



**ADULT EDUCATION
HIGH LEVEL REPORT**

Academic Year 2019/20

JANUARY 2021

Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	3
2	Policy Approach	3
3	Total AEB Spend and Participation in 2019-20.....	5
3.1	Funding amounts	5
3.2	Number of Providers.....	5
3.3	Number of Aims	6
3.4	Number of Learners	6
3.5	Number of Entitlement Aims	6
4	Report on analysis of own delivery	7
4.1	Funding amounts	7
4.2	Number of Learners	8
4.3	Number of Aims	11
5	Notes.....	16

1 Introduction

The West of England Combined Authority (WECA) came into being in 2017 and is made up of three of the Local Authority areas of Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire.

From the 2019/20 academic year, the combined authority took on responsibility for Adult Education powers and funding in relation to WECA residents. This was as a result of the Secretary of State for Education devolving powers to fund adult education to WECA.

Adult Education is used to support adults aged 19+ to develop the skills and qualifications needed for life, work, apprenticeships and further learning. Historically, funding has come from central government with adult education receiving annual funding allocations and central government setting out how the budget is spent based on national needs and requirements. For the academic year 2019/20 the West of England Combined Authority Adult Education Budget (AEB) was £14.7 million.

By taking responsibility for Adult Education powers and funding, the combined authority is able to fund providers to deliver courses tailored to meet the specific needs of the region, particularly providing residents with the opportunity to build confidence, develop the skills required for work and life and enhance their wellbeing. As set out in the [West of England Local Industrial Strategy](#) and associated [Employment and Skills Plan](#), the focus on inclusive growth serves the residents, the businesses and the three constituent authorities of Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, and South Gloucestershire as well as the wider West of England area.

Overall the devolved AEB enables localised, more flexible and tailored programmes of learning to be made available for learners to engage with. WECA delivers this by working in partnership with learners, businesses, and education providers to ensure we achieve positive results - supporting our residents and businesses to reach their potential and prosper.

2 Policy Approach

As 2019/20 was the first academic year of devolved Adult Education, the combined authority sought to implement a measured and balanced policy approach to management and administration of this funding. This approach had a number of key tenets:

- 1. A focus on transitioning from national to local arrangements, ensuring the system runs smoothly whilst seeking to minimise the destabilising effects on the provider base.**

In preparation for the 2019/20 academic year the combined authority recognised at an early stage that one of the key risks in the first academic year was destabilisation of the provider base during this transition period (critically through significant changes to funding allocations or system rules). As a result, the combined authority offered all providers who delivered to the West of England residents during 2017/18 (the baseline year) the opportunity to apply for a funding allocation commensurate with 2017/18.

The combined authority kept a very close alignment in 2019/20 with the national funding rules and overall system so that providers continued to operate within an environment with which they were familiar. One key change that the combined authority introduced was to fund all providers (regardless of type) via a Grant Funding Agreement enabling a measured approach to functions required to administer the powers and funding.

2. Building detailed knowledge of the AEB funded delivery in the West of England area with a key focus on data, capability and associated data processing systems.

Prior to determining the necessary substantive changes to devolved AEB (in order to specifically focus on key regional employment and skills issues) the combined authority focused on understanding current delivery at a detailed level through dialogue with the providers and the data they collected and submitted. This enabled the combined authority to implement changes to provision using an evidence-based approach.

3. Identify alignment with the West of England Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) and Employment and Skills Plan (E&SP) and key local initiatives

The combined authority led the development of a Local Industrial Strategy and associated Employment and Skills Plan. Dialogue with providers, key local stakeholders and consideration of the data the combined authority has, during 2019/20, focused on how AEB can align with, and start to support the delivery of the LIS and particularly the E&SP. This work includes a focus on a joined up local employment and skills system which balances competition with co-operation and more effective planning and targeting. The combined authority has also sought to align devolved AEB with key local initiatives such as Future Bright (a DWP funded initiative focused on those who are low skilled and low paid).

4. Preparation for Greater Changes in 2020/21

The combined authority put a strong policy focus on development of the approach for 2020/21, seeking greater local alignment. A key element of this was development of the Curriculum Delivery Plan approach requiring providers to demonstrate a greater level of curriculum planning and focus on agreed regional issues and targets.

Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 Pandemic caused a policy shift in relation to the combined authority's devolved AEB due to the significant, and unexpected, impact on learners and the provider base. The combined authority again focused on provider stability during 2019/20 and implemented a payment protection approach to support providers through the negative impacts of lockdown, social distancing and providers to engage and recruit learners. Due to the unprecedented nature of the pandemic the combined authority

agreed to continue to pay all providers to profile (unless they requested otherwise) so long as they agreed to:

- Continue to support learners so that they are not disengaged and can resume their learning as soon as possible.
- Continue to pay their staff so that staff are available to deliver Adult Education.
- Continue to pay their subcontractors as expected.
- Continue to communicate with the combined authority so that we have up-to-date knowledge of the key issues providers are experiencing.

