funding at local authority level. There is a particular need to address historic under-investment in Kirklees and Bradford as highlighted in the Community Learning review.

2.20 Various indicators have been explored, including population, deprivation, rurality, those with no or low qualifications, unemployed/economically inactive and those limited by long term health condition. This data highlights significant under-investment in Kirklees and Bradford, with low or no engagement on Community Learning provision across several wards despite high levels of deprivation and low skills attainment.

2.21 Targeted growth funding is already allocated to address “cold spots” in provision through the AEB Responsiveness pot which will be used to address this issue, working with all Community Learning providers across these areas to address the needs.

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.

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 There are no equality and diversity implications directly arising from this report.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

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 notes the progress of the devolved Adult Education Budget and provides any steer on how performance could be improved or what changes it feels may be needed in the period ahead.

11. Background Documents

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

12. Appendices

None.