

WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY

ADULT EDUCATION STRATEGY: 2022/23

Contents

1.	INTRODUCTION.....	3
2.	OVERVIEW	4
3.	STRATEGY ALIGNMENT	6
4.	SCOPE.....	9
5.	PRIORITY RESIDENTS.....	9
6.	EVIDENCE BASE	10
7.	APPROACH	20
8.	BUDGET	21
9.	KEY POLICIES	23

1. Introduction

1.1 In the first two full years of the devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB) the West of England Combined Authority has supported 22,800 of our residents across Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire to undertake over 37,400 learning aims. This has helped them to develop the skills and motivation they need to re-engage with education and to gain, sustain and progress within employment. We have supported our key employment sectors to help them access the skilled workforce they need, seeking to join up with other employment initiatives and maximise the benefit of the resources we have.

1.2 The 2022/23 Adult Education Strategy will build on the foundations put in place by this strategy - guided by our regional Employment and Skills Plan - to deliver on the West of England Metro Mayor's priority to simplify and widen access to training opportunities, and to ensure people have access to good secure jobs regardless of circumstances or where they are in their career.

1.3 Our approach will respond to the strategic priority of tackling the climate and ecological emergency, ensuring provision helps equip people with the basic skills and careers pathways needed to access the 23,000 green jobs which will be created in our region. This will include linking to new measures developed through the £50m Green Recovery Fund such as the retrofit accelerator programme.

1.4 Delivery will respond flexibly to the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our economy and labour market, where certain sectors have suffered more fundamental disruption which has, in many cases, exacerbated existing skills challenges e.g. for HGV drivers/logistics, tourism and hospitality, and social care. This will include linking to the new Regional Recovery and Adaptions Fund which aims to help people adapt and overcome barriers to jobs and training, while also ensuring provision is responsive to existing and future skills gaps.

1.5 Underpinning this, we will maintain a benefits approach, focusing not just on the numbers of people this funding supports but also the outcomes it helps them to achieve. We will use our intelligence and understanding of priority skills gaps and opportunities to help existing AEB providers build delivery plans which are responsive to economic need; we will use funds to commission new provision where this is needed through our Open Application Process within the year.

2. Overview

2.1 This strategy builds on the West of England Combined Authority's 2021/22 Adult Education Strategy, closely aligning adult education provision to the economic needs of the region, ensuring that our residents and employers have the skills they need to thrive.

2.2 The region's broad strategic direction is set out through our Local Industrial Strategy¹ and our Employment and Skills Plan². More recently we have responded robustly to COVID-19 through developing our Recovery Plan³ and outlined the local skills strengths and needs in the Annual Skills Report⁴. Adult Education plays a fundamental role in support of these over-arching strategies and their priorities.

2.3 During the first two years of the combined authority's Adult Education, our priority was to protect the stability of the provider base. In the 2021/22 Adult Education Strategy we started to focus provision and funding on the priorities identified by our evidence base, aligned with our regional strategies and plans. This 2022/23 Adult Education Strategy will continue this approach.

2.4 Our economic forecasts suggest a continued shift towards a high skilled economy, meaning we need to create skills development pathways into sustainable employment for our residents by providing the right training opportunities. A range of softer skills such as communication, numeracy, literacy and interpersonal skills, continue to be highly demanded by employers and should form a key part of our adult education offer.

2.5 The Covid-19 pandemic has led to unprecedented pressures on some of our high value globally leading sectors and assets, putting them at risk. There are a number of sectors where there is a clear existing and growing demand for skills including construction (including retrofit and green construction), health and social care (the pandemic has put immense pressure on a sector which was already under pressure prior to Covid), Health tech, green skills across all sectors and digitalisation of the economy to name but a few. The Combined Authority's Annual Report provides an evidence base and action plan for regional delivery.

2.6 The 2022/23 Strategy will ensure adult education reaches those most in need, by proactively targeting funding at priority residents who have been unemployed or economically inactive (for over 6 months and/ or with skills below level 2) or who are low-skilled and employed in jobs which are either low pay or at risk of redundancy.

¹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/818989/1907_VERSION_West_of_England_Interactive_SINGLE_PAGES.pdf

² <https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/West-of-England-Employment-and-Skills-Plan-July-FINAL.pdf>

³ <https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Recovery-plan-version-2.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/West-of-England-Skills-Advisory-Panel-SAP-Report-Full-Report.docx>

2.7 Success will be determined through the tangible benefits that residents gain from adult education which enables them to progress into work, within work, and along the lifelong learning pathway.

3. Strategy alignment

3.1 Background

3.1.1 The utilisation of the combined authority's adult education funding is driven by our Employment and Skills plan which aligns closely with the West of England Metro Mayor's ambitions for the area.

<https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/West-of-England-Employment-and-Skills-Plan-July-FINAL.pdf>

3.1.2 The Employment and Skills Plan set out the following vision:

“By 2036, the West of England will be internationally recognised for its sustainable, inclusive and diverse economy, providing a high quality of life, prosperity and opportunities for all its residents. Our people will be skilled, healthy and able to access a ‘pathways of opportunity’ to achieve their potential and our businesses will be able to find the skills and talent they need to innovate, add greater value and thrive.”

3.1.3 It sets out a number of strategic objectives. We have detailed the contribution that adult education can make to each strategic objective stated as a benefit to our residents below. Our benefits align with our categories of education to facilitate delivery.

3.2 Benefits

3.2.1 Our primary focus is the benefit that the adult education funding has on our residents. These allow us to understand the impact that we can have on our region. Benefits are a key mechanism through which the progress, performance and impact of all the combined authority's People and Skills programmes are monitored and performance managed.

3.2.2 The benefits are monitored through a number of measures that use both eligibility of the learner and learning aim as well as the outputs in terms of achievements and progression. These will be detailed for the 2022/23 academic year in the associated policy document.

3.3 Categories

3.3.1 We have defined 5 delivery categories of adult education to manage and target delivery. These are the same delivery categories used in the 2021/22 academic year. The categories are intended to focus provision for different progression routes.

3.3.2 Engagement provision is intended to support residents facing various forms of disadvantage and residents suffering from low levels of prior attainment to re-engage in education and training and progress into further learning and (where appropriate) towards employment.

3.3.3 Employability provision is intended to equip unemployed residents with the knowledge, skills and experience they need to secure employment. The majority of learners benefitting from Employability provision will be either unemployed or economically inactive.

