

Adult Learning

Adult Learning – UKPRN 10091806 Subcontracting - Supply Chain Policy 2023/24



Education & Skills
Funding Agency

Context

Adult Learning is an integral part of the Thriving Communities Directorate of Westmorland & Furness Council. It is a hosted service providing opportunities for adults in Westmorland & Furness and Cumberland develop their skills and education to raise confidence; increase empowerment and overall improve wellbeing. The service uses a network of community-based centres and subcontracted partners to target those adults left behind by education and encourage and allow these individuals to contribute and be part of a connected and inclusive community.

Our vision is: **Strengthening and sustaining communities through the power of learning.**

Our outcomes are:

- Become an Outstanding provider at next Ofsted Inspection
- Establish the service as the leading provider of adult skills provision in Westmorland & Furness and Cumberland up to Level 2
- Use learning to empower individuals to live healthy, fulfilling, and independent lives
- Be an integral partner in supporting communities to thrive through Social Prescribing

Provision also links directly to the priorities of the Cumbria Local Education Partnership (LEP) in its commitment to ensuring Westmorland & Furness and Cumberland has a vibrant skills system that is responsive to both current and future economic needs and offers excellent learning environments and opportunities. Our provision is aligned to the Local Skills Investment Plan (LSIP) by supporting skills provision to:

- Develop and enhance skills aligned to changes in the economy
- Provide routes to meet acute skills gaps
- Build a better digital skills base across the workforce
- Address Unemployment and Underemployment



Westmorland
& Furness
Council

Working for Cumberland Council and
Westmorland & Furness Council

The Service is externally funded by The Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). In response to the ESFA's expectation that lead providers reduce subcontracted provision it should be noted that Adult Learning has always only used procured partners as a means to enhance the Adult Learning offer in our local area. This has been carried out through engaging with partners offering additional niche curriculum and delivery methods outside the specialism of the direct delivery team. The level of procurement has always remained below 15%.

Adult Learning has always subcontracted a small proportion of its Adult Education Budget to meet the needs of the community as outlined in the rationale. This has always remained significantly below 25% of the budget. Over the last 6 years Adult Learning has gradually reduced the number of subcontracted providers to what is felt is an appropriate level which offers a mix of targeted and responsive provision to support the needs of the Community. Evidence of this is shown below:

Academic Year	Adult Education Budget	Funding paid to sub-contractor	% of Adult Education Budget	No. of sub-contractors
2016/17	2,355,209	292,943	12.44%	10
2017/18	2,355,209	274,425	11.65%	8
2018/19	2,355,209	335,208	14.23%	7
2019/20	2,323,520	267,000	11.49%	7
2020/21*	2,401,212	95,407	3.97%	4
2021/22*	2,400,892	290,322	12.09%	3
2022/23	2,400,892	299,000	12.45%	4

*impacted by Covid-19

Scope

This policy applies to all supply chain activity supported with funding from the ESFA.

Rationale for Sub-contracting

Adult Learning has developed a range of partnerships with subcontracted providers to help us to achieve our vision *to strengthen and sustain the people and communities of Cumbria through the power of learning*:

- Westmorland & Furness and Cumberland make up an area of approximately 2,500 square miles. This presents considerable challenges for delivery of an area-wide service. Community-based subcontractors enable us to meet this challenge, especially in relation to our areas of highest disadvantage in geographically isolated communities throughout both areas. Partners help target learners in these areas through focussed blended learning programmes with high quality, responsive and agile delivery mechanisms.
- Subcontracting offers the opportunity to work in partnership with niche providers working with specific targeted groups of disadvantaged adults, such as adults who are unemployed or those who are disabled or are recovering from mental ill health.
- Subcontracting offers individuals additional access to flexible Adult Learning funding to widen participation of those who are disadvantaged in the community and so aid progression to further learning within Adult Learning or to colleges, providers and/or higher education institutions.
- Subcontracting enables a greater offer of pre level 2 pathway routes to higher qualifications. These include lower-level technical qualifications that Adult Learning does not have the resource and specialism to deliver through its direct delivery teams.
- All of the points above allow Adult Learning to continue to offer a high quality, responsive and flexible curriculum to support the needs, identified in the key research, highlighted further in this policy.

