



Report to the Joint Executive Committee

Meeting Date – 9th September 2024

Key Decision – No

Public/Private – Public

Portfolio – Education, Inclusion and Skills, Westmorland and Furness Council
Lifelong Leader and Development, Cumberland Council

Directorate – Thriving Communities

Lead Officer – Donna St Claire

Title – Cumbria Adult Learning Accountability Statement and Business Plan 2024/25

Brief Summary:

The Accountability Statement and Business Plan sets out the priorities, planning and achievements for Cumbria Adult Learning. It includes an Action Plan outlining a range of outcome targets for areas of the curriculum that we are changing or looking to improve for the coming year. These targets reflect how Adult Learning contributes to the priorities outlined in Council Plans, the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), and National Skills Priorities. It also references how tailored learning provision meets local skills needs.

This document has already been submitted and accepted by the Adult Learning Management Committee (Governing Body) and submitted to the Department of Education as per the contractual requirements of the Adult Skills Fund contract. The Joint Executive committee is being asked to review the document attached at Appendix A and endorse it as a key performance document for the hosted service under the Inter Authority Agreement.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Joint Executive Committee endorses the Cumbria Adult Learning Accountability Statement and Business Plan for the next academic year attached as Appendix A as the key performance document for the hosted service in carrying out the statutory

requirement of Government in meeting Local Needs Duty across both Westmorland & Furness and Cumberland areas.

1. Background

- 1.1. Both the Local Needs Duty and annual Accountability Agreements form part of the wider set of reforms set out in the Skills for Jobs White Paper to transform the skills system, so it better supports young people and adults to develop the skills they need to get a good job and ensuring a clearer focus on the delivery of outcomes.
- 1.2. The Local Needs Duty is a statutory requirement for all governing bodies in scope. Governing bodies are required to periodically review how well the education and training they provide meets local needs and consider what actions they might take to meet those needs better (whether alone or in conjunction with one or more other educational institutions). This is a strategic review that looks further ahead than just the next academic year, with an expectation that individual institutions will consider their role in the wider context of other local providers.
- 1.3. Accountability Agreements were introduced for the first time in the 2023 to 2024 academic year and consist 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 and (for those institutions within scope) the actions and outcomes from the Local Needs Duty.
- 1.4. Part 1 of the agreement the 'accountability framework' replaces the previous, annual, grant funding agreement. We are using it to set out National Skills Priorities as well as the essential terms and conditions that providers need to meet in return for funds. Part 1 covers the required levers to ensure the effective management and assurance of public funds, the protection of learners as well as requiring sound governance. This is covered by signing the Adult Skills Fund contract which has already been actioned. The value of this contract is £2,487,369.
- 1.5. Part 2, the 'annual Accountability Statement' is a provider document that is owned by Cumbria Adult Learning and sets out a number of outcome targets for areas of the curriculum that the service is planning to change for the coming year. These targets reflect how the service is contributing to priorities outlined in Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs), with local stakeholders, other agencies and to National Skills Priorities. Local authority learning organisations within scope are required to make reference to their tailored learning provision, particularly where this meets local skills needs.

2. Proposals

2.1. The proposals are outlined in the document attached at Appendix A.

3. Alternative options considered

3.1. It is a contractual obligation to produce and submit an Accountability Statement. On this basis there are no alternative options considered.

4. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

4.1. The document has already been reviewed, accepted and signed off by the Adult Learning Management Committee, co-chaired by Alison Hatcher and Nik Hardy, the Assistant Chief Executives of Westmorland and Furness and Cumberland Councils. The document clearly outlines how we will meet Local Needs Duty and links directly to Council Plans, LSIP and National Skills Priorities. It also acts as a key performance document for the hosted service under the Inter Authority Agreement. The document also forms the Cumbria Adult Learning Business Plan meeting the requirements of the following:

- OFSTED Education Inspection Framework
- ESFA Subcontracting Standard
- Matrix Award

Implications:

Contribution to the Council's Plan Priorities - Outlined within the Action Plan at Appendix A.

Relevant Risks and explain how risks can be mitigated – Non completion and submission could lead to withdrawal of funding. The document has already been submitted to the Department of Education.

Consultation / Engagement – The document has been developed in consultation with the Governing Board

Legal – Awaiting input.

Finance – The Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) has allocated £2,487,369 to Westmorland and Furness Council who are hosting the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) provision for both Westmorland and Furness Council and Cumberland Council for the Academic Year 2024/25.

The production and submission of an Accountability Statement and Business Plan is required by ESFA to comply with the conditions of the grant. Compliance with the grant conditions and delivery against grant targets is overseen by the Adult Learning Management Committee.

Information Governance – n/a

Impact Assessments – n/a

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Background papers:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65843d0623b70a0013234db5/Accountability_Agreements_and_the_Local_Needs_Duty_2024_to_2025_1.pdf