The payment protection approach contributed towards stabilising the provider base and worked as part of the combined authority's wider response to the pandemic (of which adults aged 19-24 and 50+ were identified as critical priority groups). However, as anticipated, the pandemic did result in significant under delivery starting in February 2020 with the most significant impacts being felt from early March 2020 onwards. At the end of the academic year WECA prioritised financial stabilisation of the provider base and enabled providers to retain all funding regardless of delivery patterns due to impact of the pandemic which affected both recruitment of, and delivery to, learners.

Although not within scope of this report this Covid-19 related work has continued into the 2020/21 academic year (albeit without payment protection).

3 Total AEB Spend and Participation in 2019-20

3.1 Funding amounts

The total Adult Education Budget for the combined authority in 2019-20 was £14,739,398 and total whole year delivery for both Adult Skills and Community Learning was £12,114,400 based on the end of year provider claims.

Due to Covid-19 Payment Protection, the combined authority paid both Community Learning and Adult Skills allocations in full to a total of £14,171,328. Whilst there is a historical amount of underspend generated each academic year (approximately 3% on a national level) the Covid-19 pandemic had a very significant negative impact on recruitment and delivery. As referenced above this Payment Protection approach was critically introduced to support the stability of the provider base through the pandemic.

3.2 Number of Providers

In order to maintain the provider base in the transition from national ESFA funded AEB to devolved West of England funded AEB, all existing providers from 2017/18 were able to apply for funded in 2019/20.

There were 181 providers in 2017/18. However, almost two thirds of the providers (113 providers) had 10 or fewer learners from the West of England. All 181 providers were offered the opportunity to apply for an allocation and the combined authority subsequently received 41 applications (29 from the original 181 and 12 from providers who did not deliver to WECA residents in 2017/18). The combined authority offered funding allocations to 31 providers for the 2019-20 academic year with two providers declining the allocation. The initial split of providers by type was:

Type	Number	Percentage	Value of Funding	Percentage of Funding
CIC	1	3%	£142,453	1%
FE College	16	52%	£11,363,072	82%
ITP	12	39%	£651,341	5%
LA	1	3%	£1,561,789	11%
VCSE	1	3%	£300,713	2%

3.3 Number of Aims

18,280 learning aims were started, an average of 1.6 aims per learner. This is an overall reduction of 34% from 2017/18 (9,280 less aims) and compares with the national picture.

The Adult (19+) funded further education and skills (including apprenticeships) participation across England as reported by the Department of Education was 1,745,800. This was a 15.6% decrease from 2018/19 (2,068,200) and 19.9% decrease from 2017/18 (2,179,100).

3.4 Number of Learners

11,600 learners started a learning aim funded by the combined authority in the 2019/20 academic year. All learners funded by the combined authority were resident within the combined authority area based on the learner's home postcode. This is 3,410 (22%) less learners than the 15,010 learners in 2017/18.

In 2019/20 there was an anticipated slow start to enrolments due to the transition between funding bodies. 79% (9,210 learners) started their course before lockdown (August 2019 to February 2020) compared to 69% (13,540) in the same timeframe in 2017/18. Due to the impact of Covid-19, the providers were not able to build their numbers in the later part of the year as expected with 25% (940) of learners starting in lockdown or afterwards (March to July) in 2019/20 compared to 31% (5,970) previously.

Some learners took more than one learning aim so are counted in both time frames. Learners that continued provision started in the previous academic year are discounted here as they continued to be funded by the EFSA.

3.5 Number of Entitlement Aims

Three legal entitlements to full funding for eligible adult learners were set out in the Apprenticeships, Skills and Children's Learning Act 2009, and enable eligible learners to be fully funded for the following qualifications:

- English and maths, up to and including level 2, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have not previously attained a GCSE grade A* - C or grade 4, or higher, and/or
- First full qualification at level 2 for individuals aged 19 to 23, and/or
- First full qualification at level 3 for individuals aged 19 to 23

In 2019/20 the combined authority funded the following number of aims for each entitlement:

- 2,500 English and maths entitlement aims

- 90 First full level 2 entitlement aims
- 250 First full level 3 entitlement aims