3.3.4 Skills for Work provision seeks to support employed residents to improve their skills and progress within their careers. We have split this into Foundation Skills for Work which focuses on provision up to and including full level 2, and Intermediate Skills for Work which is solely level 3 and full level 3 provision.

3.3.5 Learning for Personal Development includes provision that supports progression into higher education. This may take the form of formal 'Access to HE' courses or other forms of L3 provision where HE is the intended destination of the learner.

3.3.6 These delivery categories are detailed in full in the associated policy document.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE DESCRIPTION	KEY BENEFIT	DELIVERY CATEGORY
SO1	Integrating our employment, skills and education system to ensure it is aligned with demand and responsive to changing patterns of employment	Support residents to progress into Higher Education	Personal Development Provision
SO2	Encouraging all young people to achieve their potential		
SO3	Supporting everyone who is able to work by helping to address their barriers to employment	Support Disadvantaged Residents to Re-Engage in Education and Progress into / towards a Positive Destination Support Unemployed Residents to Progress into Work	Engagement Provision Employability Provision
SO4	Empowering people to progress within employment, including to better higher paid opportunities, if they wish to do so	Support employed residents to improve their skills and progress within their careers	Skills for Work Provision
SO5	Ensuring employers are able to recruit and retain the diverse skills and talent they need to thrive from within and beyond the region		Employability Provision and Skills for Work

4. Scope

4.1 Adult Education is low level provision to address gaps in education and training and to provide skills to progress into employment and positive destinations.

4.2 We would like AEB to be available to all people in our region regardless of circumstances or where they are in their career; however, our evidence suggests that there are specific barriers that we need to address too, for example, economically inactive or unemployed people who have no qualifications at all and are therefore unable to enter the labour market and secure job opportunities.

4.3 AEB is a key building block in an integrated portfolio of employment and skills initiatives led by the Combined Authority, like Future Bright, which together can help people across the region find the right pathways to secure decent jobs and training opportunities.

4.4 There are approximately 50,000 low skilled employed people in the West of England, 150,000 jobs paying below the living wage and 29% economically inactive people of working age. These residents that are low skilled and unemployed or economically inactive, and low-skilled and low paid are our priority.

4.5 The £16m budget can fund approximately 10,000 to 20,000 learners depending on the level and number of courses taken.

4.6 The combined authority's adult education provision seeks to enable the four benefits outlined earlier through active engagement of our priority residents and programmes of study to support them to progress. Adult Education is part of a pathway of skills provision across the region that can be utilised through collaborative working and effective referrals.

5. Priority Residents

5.1 As of 2019, estimates put the population of the region at 0.94m. By 2025, this is projected to grow to 0.99m. Per 2019 estimates 0.74m of the region's population would be eligible for adult education funding (aged 19 and over), increased from 0.71m in 2015. By 2025, this eligible age group is projected to grow to 0.78m. With a growing eligible population against a static budget identifying the key residential groups AEB (as opposed to other related provision) is supporting is key.

5.2 A key focus of our adult education provision is to support disadvantaged residents suffering from long-term unemployment and / or with very low levels of prior attainment. Data from the evidence base shows this should remain the case and the combined authority's adult education is positioned as part of a wider local education and skills landscape to enable learner progression.

5.3 The combined authority considers the following types of resident to be the priority for our investment in adult education:

- Residents who have been either unemployed or economically inactive for 6 months or more.
- Residents who are either unemployed or economically inactive, with prior attainment below full level 2.
- Residents who are employed in jobs which are either low pay or at risk of redundancy, with prior attainment below full level 2.

5.4 These learners have historically been the primary focus of adult education investment, with an average of 65% of adult education provision invested in support of residents who were either unemployed or had prior attainment below full-level 2. This level of support reduced during the COVID-19 pandemic and although slowly recovering remains significantly lower than historic averages.

5.5 At the end of the 2019/20 academic year, 16% of enrolments related to residents with prior attainment below full level 2. 12% of enrolments related to residents who were unemployed and seeking work, and only 6% of enrolments related to residents who had prior attainment below full level 2 and were unemployed and seeking work. In comparison, 9% of enrolments related to residents who were in paid employment and had prior attainment at level 4 or above.

5.6 Our focus now is to rebalance the investment towards our priority residents and ensuring they have functional skills in English and Maths as well as supporting them to access, or progress, in quality jobs.

5.7 Learners outside of these priorities can still be support by AEB, however there are also other initiatives that might be better able to support them to their chosen destination like Future Bright, the Digital Skills Investment Fund and the Recovery and Adaptions Fund.

6. Evidence Base

6.1 Background

6.1.1 We are using the recent Evidence Base created for the 2021/22 Strategy which sets out our best understanding of the characteristics of the West of England Adult Education landscape, and the established needs of residents and the local economy. The evidence base underpins this strategy and providers will need to set out how their delivery will address the challenges and opportunities identified.

6.1.2 The evidence base created for the Employment and Skills Plan, the Local Industrial Strategy and the COVID-19 Recovery Plan, and the Annual Skills Report are also utilised to give a greater understanding of the skills and employment needs of the region.

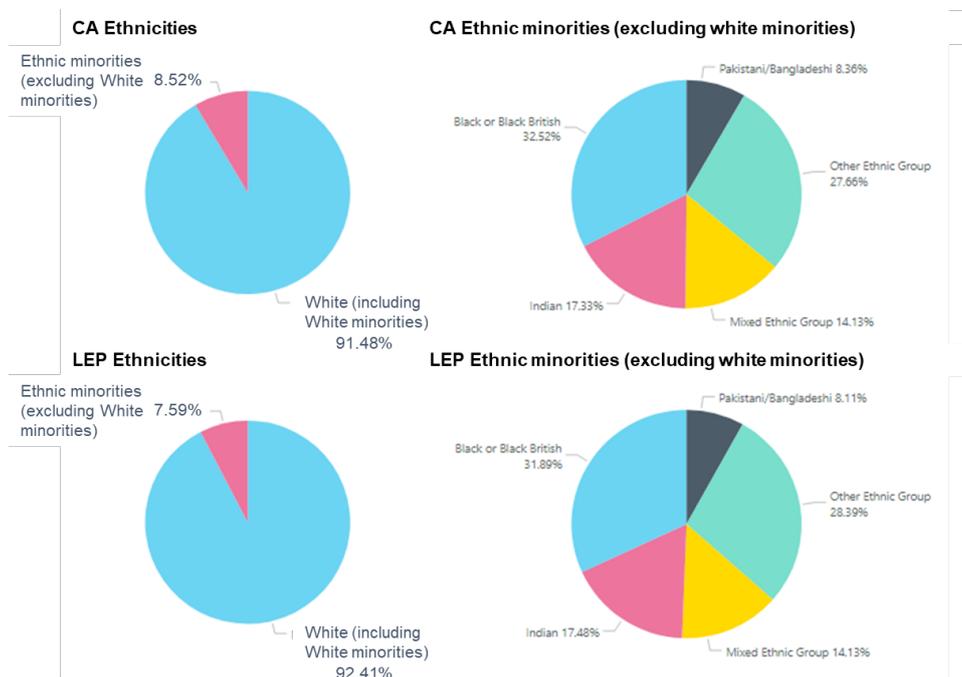
6.1.3 The evidence base contains a number of key messages in relation to the Labour Market and Business Demand and also the Demographics of the region's population which the combined authority is seeking to respond to.