Multiple deprivation and targeting areas of need through partnership

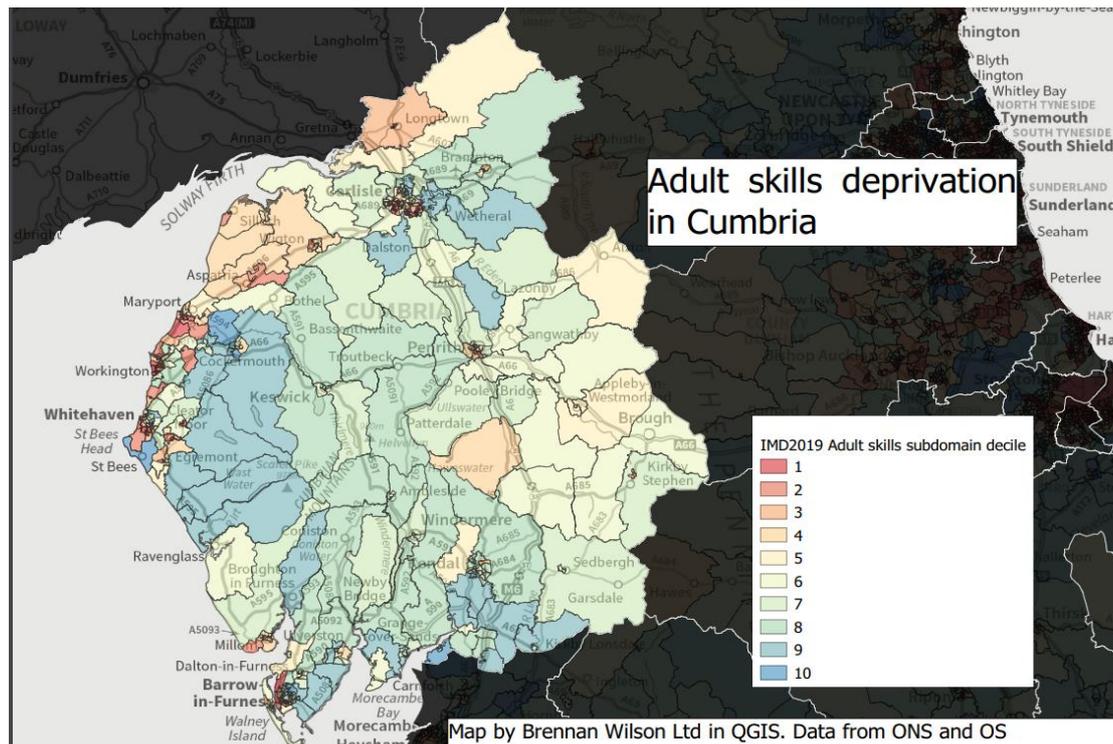
IMD 2019 data evidence clear skills deprivation in particular geographic areas of Cumbria - including Carlisle, Penrith, West of Cumberland and Barrow in Furness. Wards in these areas are in the lowest 10% skills deprivation in England. Subcontracting with niche partners supports Adult Learning in targeting communities with high skills deprivation demonstrated as hot spots in the map below.

Adult Learning direct delivery centres are located in the hotspot areas and have built strong partnerships in delivering skills in these areas. Subcontracted providers enhance provision allowing partnerships to develop which offer a wide and responsive curriculum supporting the points laid out in the rationale.

Our partners have experience of delivering skills provision and targeting hard to reach cohorts in these areas outside the specialism of our own direct delivery curriculum.

We deploy learner recruitment with partners through individual characteristics – including care leavers, unemployed, prisoners, employed and refugees.

Adult Learning and subcontracted providers have strong partnerships in place with DWP, CVS, Community Development Centres, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, Cumbria LEP, Inspira, , volunteer groups, care providers, HMP Haverigg and refugee support groups.



Evidence of other areas of need

In addition to the challenges outlined in the geographic areas shown above, various key research has evidenced the following geographic and demographic issues in Cumbria. Subcontracting supports Adult Learning in offering the relevant curriculum mix to respond to these issues.

- 24% of 16 to 64 year-olds in Cumbria do not have a Level 2 or above compared to 22% Nationally. 6.5% have no qualifications - Source: ONS Annual Population Survey 2021
- Cumbria Observatory data shows that there were 6,660 unemployed individuals in Cumbria as of July 2023. This equates to 2.2% of the working age population. Although this is below the national average the rate in the areas of deprivation shown above remain well above the average.