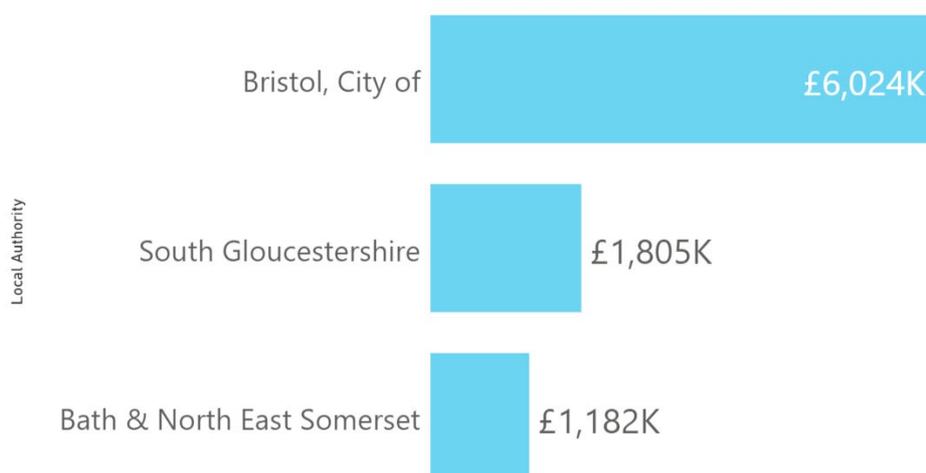
4 Report on analysis of own delivery

4.1 Funding amounts

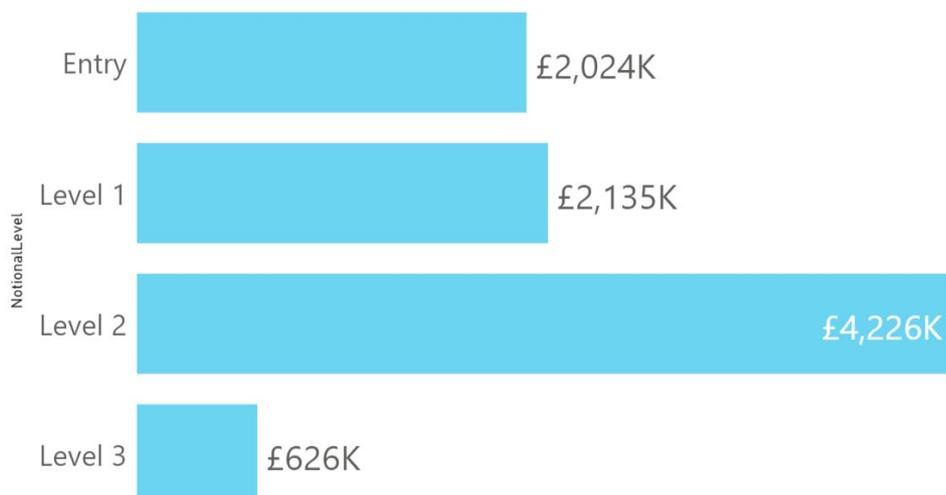
The total amount of funding claimed by the providers includes the provision amount as well as additional funding for learning support, learner support and community learning. 80% of funding was for Adult Skills aims and 20% for Community Learning.

Funding Model	Amount funded
Adult Skills	£9,830,400
Community Learning	£2,284,000
Total	£12,114,400

For Adult Skills aims, two thirds of the provision and learning support funding (£6,024k) was spent on learners residing in Bristol. The remaining third was split roughly evenly between South Gloucestershire (£1,805k) and Bath & North East Somerset (£1,182k). The Local Authority of the learner is determined based on postcode at first day of learning.



Twice as much adult skills funding was spent on Level 2 aims (£4.2m) than on either level 1 (£2m) or entry level (£2m). The least amount of funding was spent on Level 3 aims as only a small group of learners were eligible for funding.



4.2 Number of Learners

The number of learners supported in the last five years is shown below. The learner numbers were fairly consistent in the three years prior to devolution (where the data is known) at 16,000. There was a decrease of over 3000 in 2019/20 which is mainly attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Year	Adult Education Total	Adult Skills	Community Learning
2019/20	11,600	8,900	3,350
2018/19	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>
2017/18	15,853	12,440	3,732
2016/17	16,090	12,350	4,100
2015/16	15,990	12,220	4,020

Learners by Local Authority: The percentage of learners from Bristol was 60% in 2019/20; 25% from South Gloucestershire and 15% from Bath and North East Somerset. This is a decrease in learners from Bristol of 5% compared to 2017/18; an increase of 4% in South Gloucestershire, and an increase of 2% in Bath and North East Somerset.