6.2 Support Disadvantaged Residents to Re-Engage in Education and Progress into / towards a Positive Destination

6.2.1 The focus of the Engagement delivery category is to support disadvantaged residents to re-engage with education. Across the West of England there are 51 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) that fall within the 10% most deprived in the country (7.5% of LSOAs in the West of England). Whilst there are 70 LSOAs that fall within the 10% most deprived in relation to education (10.3% of LSOAs in the region). In the 2021/22 academic year we have increased the uplift available for providers delivering to learners living in the most deprived areas this uplift will continue for 2022/23.

6.2.2 The Engagement category also looks to close the gaps for underrepresented groups in our current and historic provision.

6.2.3 Approximately 8% of the population of the region are from ethnic minorities (excluding white minorities) with around a third of these from Black or Black British ethnicities. The chart below shows ethnicities by combined authority area and West of England LEP area.

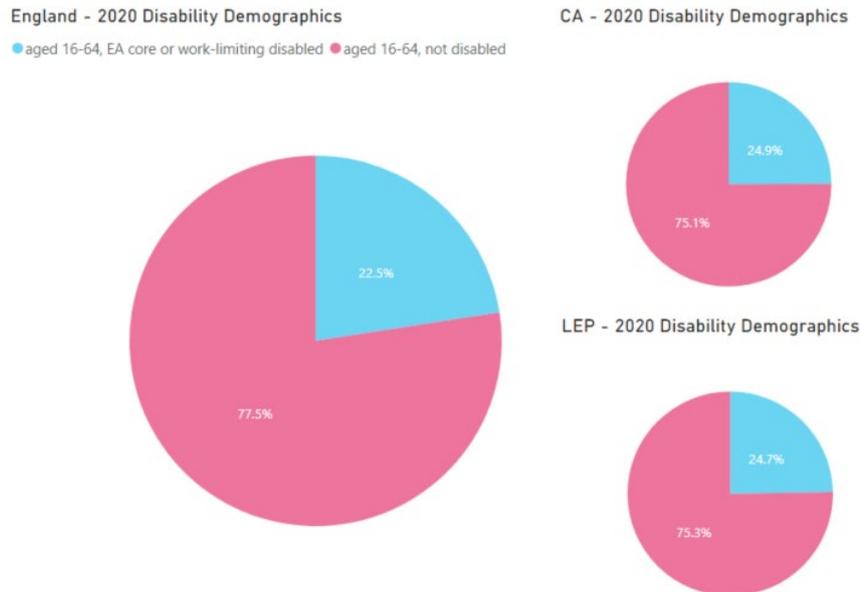


6.2.4 The 2019/20 annual report shows that 30% of learners were of a Minority Ethnic group (excluding white minorities) in 2019/20. We now need to understand the levels of provision for ethnic minorities at a more granular level across different subjects, levels, and qualifications to address any underrepresentation.

6.2.5 22.5% of the working age population in England in 2020, are classed as Equality Act core or work-limiting disabled. This is c.2 percentage points higher for both the West of England; this is driven up by a higher percentage of those classified as Equality Act core or work-limiting disabled within Bristol at 26.7%.

6.2.6 22% of learners in 2019/20 self-declared a learning difficulty, disability or health problem (LLDD) according to the annual report. This was a reduction of 1.5% from 2017/18.

Disability by WECA and WELEP with comparative England Figure



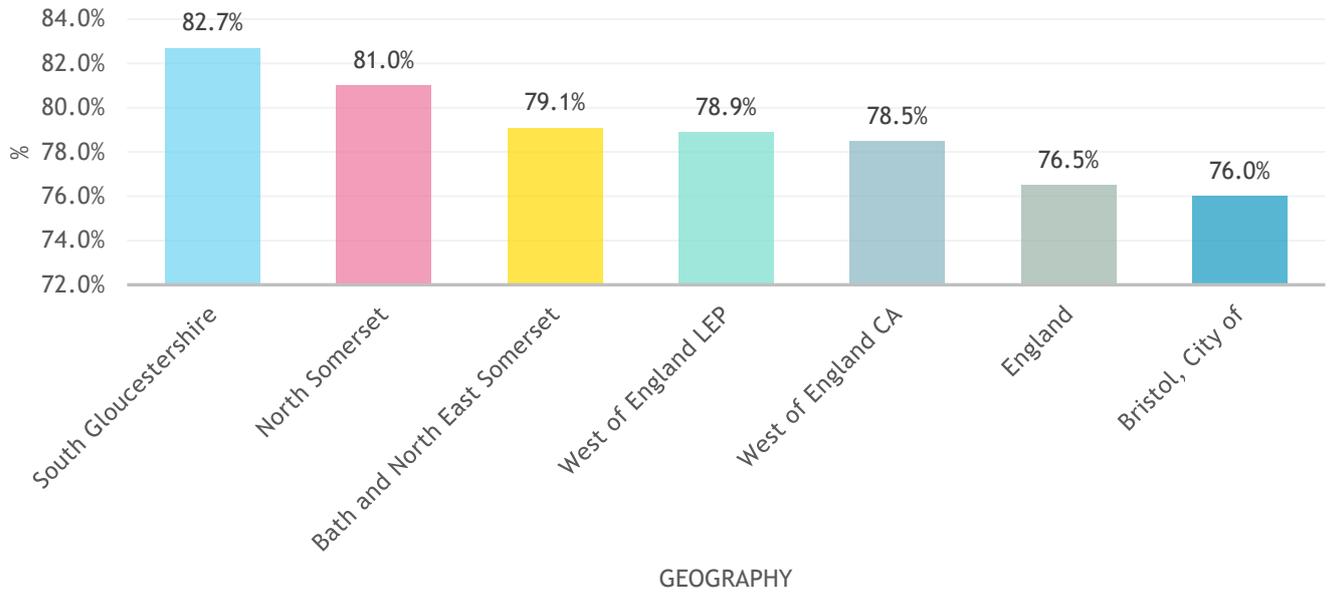
6.3 Support Unemployed Residents to Progress into Work

6.3.1 The West of England combined authority area has a lower unemployment rate than the rate for England. However, within our region, the City of Bristol has a higher unemployment rate than the England average.

