

WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY

ADULT EDUCATION BUDGET: COMMISSIONING PLAN 2023/24

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. In the first three 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 2023/24 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 exacerbated existing skills challenges (e.g. for 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 increase our focus on the benefits realised by our investment, 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. STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

2.1. BACKGROUND

- 2.1.1. The utilisation of the Combined Authority's adult education funding is driven by our regional Employment and Skills plan which aligns closely with the West of England Metro Mayor's ambitions for the area.
- 2.1.2. The refreshed Employment and Skills Plan sets out the following vision:

"Bring secure and fairly paid jobs to the region, including green jobs, working with trades unions, local employers, skills providers and others to help residents access opportunities".

- 2.1.3. The refreshed Employment and Skills Plan also incorporates the following mayoral priorities:

- **PRIORITY ONE:** Strengthen and simplify the skills system.
- **PRIORITY TWO:** Enable all young people to achieve their potential.
- **PRIORITY THREE:** Support unemployed and inactive people into work.
- **PRIORITY FOUR:** Support people to progress in work.
- **PRIORITY FIVE:** Address employer needs and skills shortages.
- **CROSS CUTTING THEME:** Improve digital skills at all levels.
- **CROSS CUTTING THEME:** Deliver green skills for our low carbon transition.

- 2.1.4. The Adult Education Budget is expected to make a contribution towards all of these priorities and cross cutting themes.

	PRIORITY	AEB CONTRIBUTION
1	Strengthen and Simplify the Skills System	▪ Implementation of a simplified AEB system from 2023/24
2	Enable all Young People to Achieve their Potential	▪ Support for Young People aged 19-25
3	Support Unemployed and Inactive People into Work	▪ Targets for sustained progression into work
4	Support People to Progress in Work	▪ Targets for sustained progression within work

5	Address Employer Need and Skills Shortages	▪ Enabling increased delivery in the workplace
X	Improve Digital skills and All Levels	▪ Investment in digital from entry level to level 3
X	Deliver Green skills for our Low carbon Transition	▪ Establishing a ring-fenced budget for green skills

2.2. BENEFITS

- 2.2.1. Our primary focus is the benefits that the adult education funding has for 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.
- 2.2.2. In the 2023/24 academic year we will simplify the range of measures used to measure the impact of adult education budget investment. We will focus on inputs, outputs and outcomes with a clear focus on those achieved by our priority residents.

2.3. PRIORITY RESIDENTS

- 2.3.1. In recent academic years we have invested adult education budget funds within five discreet 'categories of adult education'. These were:
- Engagement
 - Employability
 - Foundation Skills for Work
 - Intermediate Skills for work
 - Learning for Personal Development
- 2.3.2. As part of our efforts to simplify adult education budget delivery, from 2023/24 we will no longer use categories of adult education and will instead focus on priority residents. These are defined as follows:

UNEMPLOYED PRIORITY RESIDENTS

Individuals who are either unemployed or economically inactive and satisfy one or more of the following criteria:

- Have been unemployed or economically inactive for 6 months or more prior to enrolment.
- Have prior attainment below full level 2
- Have literacy, numeracy or ESOL needs assessed to be below level 2
- Are aged 50 or above

EMPLOYED PRIORITY RESIDENTS

Individuals who are employed and satisfy one or more of the following criteria:

- Have an income that falls below the Real Living Wage
- Have prior attainment below full level 2
- Have literacy, numeracy or ESOL needs assessed to be below level 2
- Are undertaking regulated certificates or diplomas at Level 2 or above which effectively support re-training, progression to qualifications funded under the National Skills Fund Level 3 initiative, recognised Trades Union qualifications (at all levels and sizes) or are recognised Access to Higher Education qualifications.

3. OVERVIEW

- 3.1. This strategy builds on the West of England Combined Authority's 2022/23 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.
- 3.2. The region's broad strategic direction is currently set out through the Local Industrial Strategy¹ and our Employment and Skills Plan². This strategy has also been developed within the context of the Local Skills Improvement Plan³ which is currently under development.
- 3.3. During the first three 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.
- 3.4. 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. Such pathways should ensure that our most disadvantaged residents are not left behind and are equipped with the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to take full advantage of the opportunities created in the region.
- 3.5. From 2023/24 we will begin to develop a particular focus on equipping the region with the skills necessary to support the transition to net zero and capitalise on the significant opportunities presented by the green economy.
- 3.6. A range of softer skills such as communication, numeracy, literacy, digital and interpersonal skills, continue to be highly demanded by employers and should form a key part of our adult education offer.
- 3.7. The 2023/24 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.
- 3.8. 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. This will include an

¹<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/west-of-england-local-industrial-strategy/west-of-england-local-industrial-strategy>

²<https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/West-of-England-Employment-and-Skills-Plan-July-FINAL.pdf>

³<https://www.businesswest.co.uk/grow/LSIP/lcip-west-england#:~:text=LSIPs%20will%20bring%20together%20employers,prepares%20employees%20better%20for%20work.>

increased focus on sustained progression to positive destinations as a result of the learning we fund.

