

# North Yorkshire Council

## Executive

18 June 2024

### Adult Learning and Skills Service Accountability Statement 2024-25

#### Report of the Corporate Director Children and Young People's Service

#### 1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to gain approval to submit the accountability statement, relating to the Adult Skills Fund, (ASF, formerly Adult Education Budget AEB grant) and 16-19 formula funding received by the Adult Learning and Skills Service (ALSS) on an annual basis. All providers in receipt of £1m or more of funding for post-16 provision have a statutory responsibility to produce and publish an annual accountability statement that reflects the needs of the local environment as determined by the Learning Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) in particular but should also detail how funding is most effectively used in a local context.
- 1.2 This document will form part 2 of the funding agreement provided by the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and failure to agree this document by June 30th may impact on ALSS ability to draw down grant funding in a timely manner.

#### 2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The reforms for post 16 technical education laid out in January 2021' detailed how education providers in receipt of over £1m must annually detail within an accountability statement how they will align their curriculum offer with the local aims and aspirations laid out in the Learning Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)
- 2.2 This paper and its attached agreement indicate this alignment alongside alignment with our priorities as a council and the wider regional ambitions of the Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA)
- 2.3 As a council we must agree and upload the statement to the ESFA by June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024, as part of our conditions of funding.

#### 3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Skills for jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth published in January 2021 laid out key reforms to post-16 technical education and training that aims to support people to develop the skills needed to get good jobs and improve national productivity. This paper and its subsequent legislation stipulated a clear plan to place employers at the heart of the skills system through the production of an LSIP.
- 3.2 The LSIP was written and published in July 2023 by an approved Employer Representative Body (ERB), for York and North Yorkshire the West and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce being the designated ERB.
- 3.3 The York and North Yorkshire LSIP report is a strategic document identifying clear priorities for skills in the local area. It included the necessary key changes needed (or indeed what

should be retained) to make post-16 technical education and training more responsive to the skills needs of employers in the area. The LSIP covers a fixed period of 3 years.

- 3.4 The Skills for Jobs whitepaper detailed how providers would need to publish an annual accountability statement, that would form part of their annual funding agreement, that would indicate how funding received is to be used in line with local and national skills priorities as detailed by the LSIP.
- 3.5 The Department for Education (DfE) describe the Accountability Agreements as introduced for the first time in the 2023 to 2024 academic year and consisting of a 2-part document setting the overall expectations of providers (including local authorities delivering more than £1 million of post -16 provision) in return for funding. The agreement focusses on what colleges, designated institutions and local authorities deliver in the year ahead and how they intend to support local, regional, and national needs. These annual Statements should in all cases be informed by providers' longer term strategic plans and ambitions. The DfE stipulate that documents produced by local authority providers must have executive approval. The final accountability statement must be published on the North Yorkshire Council website (on ALSS pages) website, as such it provides a key public facing document. The production of this public facing document allows us to clearly demonstrate how:
- a) we aim to align the service with the key aspirations of the council through reflection of the council plan.
  - b) we aim to support residents to live healthier and more economical impactful lives.
  - c) we can support our local businesses to develop a pipeline of talent and to upskill and reskill their existing workforce in line with the aims of the LSIP.
  - d) we are shaping our curriculum to also meet the aims, needs and aspirations of the Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) economic framework, skills strategy and plans for Adult Skills Fund (ASF) devolution, (previously known as Adult Education Budget AEB).
- 3.6 The key challenges we face as a service are driven by decreasing participation rates in adult learning and increasing challenges on core council budgets. The accountability statement seeks to detail how we will align our curriculum to this preventative approach and to maximise the added social value of learning. We believe this to be in line with the plans of the MCA and will hope to be able to utilise' the actions seen here to demonstrate the value provided by funding the local authority through the ASF.

#### **4.0 THE STRATEGIC POSITIONING OF THE ADULT LEARNING AND SKILLS SERVICE**

- 4.1 ALSS is part of the Children and Young Peoples Service Directorate of North Yorkshire Council. We define our purpose as providing the gateway to opportunity for the county's adults, (and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) enabling them to reach their full potential. Whether that be greater integration into society or to move into more-fulfilling employment roles we are keen to support individuals to thrive, improving their physical and emotional health and recognising the opportunities available to them.
- 4.2 ALSS provides largely Education and Skills Funding Agency funded adult and community learning provision, with additional income from dedicated project work, apprenticeships and the support for those learners aged 19-25 with Education Health and Care Plans
- 4.3 Our service, and its partnership with City of York's York Learning Service, has a major role in enabling residents across the region to achieve the best they possibly can and benefit from a thriving economy.
- 4.4 Our passion for adult learning continues to drive us to deliver effective programmes of learning to a range of adults with a particular focus on those from disadvantaged and marginalised communities. We want to offer inclusive services with high quality learning

provision and support, which works well across the spectrum of need, whilst meeting the needs of our local economy, fully in line with the Council Plan, we aim to deliver in a way that sets strong ambitions to increase opportunities for everyone living in North Yorkshire to live healthy and fulfilling lives.

## **5.0 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN AND RESPONSES**

- 5.1 The Shared Head for Adult Learning and Skills (York and North Yorkshire) set out and consulted on a clear strategic vision for the adult learning provision provided by North Yorkshire and City of York Councils in December of 2021. This strategy and direction identified the need to support adults to access the training and support that can be provided by engagement in education. This common strategy is important to support the wider economic requirements of the region and aims to enable strong lobbying support for the services once the adult education budget is devolved under a combined mayoral authority which is expected in the 2025/2026 academic year.
- 5.2 This strategic document was consulted on in July of 2022 and published in September of 2022, this document was produced utilising the extensively consulted research base of the York and North Yorkshire LEP and is one of many documents that were used to formulate the York and North Yorkshire LSIP which additionally cites a strong research and policy base. The Shared Head has worked closely with the combined authority team to shape the MCA skills and ASF strategies and these opportunities have been integral to the creation of a strong collaborative platform for the creation of this plan.