- The Cumbria Business Survey 2020 (1700 employer responses) identified the following skills gaps within the employed workforce:
 - Basic digital literacy 31%
 - Oral communication skills 23%
 - Written communication skills 22%
 - Literacy skills 15%
 - Numeracy skills 14%
- Job postings data (extracted from EMSI Analyst for jobs) shows that out of 43,281 unique postings in the year to end August 2023, 3,332 required basic skills maths, literacy and/or digital as a key requirement.
- Delivery partners, DWP and Inspira have indicated that there is a basic skills shortage, and this is likely to escalate as target groups such as NEET (345) and Care Leavers (68 in 2021) turn 19 years old.
- Further evidence from Inspira shows that the number of adults supported through the National Careers Service between 1/11/2021 to 31/10/2022 who did not have a L2 qualification was 584.
- Partners have indicated that in the current climate there is greater need to support adults to budget/meet the demands of rising fuel/food costs.

Equality and Diversity

All subcontracted partners will perform its obligations under agreement in accordance with:

- all applicable equality law (whether in relation to race, sex, gender reassignment, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy, maternity or otherwise)
- the Council's equality and diversity policy as provided to the Provider
- any other requirements and instructions which the Council reasonably imposes in connection with any equality obligations imposed on the Council at any time under applicable equality law

Initial assessment will be carried out for all learners and additional learner support will be available and allocated as appropriate.

Improving the Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Subcontractors will be expected to meet Service quality assurance standards. The quality of provision will be monitored and managed through the Service's existing quality assurance processes and procedures.

The Service is committed to continuous improvement of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This will be achieved through the sharing of effective practice across the supply chain, for example through the Self-Assessment Report, regular lesson

observations with constructive feedback and the shared resources of professionals to support the subcontractor with any teaching and learning issues.

Contingency Plan in the Case of Non-delivery

In compliance with ESFA and other agency funding rules that apply, if a sub-contractor withdraws from the arrangement, or if a sub-contractor goes into liquidation or administration, Adult Learning undertakes to directly manage and deliver the remainder of the agreed provision already being delivered. This delivery will be either through existing structure or by retaining tutor expertise and/or specialist equipment, whichever is more cost-effective. Any provision planned but not started will be cancelled and the project closed. If Adult Learning needs to withdraw from a sub-contracting arrangement, sufficient notice will be provided to allow sub-contractors to complete delivery of immediate provision. Adult Learning will provide support to enable sub-contractors to identify other sources of funding if possible, or take appropriate action to complete the project, or close the project at the earliest opportunity, without prejudice to currently enrolled learners or staff.

Fees and charges

Adult Learning retains 20% of the Government Funded value of the provision delivered by the subcontractor. This is referred to as the management fee. The level of the management fee has been arrived at by a detailed assessment of the costs involved in managing an external delivery partner. It represents the cost of effectively identifying, selecting and managing subcontracted provision and covers the cost of the standard support that the Service deems necessary to maintain the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and high success rates of partners. This amount ensures that our subcontracting arrangement is a viable delivery option whilst remaining fair to the subcontracted partner.

In order to maintain the high quality of provision expected by Adult Learning and OFSTED each subcontractor will receive the following support:

- **Contract Management** – Each subcontracted partner will be allocated a contract manager and receive a full programme of support throughout the period of the contract. This will involve a contract initiation meeting followed by bi-monthly support meetings. Contract support will consist of:
 - Confirmation of Allocation and payment process
 - Financial support through Adult Learning Finance Officer (detailed further below)
 - Policies and Procedures guidance including Health and Safety Support.
 - Advice on Government policy.