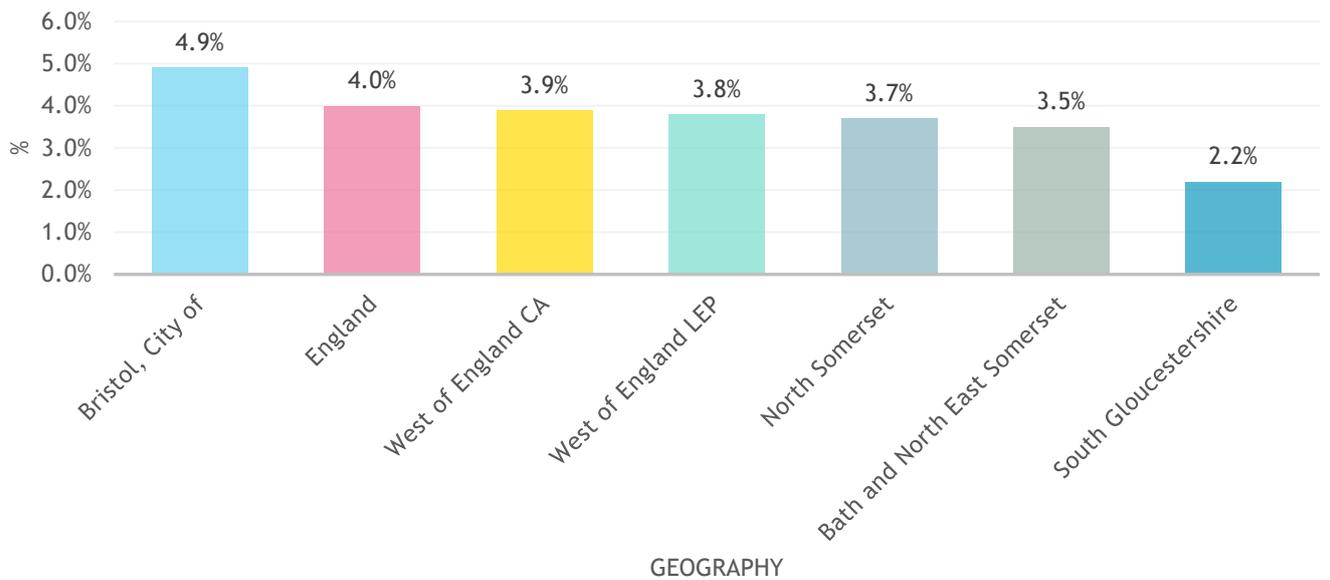
6.3.2 There is a higher proportion of economically inactive people of working age in the region than at the national level including in each of our constituent authorities. The combined authority is putting a key focus on supporting unemployed residents into work, with a particular focus on those who are disengaged and economically inactive.

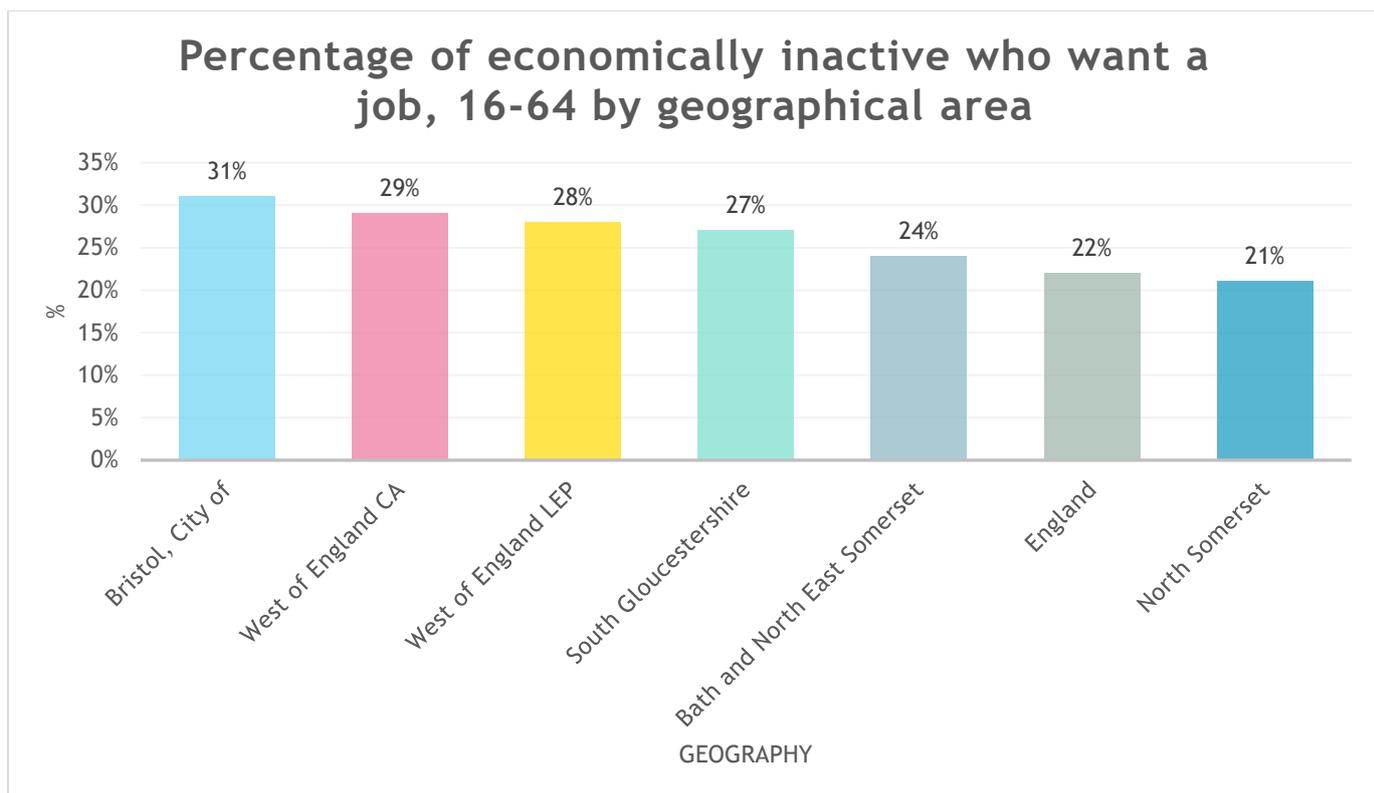
6.3.3 The charts below show the economic status of 16-64 year olds for the 12 months to June 2020 by geographical area:

Employment rate, 16-64 by geographical area



Unemployment rate, 16-64 by geographical area





6.3.4 Historically the region has a lower claimant rate than the rate for England; this remains the case despite the recent spike in claimants experienced across all geographical regions between March and May 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The ONS data in January 2022 shows this remains to be the case with 20,400 people claiming benefits across the region. For 2022/23 continuing to respond to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic will be a key issue. This means supporting residents through their immediate challenges and also the ones left by the impact on the local economy and jobs market.

6.3.5 The pandemic has led to unprecedented pressures on some of our high value globally leading sectors and assets, putting them at risk. Many of the challenges Covid-19 has bought will likely outlast the pandemic. However, it is notable that the forecasts for high unemployment have not been reached, at least partly due to Government initiatives like furlough. When furlough ended we also did not see a significant upsurge in unemployment. The pandemic has been highly sectorally uneven. Whilst the long term impact of the pandemic on sectors, their supply chains and individuals remains to be seen, there are a number of areas where there is a clear existing and growing demand for skills; which align to our strategic aspirations.

6.3.6 Such sectors include construction (including retrofit and green construction), health and social care (the pandemic has put immense pressure on a sector which was already under pressure prior to Covid), Health tech/digitalisation, green skills across all sectors and digitalisation of the economy. (Please refer to p.25 for the Combined Authority’s definition of a green job).

6.3.7 37% of jobs in the WECA area are thought to be in lower skill level occupations (NVQ Levels 1 & 2). The broad industry which has the highest proportion of low

skilled occupations is distribution, hotels and restaurants; this sector is a volume industry, employing c.85,000 people in the West of England and c.66,900 in WECA in a wide range of activities including retail.

6.3.8 Number of jobs by broad industry and occupation NVQ level in WECA in 2020 in shown in the table below.

	Level 4 Occupations		Level 3 Occupations		Level 1 and 2 Occupations	
Industry	Employed	%	Employed	%	Employed	%
Agriculture & fishing	0	0	1,100	100	0	0
Energy & water	4,200	47	2,100	23	2,700	30
Manufacturing	12,300	34	14,800	41	8,700	24
Construction	9,000	26	17,500	50	8,300	24
Distribution, hotels & restaurants	12,100	18	10,600	16	44,200	66
Transport & communication	18,600	41	6,100	13	20,900	46
Banking, finance, insurance & other professional activities	44,100	46	26,000	27	26,000	27
Public admin, education & health	83,400	46	32,600	18	63,800	35
Other services	5,900	23	9,700	37	10,500	40
Total	189,600	38	120,500	24	185,100	37

6.3.9 Occupations requiring level 2 skills are expected to see the second highest demand; whilst occupations with level 1 skills are going to see the lowest level of demand. Our learners need to be achieving qualifications at level 2 to support their progress into these occupations.

6.3.10 Whilst occupations requiring lower-level skills are anticipated to see less jobs growth, ensuring individuals have basic lower level skills is critical to opening up opportunities and pathways to higher skilled occupations. The combined authority will support residents to gain both the skills they need now, and also the skills and skills levels they and the local economy will need in the future. Adult education provision can provide the foundation for learners to progress into occupations within many sectors. For example lower level digital skills, green skills and health and social care. Adult education forms a part of overall progression pathways for residents through provision enabling them to progress in their employment and their related wage levels.

6.3.11 Soft skills such as communication, numeracy, literacy and interpersonal skills are often cited within job adverts as required competencies regardless of sector or occupational; ensuring that the population is equipped with these lower-level basic skills is critical in enabling individuals to engage in the labour market.

6.3.12 The Employability delivery category is focused on supporting learners to gain the skills to progress into employment. The focus is on predominantly level 2 qualifications as well as functional skills and ESOL.

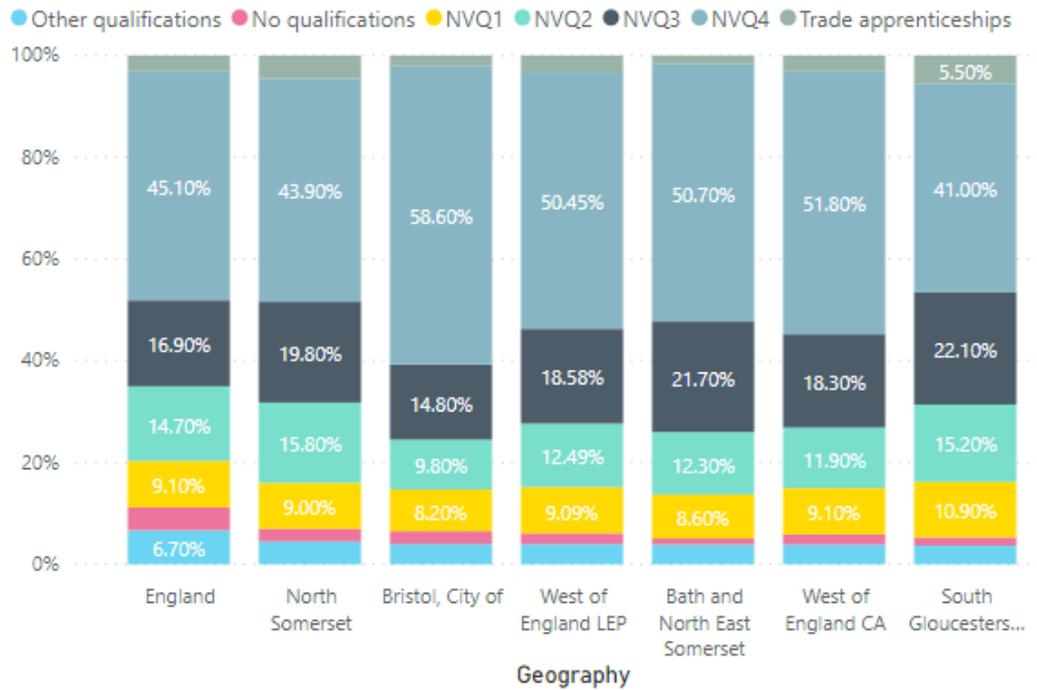
6.4 Support employed residents to improve their skills and progress within their careers

6.4.1 The West of England was estimated to have between 102,600 and 153,900 jobs paying less than the Living Wage Foundation's rate of £9.50 an hour in March 2021. Across the West of England and the constituent authorities there are significantly more jobs held by females that pay less than the living wage than jobs held by males. Within the region Bristol and South Gloucestershire have the highest number of jobs that pay below the living wage.