Learners by Local Authority

South Gloucestershire

2960

Bristol, City of

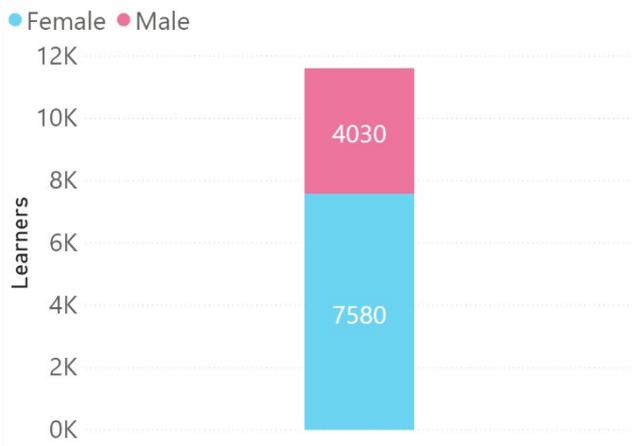
6980



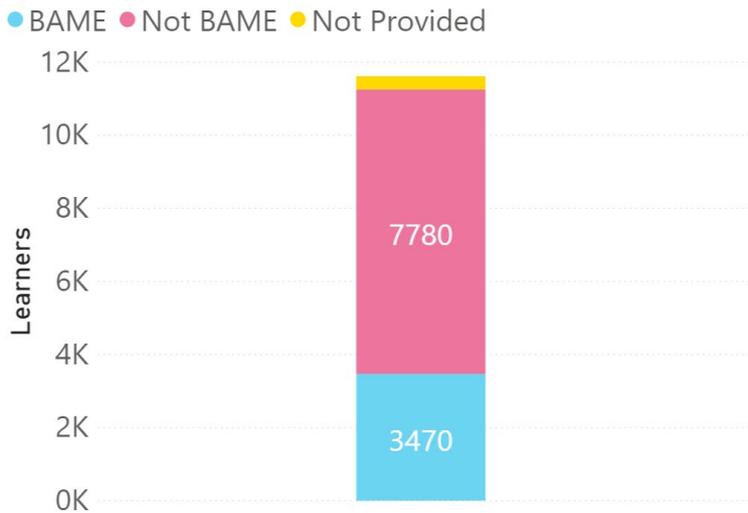
Bath & North East Somerset

1740

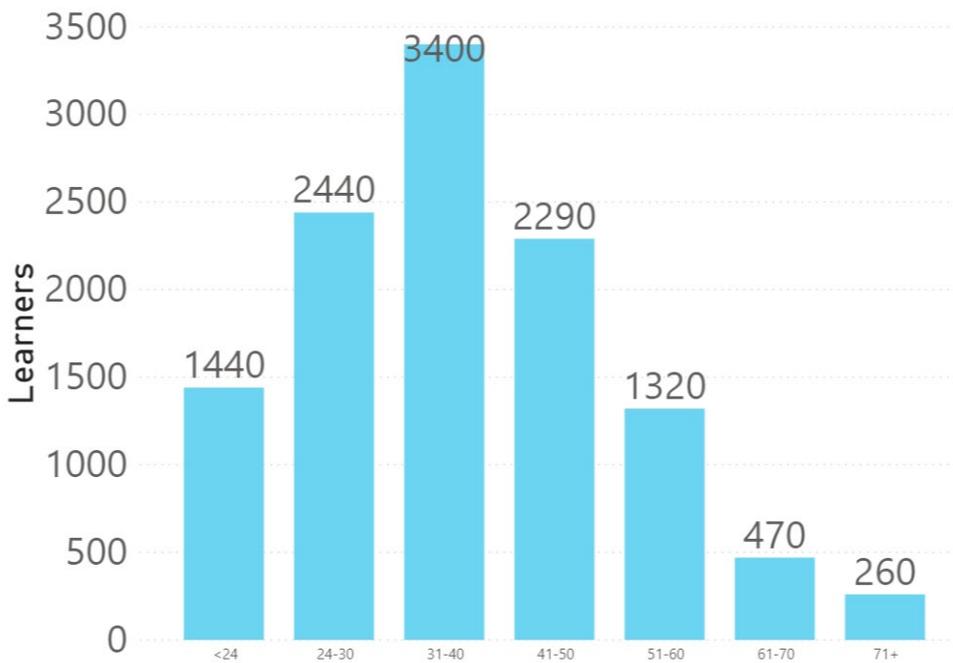
Learners by Gender: 65% of Adult Education learners were female in 2019/20 an increase of 6% from 2017/18. The overall balance of learners being in favour of females is in line with historical patterns of recruitment/delivery.



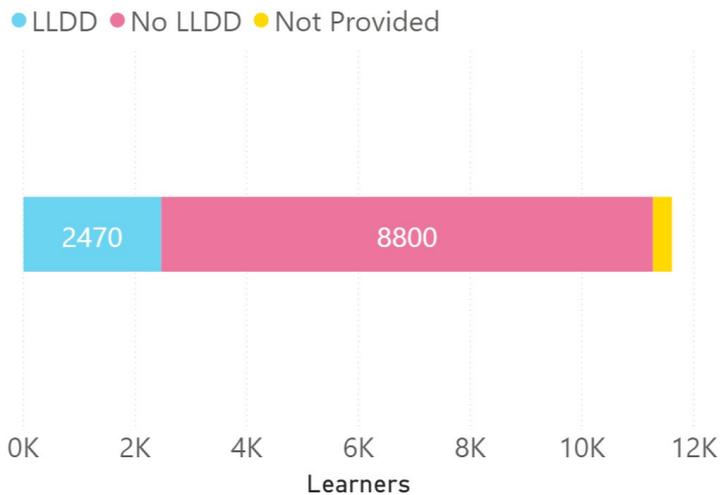
Learners by Ethnicity: 30% of learners were of a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic group (BAME) in 2019/20. This is the same percentage as in 2017/18.