- Full suite of course management paperwork and support for tutors and managers in ensuring accurate completion.
 - Learner support – including access to specialist advice and specific support service for individuals with learning difficulties and disabilities.
 - Access to Management Information System including electronic registers.
 - Performance management support - including access to Adult Learning Curriculum Dashboard software and regular bi-monthly monitoring meetings.
 - Training and support on all Adult Learning Software – ProSolution, Curriculum Dashboard and Curriculum Observer
- **Financial Support** – Each partner will receive a financial support and payment service consisting of the following:
 - Payments issued on a bi-monthly basis as set out in the payment schedule detailed in this contract. Payment will be issued by BACS.
 - A remittance advice will be sent via e-mail 3 to 5 days prior to the BACS payment being made.
 - Any queries relating to payments will be acknowledged within 3 working days and resolution will be sought within 7 working days. Please note this timeframe may be extended if the action required to resolve the query, requires a response from both the Subcontractor and Adult Learning.
 - Partners will receive a bi-monthly summary of the payments issued to date and an details of and reconciliation.
- **Support for Quality of Teaching & Learning** – Partners will receive full extensive quality support through the Adult Learning OTLA process as follows:
 - All tutors delivering Adult Learning programmes will be observed annually in line with OTLA policy.
 - Access to curriculum observer, to be able to monitor and develop action plans from tutor observations.
 - New tutors delivering Adult Learning programmes, will be monitored via a non-graded observation before receiving a graded observation in line with the OTLA policy.
 - Opportunity to undertake peer observations to share good practices.
 - Undertake Quality Assurance Meetings (QAMs) to review centre data.
 - Standardisation meetings for curriculum areas such as Maths, English, ESOL etc.
 - Use of MyLearning to access resources and course documentation.
- **Publicity and Marketing Support** – Partners will receive a full range of marketing and communications support consisting of the following:

- Advertisement of courses and contact details in the annual Autumn Adult Learning Brochure (printed and delivered to all households in Westmorland & Furness and Cumberland).
 - Advertisement of courses and contact details in the Spring and Summer Adult Learning Brochures (available digitally on the CCC website).
 - Courses advertised online via the Council's Adult Learning website.
 - Advertising on the Council's social media sites (Facebook; Twitter and Instagram).
 - Advertising in local press at the time of the Autumn brochure delivery.
- **Curriculum Development and CPD** – Partners will receive access to a programme of CPD and support on curriculum development as follows:
 - Curriculum CPD events throughout the academic year.
 - Access to inset days with all Adult Learning staff.
 - Annual service day with a programme of curriculum development modules.
 - Sharing good practice and innovation

Payment arrangements

The standard payment arrangements are that the Maximum Contract Value (MCV) specified in the provider's subcontract is paid in six equal bi-monthly payments in September, November, January, March, May and July.

However, following payment 1 in September, provider target profiles specified in the contract are regularly compared with actual delivery as recorded on the ILR and payments 2 – 6 are reduced or suspended where necessary. In this case payments are as follows:

- **Payment 1 (September)** – one sixth (16.67%) of total MCV.
- **Payment 2 (November)** – data returns used to calculate actual earnings to date. If this is less than 80% of expected profiled delivery, payment made is actual earnings to date less payment 1. Provider is required to submit detailed action plan of how they will make up the shortfall.
- **Payment 3 (January)** - data returns used to calculate actual earnings to date. If this is less than 85% of expected profiled delivery, payment made is actual earnings to date less payments 1 & 2. Provider is required to submit detailed action plan of how they will make up the shortfall.
- **Payment 4 (March)** - data returns used to calculate actual earnings to date. If this is less than 90% of expected profiled delivery, payment made is actual earnings to date less payments 1, 2 & 3.

- **Payment 5 (May)** - data returns used to calculate actual earnings to date. If this is less than 95% of expected profiled delivery, payment made is actual earnings to date less payments 1, 2, 3 and 4.
- **Payment 6 (July)** - data returns used to calculate actual earnings to date and projected additional earnings from outstanding achievements. If this is less than expected profiled delivery, payment made is actual earnings to date less payments 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5.
- **Final reconciliation (November)** – following submission of the final ILR return (R14) at the end of October, a final reckoning of actual earnings against MCV is made. Any outstanding monies due are paid, or an invoice is raised for any clawback in situations where payments 1 – 6 amount to more than final earnings.

Invoices are not required to trigger payments.

Providers cannot claim more than the MCV specified in their contract.

Communication of the policy

The Service will ensure that all actual and potential subcontractors have sight of this policy. The policy will be reviewed annually in July and updated or amended as required. It will be published on the Adult Learning area of the council's website at the start of each academic year and will be discussed at contract negotiation and set-up meetings with all subcontractors.

Signed:



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Tracey Ingham

Job Title:

Assistant Director Safe and Strong
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Dated:

1st August 2023

Date for review: July 2024