6.4.2 WECA will continue the focus on supporting those who are low skilled/low paid through our Low Wage programme. This will enable these residents to gain the skills they need to progress which benefits both themselves and local economy/employers. We will match the Living Wage Foundation's rate of £9.90 per hour for the 2022/23 academic year.

6.4.3 West of England region residents (both the whole population and those employed) have higher rates of NVQ3 and NVQ4 achievement than England as a whole, reflecting a highly skilled workforce. Bristol has the highest proportion of employed working aged population with an NVQ4; but also had the highest rate of people with no qualifications (5.7%).

6.4.4 The chart below shows the Highest Qualification achieved breakdown of working age population, 2019

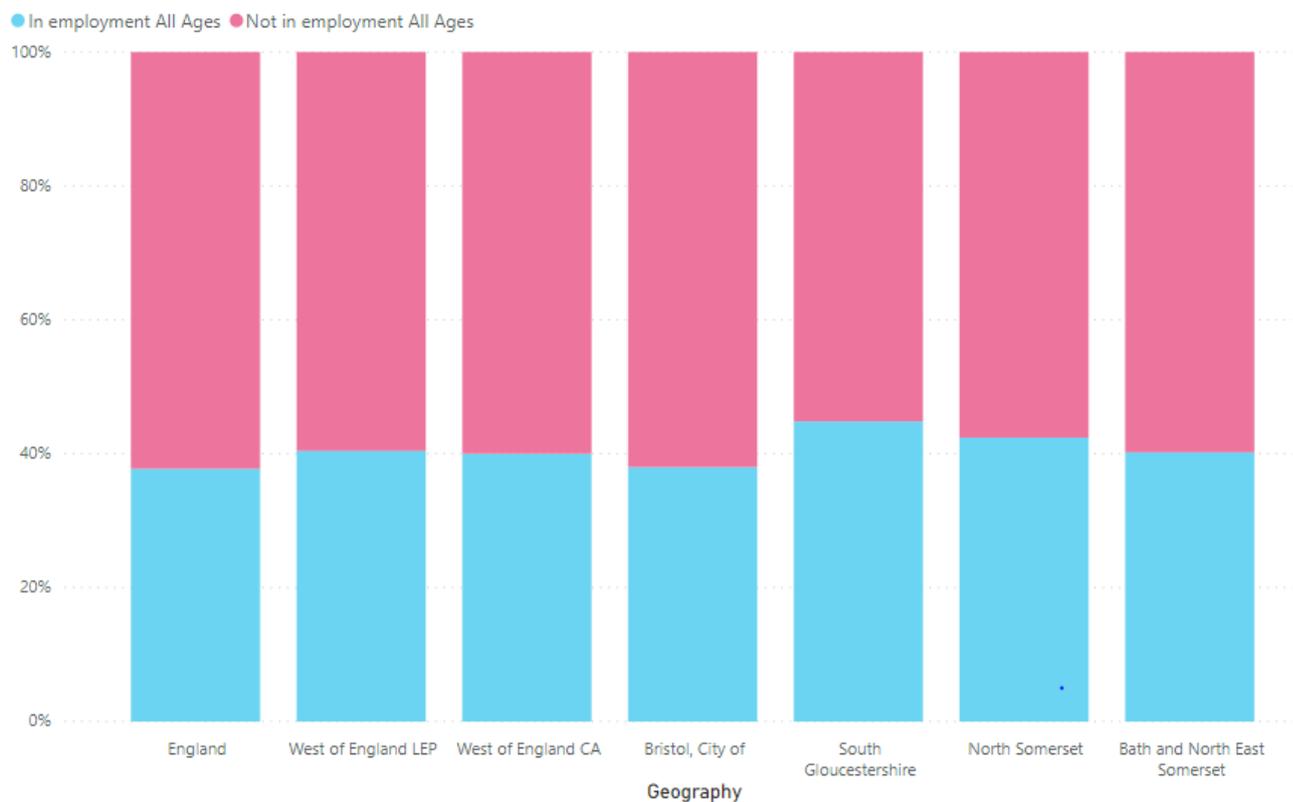


6.4.5 Whilst the region demonstrates a highly skilled population with proportionately fewer people with no qualifications than the England average, there are still approximately 53,100 people of working age employed in WECA (64,700 in the West of England LEP) with either only NVQ1 qualifications or no qualifications. This strategy focuses on those who have low skills levels and support them to progress through to provision for, and jobs which require, higher skills levels.

6.4.6 Data from August 2020 shows that 40% of Universal Credit (UC) claimants in the WECA are employed (27,847 claimants) which is higher than the 38% rate for England as a whole. Female claimants were more likely to be employed than males.