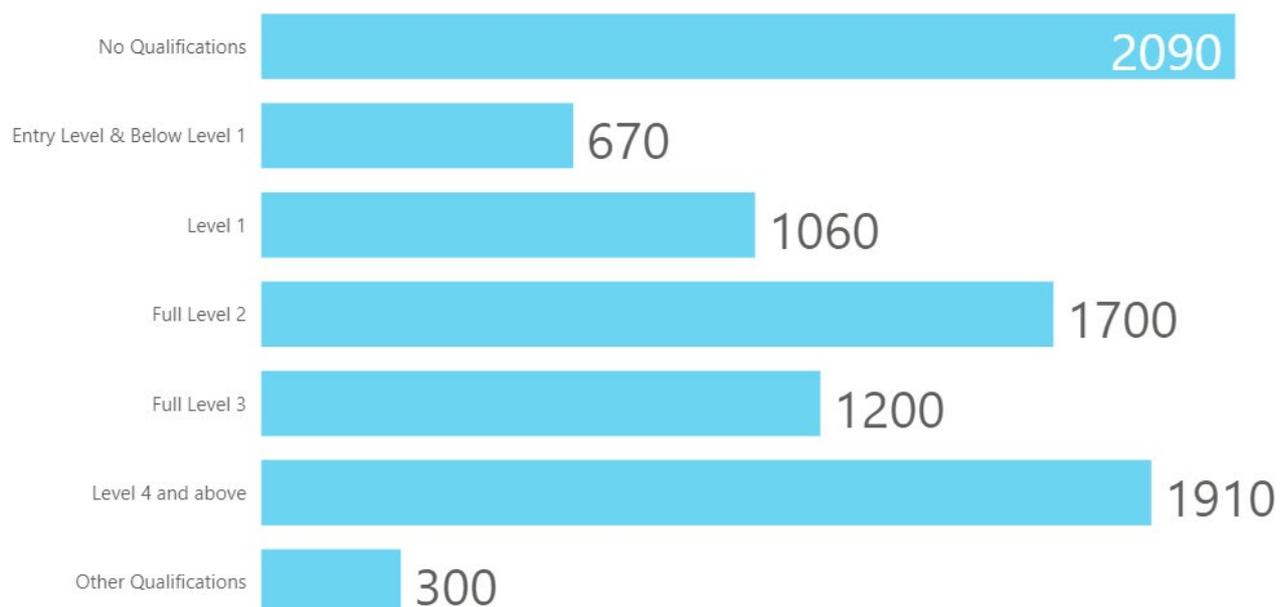
Learners by Age: 12% of learners in 2019/20 were younger than 24, a third (33%) were aged 30 or younger, and 18% were aged 50+. In 2017/18, 16% were aged 19 to 24, 22% were aged 50+.



Learners with learning Difficulties or Disabilities: 22% of learners in 2019/20 self-declared a learning difficulty, disability or health problem (LLDD). This is a reduction of 1.5% from 2017/18.



Learner Prior Attainment: In 2017/18 prior attainment details were recorded for 89% of people on Adult Skills courses 25% of those undertaking Community Learning. For the people doing Adult Skills courses; 49% of learners whose prior attainment was known, had no qualifications or qualifications of Level 1 and below. 21% had previously completed a full Level 2 qualification and 12% had complete a full Level 3.