## **6.0 CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

- 6.1 The council plan for the county sets five aligned core ambitions
- Place and Environment
  - Economy,
  - Health and Wellbeing
  - People
  - Organisation.
- 6.2 We are ambitious within ALSS to be able to stress the significant impact that adult learning can have to meet these ambitions. Using creativity, innovation and our community roots we can utilise our Adult Skills funding to:
- Increase opportunities for people to manage through the cost-of-living crisis – through understanding waste, energy bills, practical hints and tips with embedded core numeracy, literacy and digital skills.
  - Increase the levels of independence in adults with disabilities to take personal responsibility for health and wellbeing.
  - Encourage families to work, learn and play together – delivering green ambitions, use of the considerable natural beauty of our landscape and the vibrancy of conurbations and to cement the connection with arts and heritage.
  - Encourage more people to see themselves as learners and to benefit from lifelong learning to meet their potential.
  - Support combined pride in and understanding of our wide and welcoming common heritage.
  - Work in spaces in communities to help them be more useful and vibrant.

But through all of this we will demonstrate clear pathways that:

- Improve essential skills.
- support people to overcome digital poverty.

- allow people to take up better jobs that are better suited to their skills, ambitions and aspirations and progress into the wider economic infrastructure.

## **7.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 7.1 Whilst the paper presented is a key step in receiving funding it does not hold us directly to account on how this funding is utilised. This is set out in the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) funding guidance and in turn in the ALSS Fees and Charging Policy document for 2024-25. These rules are the boundaries on what we can and can't use funding received through ASF for. This document details the key strategic approaches that we wish to take and are the mechanism by which this funding is received.
- 7.2 As such it is hoped the approach meets the aims of council and demonstrates an effective way of utilising this ring-fenced funding to assist in achievement of the council plan.
- 7.3 Agreement to approve does not prevent further discussion on how we may utilise our 2024-25 budget but failure to do so may impact the receipt of vital funds.

## **8.0 IMPACT ON OTHER SERVICES/ORGANISATIONS**

- 8.1 Effective and strategically planned use of the budget received can have a positive impact in the preventative space. Funding, (particularly the £1.9m of Tailored Learning) can be effectively utilised in the following 7 ways:
1. Engaging and/or building confidence
  2. Preparation for further learning
  3. Preparation for employment
  4. Improving essential skills (English, ESOL, maths, digital)
  5. Equipping parents/carers to support children's learning.
  6. Health and well-being
  7. Developing stronger communities
- 8.2 These purposes offer a real opportunity to reduce the burden on core funding through targeted work through ALSS allowing budgets in localities, in Health & Adult services and even within Training and Learning to go further
- 8.3 The potential to utilise funding internally for upskill and reskill is also not fully developed with Maths, English and digital skills often a barrier to internal progression, take up and ultimately success of apprenticeships, planned use of funds could open up the possibilities for our workforce.

## **9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The accountability statement shapes the high-level ways that we will utilise our funding. This document basically details how we will aim to spend the funds that we are provided (as a grant) by the Education Skills Funding Agency. These funds being around £2.6m received directly for adults and circa £3m for learners aged 16+ who we support through the Personalised Learning College
- 9.2 Whilst no savings or significant surplus can be generated from our grant funding, greater use of the opportunities offered by engagement in learning by our residents (including our staff) can improve health outcomes, can overcome barriers that are preventing individuals meeting their potential and can support families (and in turn their children) to be able to cope and become resilient to challenges such as cost of living crisis. This in turn then potential reduces the number of individuals who seek support from the wider statutory services of the council.

## **10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 The submission of an agreed accountability statement by June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024, is a legal requirement for receipt of funding through the ESFA, failure to do so may result in suspension or withdrawal of funding.

## **11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 The appended equalities impact assessment details no equalities implications

## **12.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 The appended climate change impact assessment details no implications

## **13.0 RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 There are no known risks associated with the agreement of this document, but significant risk should we not gain agreement as funding for the service would be removed.

13.2 Future risks exist should we not be able to demonstrate full use of the grant, (although a 97% tolerance is applied) as this year's performance can be directly monitored by the MCA as they prepare to manage funding and its allocation from 2025-26 academic year.

## **14.0 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

14.1 Should agreement be passed there are no human resources implications.

## **15.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

15.1 For the service to receive funding to deliver against this statement we must gain agreement on contents. This agreement provides a framework for accountability whilst enabling us to receive the necessary funds to deliver the service. The document will also serve as the basis for wider internal conversations that will maximise the potential of learning for our residents.

## **16.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- i) That the enclosed accountability statement be approved for submission to the ESFA

## **APPENDICES:**

Appendix A – Adult Learning and Skills Service Final Draft Accountability Statement 2024-25

Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment ALSS Accountability Statement

Appendix C – Climate Change Impact Assessment ALSS Accountability Statement

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:**

[Skills for jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth](#)

[York and North Yorkshire Local Skills Improvement Plan](#)

[Meeting skills needs: Guidance on annual Accountability Agreements 2024/25 and the Local Needs Duty](#)

[York and North Yorkshire Adult Learning and Skills Engagement Strategy 2021-2025](#)

Stuart Carlton  
Corporate Director – Children and Young Peoples Service  
County Hall  
Northallerton  
18 June 2024

Report Author – *Paul Cliff Shared Head of Adult Learning and Skills (York and North Yorkshire)*  
Presenter of Report – *Paul Cliff Shared Head of Adult Learning and Skills (York and North Yorkshire)*

Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.