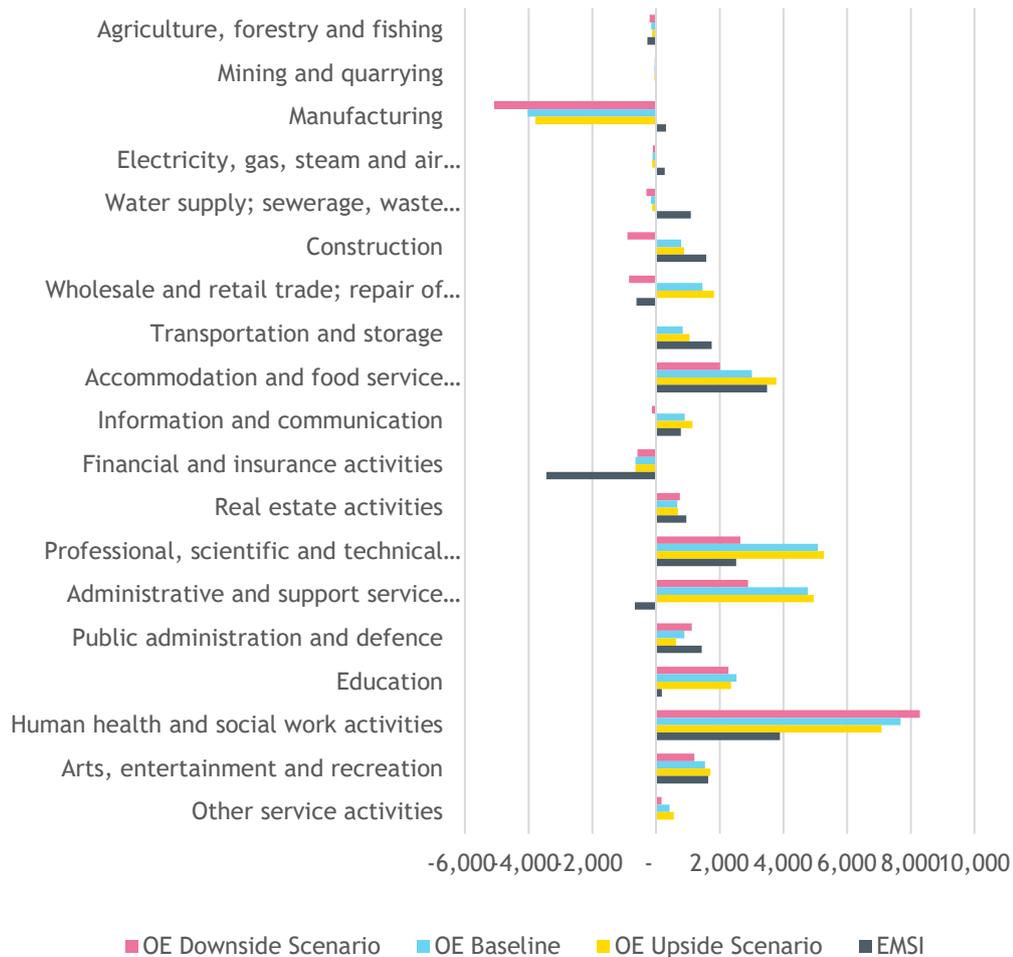
6.4.7 The chart below shows the Universal Credit claimants by employment status and geographical region in Sept 2020.

UC claimants by employment status



6.4.8 The largest sector increase in future employment is expected for human health and social work activities, with this increase predicted because of both an uplift in spending and recruitment due to the pandemic and longer-term investment because of the demographics of the nation's ageing population. Through our funded provision, WECA needs to both support residents to develop the skills needed to gain employment in the WECA area and also progress within that employment. Ensuring provision supports sector and occupational growth (either directly or as part of a progression pathway) is key. At the same time WECA does not wish to support residents to gain skills (directly or indirectly) which will not benefit them or the local economy.

6.4.9 Forecast change in jobs by sector in West of England from 2019-2025 shown below.



6.4.10 WECA commissioned a study to analyse the current scale of the retrofit and wider ‘green skills’ market, how this can be stimulated to support our net zero ambitions. The Retrofit report found:

- That for the WECA region to meet net zero by 2030, a further 50,383 total net retrofit jobs would be required. Currently low carbon jobs equate to less than 1% of all jobs in the region.
- This would consist of 29,669 direct jobs and a further 20,715 indirect jobs as the wider supply chain would mobilise to support the increased demand for low-carbon technologies and infrastructure. Of these indirect jobs, 52% are likely to be in construction and installation, 10% in manufacturing and 38% in ops/maintenance.

6.4.11 The Green Skills report found:

- Over 45,000 new ‘green jobs’ will be required at all skills levels and across all sectors by 2030.
- Key sectors where these new green jobs will be created include low carbon services (green finance, digital and legal), environmental consulting, engineering (nuclear, aerospace etc), construction, low carbon energy (solar PV, offshore, nuclear, hydropower etc) and transport (EV).

6.5 Support residents to progress into Higher Education

6.5.1 The data shows that occupations with level 4 skills are going to see the greatest demand, through both net change and replacement demand. Adult education can support this through enabling residents to access higher education courses.

7. Approach

7.1 Our approach to adult education is driven by the following principles.

7.2 Driven by Evidenced Need

7.2.1 In contrast to the largely demand-led approach which has informed adult education provision previously, provision in the region should be driven by need.

7.2.2 This means that support is directed towards the residents, communities and employers within the West of England for whom the evidence of need is strongest and most aligned with our strategies, plans and accompanying evidence base.

7.2.3 Residents in greatest need of support are often amongst the least likely to actively seek it. Given this we need our providers to engage through an active targeting process. We encourage utilisation of community learning budgets to fund staff to undertake such intelligence gathering and active engagement activity.

7.3 Transformational

7.3.1 Our adult education funding should have significant beneficial impact on the residents, communities and employers of greatest need. An achievement of a qualification is considered a means to an end as opposed to an end in its own right. We will measure the degree to which the provision we fund is transformational in terms of the positive destinations to which learners progress.

7.3.2 Transformational provision is possible through substantial programmes of learning encompassing multiple learning aims. Providers should invest in their Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) and initial assessment processes to ensure that every learner is enrolled on a qualification (or package of qualifications) which equips the learner with knowledge, skills and experience which they do not already possess and supports their progress towards a positive destination.

7.3.3 2020/21 data (at end of February) demonstrates that only 6% of learner have progressed to a positive destination such as employment or further learning. 2019/20 (R14) data shows that 18% of AEB learners are undertaking learning at a lower level than they have previously attained, and 10% undertook learning more than two academic levels lower than that previously attained.

7.3.4 Adult Education can provide key transferrable skills to allow learners to progress into green jobs and further learning to gain skills in emerging technologies. The west of England Metro Mayor is committed to bringing more green jobs to the region and ensuring residents have the skills opportunities to access these new jobs. Through upskilling the current workforce and engaging the next generation of workers, we can help tackle climate change. We will continue to work with our providers to develop the provision of green skills.

7.4 Collaborative

7.4.1 We want to establish a cohesive and collaborative adult education system within the West of England to establish a better distribution of provision across the region with an improved focus on the residents, communities and employers in greatest need of the type of support that adult education can offer. To do this, providers should plan their provision in a collaborative manner, actively engaging with each other and the combined authority to avoid unconstructive competition

7.4.2 Active engagement between providers and with stakeholders in support of collaborative planning including an increase of collaboration to establish effective progression pathways between providers will support of the lifelong learning journey.