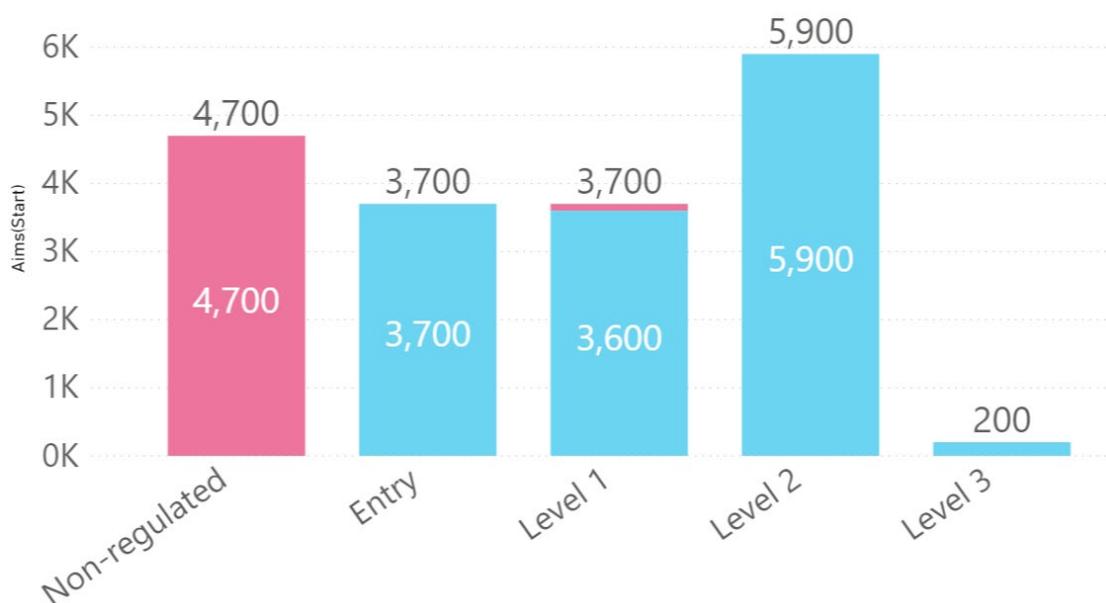


4.3 Number of Aims

A single Adult Education course or qualification is defined as a learning aim. Each learner will take one or more learning aims. The number of learning aims studied in 2019/20 was 18,280 of which 13,490 were Adult Skills aims and 4,800 Community Learning aims. This is an overall reduction of 34% from 2017/18 (9,280 less aims).

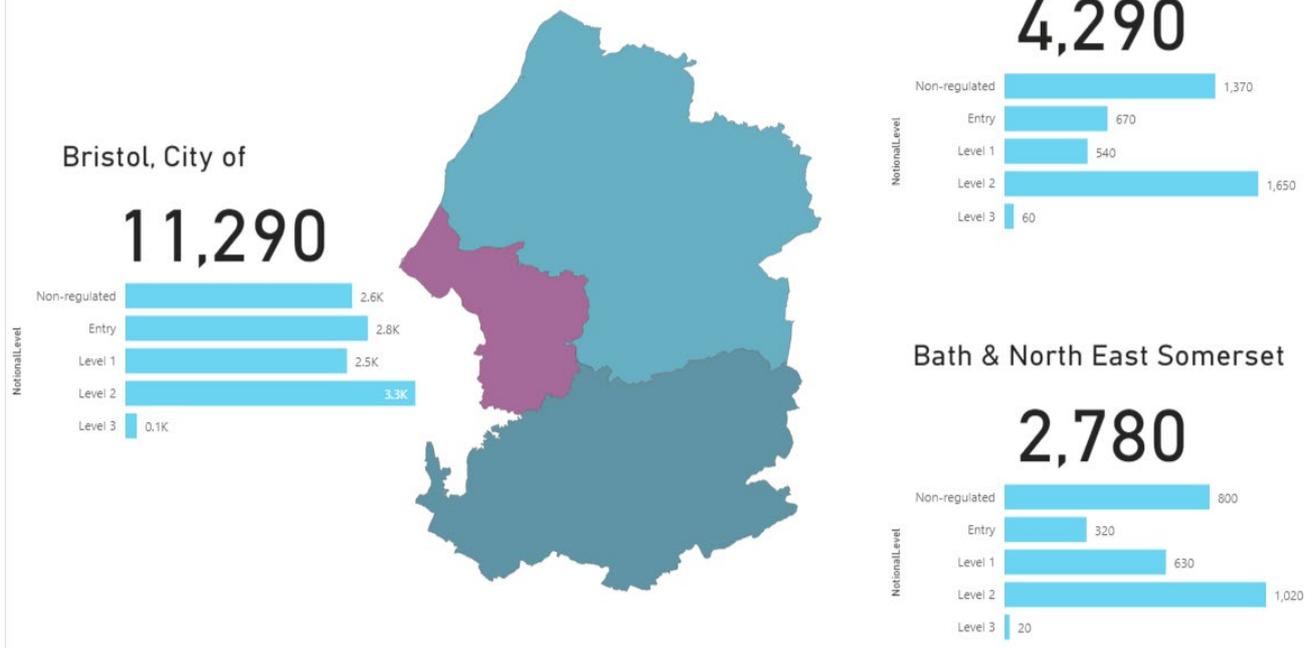
The most common level of aim was level 2 (5,900 aims) with 3,700 aims each at entry level and level 1. There were only 200 aims at level 3. The majority of Community Learning aims were non-regulated (4,700) with a small number (100) at level 1.

● Adult Skills ● Community Learning



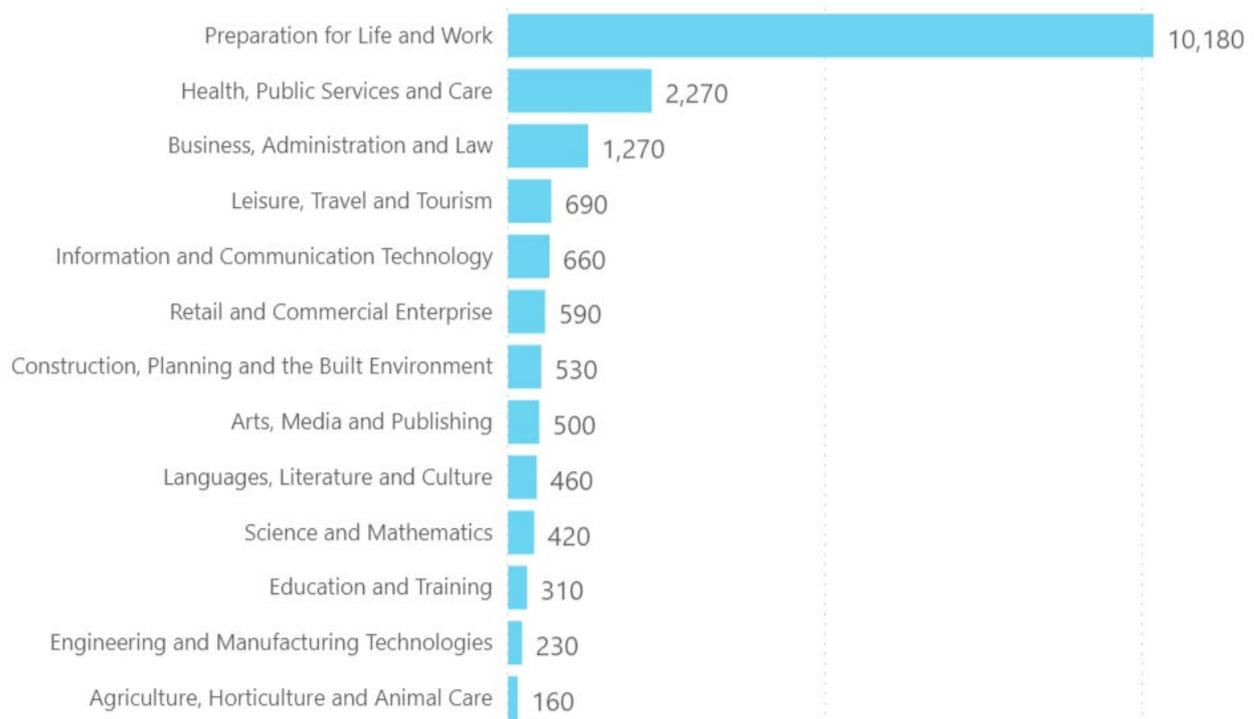
Learning Aims by Local Authority: The majority of learning aims were delivered to learners living in the City of Bristol local authority (11,290 aims). Of these aims there were slightly more level 2 aims delivered than other levels (3.3k aims) though a fairly even number at all levels from non-regulate to level 2. 4,290 aims were delivered to learners residing in South Gloucestershire with 1.7k of these at level 2. There were far less aims at entry level and level 1 for these learners. 2,780 aims were delivered to learners from Bath & North East Somerset. Of these, most (1k) were at level 2 as well as both non-regulated (0.8k) and level 1 aims (0.6k).

Aims by Local Authority



Learning Aims by Sector Subject Area: The most popular sector area in 2017/18 was Preparation for Life and Work with 52% of courses. The next most popular sector areas were Health, Public Services & Care (12%), Information & Communications Technology (8%), and, Business Administration & Law (7%).

Number of aims by Tier 1 Sector Subject areas:



Number of aims by Tier 2 Sector Subject areas:



Foundations for Learning and Life was the largest Subject Sector Area (Tier 2). The breakdown of learning aims within Foundations for Learning and Life were as follows:

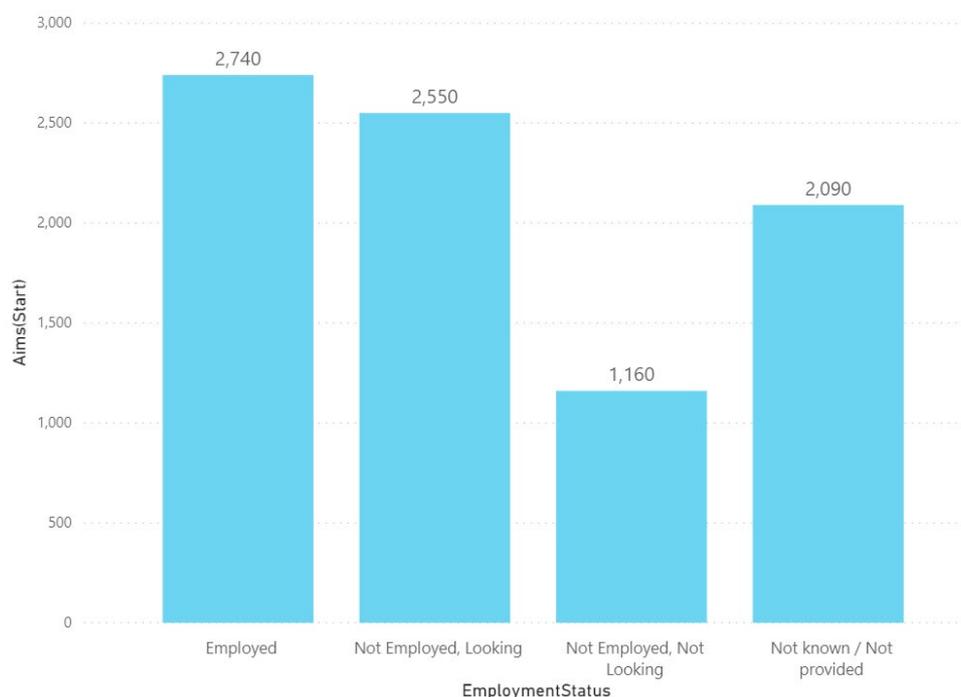
Learning Aim Title	Number of Aims
Non-regulated Community Learning provision, Foundations for Learning and Life	2,320
Non-regulated Adult Skills formula funded provision, Entry Level, ESOL, 69 to 92 hrs	470
Non-regulated Adult Skills formula funded provision, Entry Level, ESOL, 101 to 196 hrs	450
Functional Skill qualification in English	320
Functional Skill qualification in mathematics	280
Non-regulated Adult Skills formula funded provision, Entry Level, ESOL, 45 to 68 hrs	250
Functional Skill qualification in mathematics at Level 1	230
Non-regulated Adult Skills formula funded provision, Entry Level, ESOL, 21 to 44 hrs	210
Functional Skill qualification in English at Level 1	200
Certificate in The Principles of Using Mathematical Techniques	180
Functional Skill qualification in mathematics (Entry 3)	150
Non-regulated Adult Skills formula funded provision, Pre-Entry Level, ESOL, 101 to 196 hrs	150
Functional Skill qualification in English at Level 2	120
Award in ESOL Skills for Life (Reading) (Entry 2)	110
Functional Skill qualification in English (Entry 3)	110
Functional Skill qualification in mathematics (Entry 2)	110
Functional Skill qualification in mathematics Level 2	100
Non-regulated Adult Skills formula funded provision, Level 2, Maths, 21 to 44 hrs	100
Non-regulated Adult Skills formula funded provision, Pre-Entry Level, ESOL, 69 to 92 hrs	100

Learning Aims and the Low Wage Funding Rule: During 2019/20 1,890 aims (10% of all aims) were delivered via the Low Wage funding rule. This rule enabled employed learners earning £16,009.50 or less to access their learning for free. The value of this delivery was £1,348,000.

The West of England LEP area (including North Somerset Local Authority) is estimated to have between 102,600 and 153,900 jobs paying less than the living wage foundations £9.50 an hour.¹ The total number of jobs in West of England LEP is 513,000, meaning that 20% to 30% are below the living wage. This means that AEB low wage learners equated to 1.2% to 1.8% of those in low wage jobs.

¹ The data in this paper is the most recent, using Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) data for the year 2019. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/surveys/informationforbusinesses/businesssurveys/annualsurveyofhoursandearningsashe>

Learning Aims and Employment Status: 35% of all learners were employed or self-employed in 2017/18. 31% of learners were not in paid employment and were looking for work, this was lower than the 43% in 2016/17. The employment status of the majority of Community Learners was not recorded.



5 Notes

Data sources:

- R14 ILR dataset provided by the ESFA to the West of England Combined Authority
- End of Year Claim Forms submitted to the West of England Combined Authority by providers
- DfE published statistics
- ONS published statistics

Disclosure control:

- Funding amounts all rounded to nearest £100
- Aim and Learner numbers rounded to nearest 10
- Where aim or learner numbers are less than 5 (including equal to zero) “<5” is used and calculations are not performed.
- Where aim or learner percentages are more than 95%, “>95%” is used (if calculations done on unrounded figures)

Calculations & measures:

- Number of aims calculated as the Funding Starts for Adults Skills and all Community Learning Aims.
- Number of learners calculated as unique learner within a provider using the data fields: Learner Reference Number & UKPRN.

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