7.4.3 Adult Education provides the foundation skills for progression into employment and further learning. Pathways are being established and expanded between Adult Education provision and other initiatives in the region such as Future Bright, Workforce for the Future, the Community Support Fund and the Digital Skills Investment Programme. Collaboration with employers is of key importance for providing work experience opportunities to learners and helping them to progressing into work. We will continue to be looking at best practices from these programmes and elsewhere to consider what can be integrated into future AEB provision.

8. Budget

8.1 The combined authority is anticipating a similar budget to be announced in early 2022 to support adult education delivery in the 2022/23 academic year as for the 2021/22 academic year.

8.2 The planned distribution of the budget for the 2021/22 academic is detailed below across the five delivery categories. The intended distribution for 2022/23 remains the same taking into account: the evidence base (including current employment and skills levels, forecast employment demands), historical investment levels and the needs of our priority residential groups.

Category of Adult Education	Planned Distribution 2021/22	Planned Allocation 2021/22	Planned Distribution 2022/23
Engagement	30%	£4,729,282	30%
Employability	35%	£5,517,495	35%
Foundation Skills for Work	25%	£3,941,068	25%
Intermediate Skills for Work	8%	£1,261,142	8%
Learning for Personal Development	2%	£315,285	2%
Total	100%	£15,764,272	100%

8.3 The greatest proportion of priority residents are supported within the Engagement, Employability and Foundation Skills for Work Categories and this is where our investment should be highest.

8.4 It is possible for individual providers to adopt a different distribution, especially where they are smaller and more specialised. However, in order for the planned distribution to be realised the larger providers will need to establish a strong degree of alignment.

8.5 Within the Learning for Personal Development category, the only priority for the combined authority is ‘access to higher education’ provision. The proportion of adult education funding planned to be invested in this category in 2022/23 will maintain historic levels of this provision.

8.6 The budget allocated to support each category of adult education is ring-fenced to ensure our priority residents are supported.

8.7 Each provider is required to submit a curriculum and delivery plan detailing their planned provision across the categories of adult education. These need to show how the provider is supporting the strategy direction and regional skills needs. The curriculum and delivery plans will be assessed and an equalities impact assessment performed.

9. Key Policies

9.1 Green Skills

9.1.1 Details on the funding mechanisms the providers can use to deliver green skills to our residents including ways to delivery existing courses in a 'greener' way.

9.1.2 Providers should also consider the role of adult education in terms of meeting future skills needs, as this may require training in advance of employment opportunity. A key example of this is the provision of skills which support the green agenda where local expertise will provide a catalyst which enables the West of England to capitalise on this significant economic opportunity and critical environmental necessity, not least the implementation of the West of England Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy:

<https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Joint-Green-Infrastructure-Strategy-%E2%80%93-June-2020..pdf>

Further information relating to green skills can be found on our website: <https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/employment-skills/green-skills/>

9.1.3 For clarity, the West of England Combined Authority has adopted the following definition of Green Jobs:

“A job which will directly contribute towards the reduction of emissions and help to protect the environment”

And/Or

“will help to create the job functions, responsibilities, conditions, working practices and/or business processes which contribute towards reducing emissions, lowering the carbon footprint and protecting the environment.”

9.2 ESOL

9.2.1 We are committed to supporting residents with ESOL needs in our region and provide full funding for all learners up to and including level 2 provision.

9.3 Active engagement of learners & Improving alignment

9.3.1 Details on the funding mechanisms the providers can use to actively engage our priority learners.

9.3.2 In order to effectively engage the types of learner prioritised by the combined authority, providers need to invest in their intelligence gathering and outreach functions to actively engage learners.

9.3.3 The combined authority expects our providers to continuously consider how they may improve the alignment between the provision they offer and the identified needs of the local economy. We have communicated our understanding of the needs of the local labour market through the evidence base which informs this strategy and we regularly publish a range of updates via the West of England Combined Authority website and email circulation groups:

<https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/regional-insights/>

9.3.4 Providers should utilise this intelligence, combined with their own understanding of economic needs across the smaller geographies which they serve to inform the development of their curriculum offer.

9.4 Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance & Initial Assessment

9.4.1 Details on the expected quality of careers education information and guidance given to all learners as part of their Adult Education journey.

9.4.2 We expect learners to be enrolled on qualifications at least equal to the level of learning which they have previously achieved, and ideally at a higher level in support of the learning journey. Where study at a lower level is required (for example within the context of re-training or ESOL provision) the gap between the level studied and the level previously achieved should be as small as possible.

9.5 Collaboration & communication with providers

9.5.1 The combined authority sees adult education provision as part of a pathway of learning for the adults in our region.

9.5.2 Collaboration between providers and stakeholders is vital to enabling a clear journey for the learners utilising the expertise at different types of provision. We have set out our delivery categories from engagement provision to skills for work to follow the different stages of a learning pathway across adult education provision.

9.6 Blended & Distance Learning

9.6.1 Our expectations regarding blended learning used to enhance delivery and distance learning to reach priority residents are set out in the Blended & Distance Learning policy.

9.6.2 Blended learning refers to provision that is a combination of face-to-face learning and online digital learning that can be undertaken at any time or location used to enhance the learning experience and achieve learning outcomes. Distance learning refers to delivery involving activities that happen away from the physical site of a provider with learners using digital means to engage with a programme.

9.6.3 The combined authority values distance learning where it serves the following purposes:

- To provide access to learning, and support for, priority residents who would not otherwise be able to participate
- To broaden the local curriculum offer so that is most effectively supports our local employers and the local economy

9.7 Other policies

9.7.1 Other policies for the 2022/23 academic year include:

- Substantial programme of learning: Where initial assessment and diagnostic testing identify a learner faces a literacy / numeracy / ESOL / digital barrier, or has little work experience, providers should offer programmes of support which address these issues in addition to the main learning aim.
- Minimum contract value: We will continue with a minimum contract value of £150,000 to continue working with a smaller and more strategic network of directly funded adult education providers to proactively focus on evidenced need.
- Open application process: We may launch a second open application process in a similar way to the 2021/22 process to secure provision that directly responds to this Adult Education Strategy where gaps are identified or where the level of need exceeds the level of supply.