4. APPROACH

4.1. DRIVEN BY EVIDENCED NEED

- 4.1.1. In contrast to the largely demand-led approach which has informed adult education provision previously, provision in the region should be driven by need.
- 4.1.2. 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.
- 4.1.3. 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.

4.2. TRANSFORMATIONAL

- 4.2.1. 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.
- 4.2.2. 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.
- 4.2.3. 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.
- 4.2.4. 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.

4.3. COLLABORATIVE

- 4.3.1. 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.
- 4.3.2. 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 the lifelong learning journey.
- 4.3.3. 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, all of which are set out and can be accessed via our new Skills Connect service. Collaboration with employers is of key importance for providing work experience opportunities to learners and helping them to progress 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.

5. SCOPE

- 5.1. Adult Education Budget provision is intended to address the full range of learning needs between entry level and level 3, offering a progression pathway through which individuals may secure the qualifications, knowledge, skills and experience needed to progress into employment, within employment and to other and positive destinations.
- 5.2. Adult Education Budget provision benefits from very broad eligibility criteria, but the level of funding available is finite. Given this we must carefully prioritise our investment to support the residents, employers and communities likely to benefit most from support.
- 5.3. 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.

- 5.4. 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.
- 5.5. The £16m budget can fund approximately 12,000 learners depending on the level and number of courses taken. We are actively seeking to increase the level of investment per learner so anticipate that fewer learners will be supported in total within the static budget allocated to the Combined Authority

6. SIMPLIFICATION

6.1. OUTLINE

- 6.1.1. To date, the Combined Authorities approach to adult education has evolved iteratively as we have sought to increase the alignment between our investment and local strategic priorities and respond to emerging issues. It is however the case that this has resulted in a degree of complication.
- 6.1.2. Our approach in the 2023/24 academic year will seek to simplify our approach to AEB in a manner which increases the emphasis on the specific inputs, outputs and outcomes that we wish our investment to support:

- **INPUTS:** Greater emphasis on the types of resident who will benefit most from AEB investment (i.e. our priority residents).
- **OUTPUTS:** Greater emphasis on the types of qualification / programme / intervention that will have the most transformational impact on the learner.
- **OUTCOMES:** Greater emphasis on the impact of AEB investment quantified in terms of progression to positive destinations, both immediate at the point of exit from AEB and sustained through measurement at a point some time following exit.

- 6.1.3. Our approach to simplification will make the delivery (or under-delivery) of targets meaningful through the introduction of targeted incentives and disincentives.
- 6.1.4. The specific inputs, outputs and outcomes upon which we will focus are as follows:

INPUTS	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES
RING-FENCED INITIATIVES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NSFL3 ▪ Green Skills PRIORITY / LOW PRIORITY RESIDENTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Priority: Unemployed / Economically Inactive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 6+ months Unemployed ▪ Prior Attainment < FL2 ▪ Lit / Num / ESOL < L2 ▪ Aged 50+ ▪ Priority: Employed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Income < Real Living Wage ▪ Prior Attainment < FL2 ▪ Lit / Num / ESOL < L2 ▪ Low Priority: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All other learners ▪ Level of £ available capped 	FEWER BENEFIT MEASURE TARGETS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Priority Residents Only <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Achieving Lit / Num / ESOL at L2 ▪ Achieving Digital Skills at L2 ▪ Achieving a Qualification at FL2 ▪ Achieving a Qualification at FL3 ▪ Completing a Work Experience Placement ▪ Completing an Access to HE Course 	FEWER BENEFIT MEASURE TARGETS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Priority Residents Only <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Progressing Immediately into Employment [ILR] ▪ Progressing Immediately into Further Learning [ILR] ▪ Sustained Progression into Employment ▪ Sustained Progression to Further Learning ▪ Sustained Progression to Other Positive Destinations

6.2. INPUTS

- 6.2.1. We will no longer allocate funds to the categories of adult education that we have used in the past but will instead allocate funds in five separate elements structured around priority learners (and other ring-fenced budgets). These five elements will be:

- Unemployed Priority Residents
- Employed Priority Residents
- National Skills Fund Level 3 Entitlement / Free Courses for Jobs
- Green Skills
- Lower Priority Residents / Provision

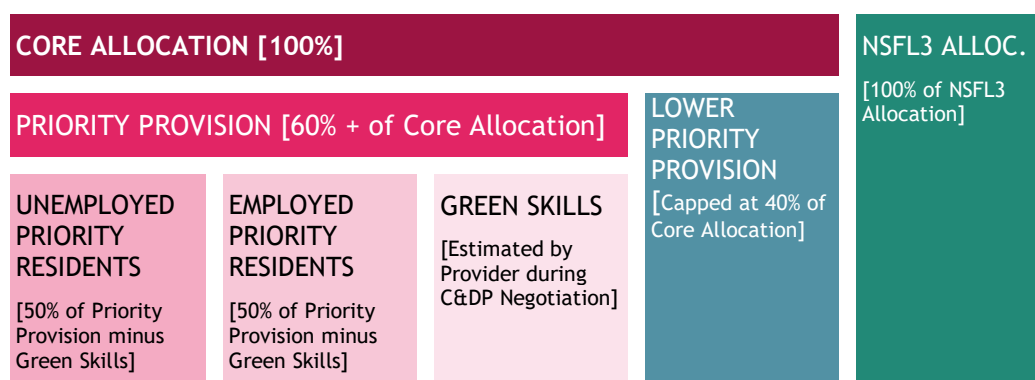
- 6.2.2. The definitions that we will adopt for both Unemployed and Employed Priority Residents are set out above.
- 6.2.3. Provision which is fundable under the National Skills Fund Level 3 Entitlement / Free Courses for Jobs is defined by national government (this includes increased local flexibility from 1st April 2023).
- 6.2.4. We do not currently have a mechanism through which green skills provision may be identified within the AEB management information systems and given this we are not yet able to quantify the extent to which current provision supports the green agenda. We will therefore use the 2023/24 academic year to establish a baseline through asking providers to identify all provision that satisfies the following definitions via the individualised learner record:

- **PRIMARY GREEN:** The primary purpose of the course is to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, experience and attitudes needed to support a fair transition towards an increasingly sustainable economy and society, in particular accelerating progress towards net-zero.
- **SECONDARY GREEN:** The course offers a reasonable contribution towards equipping learners with the knowledge, skills, experience and attitudes needed to support a fair transition towards an increasingly sustainable economy and society, in particular accelerating progress towards net-zero (but this is not the primary purpose of the course).

6.2.5. All other provision will be considered to be lower priority as it will either support a resident deemed to be a lower priority (on the grounds of employment status, income and / or prior attainment) and / or deliver learning which is considered to be lower priority (in terms of its capacity to effectively support residents to progress to a positive destination and / or retrain).

6.2.5.1. Although such provision is considered to be a lower priority it is still funded and therefore should still be focussed on interventions that maximise transformational benefit to learners. For example, offering substantial programmes that support residents who do not fall within our definitions of priority resident to retrain and progress into new work or education at a higher level. It should not be used to support interventions of limited transformational value.

6.2.6. We intend to invest our 2023/24 budgets as follows:



6.2.7. This table sets out planned investment at whole-programme level. The balance may vary somewhat at individual provider level to reflect how their individual offer contributes towards the whole. We will however maintain a cap of no more than 40% of core funding being invested in low priority provision (and ideally this will be far lower).

6.2.8. The balance of investment between unemployed and employed priority residents in 2022/24 is roughly 60:40 in favour of unemployed residents. The move towards a 50:50 split between unemployed and employed is intended to reflect recent changes to the labour market, an increased focus on in-work progression and greater flexibility to deliver in the workplace.

6.2.9. As we have no reliable baseline regarding current investment in Green Skills we will use 2023/24 to establish a baseline. Given this is would not be fair or reasonable to subject this element of the allocation to reconciliation in the same manner as other elements. Given this, if providers find that they have over-estimated the level of funding they will invest in Green Skills it may instead be utilised in support of priority residents. Reciprocally, if more funding is needed to support Green Skills it may be drawn from Low Priority Provision. To support this, reconciliation will be applied at the following levels only:

- Priority Provision (Overall)
- Lower Priority Provision
- NSFL3

6.3. OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES

6.3.1. In previous academic years we have negotiated output and outcome-based targets with providers, but their delivery or non-delivery has been largely inconsequential. Through our plans for simplification, we intend to make these targets meaningful.

6.3.2. We will continue to monitor and report on the same range of outputs and outcomes as has been the case in previous academic years but will significantly rationalise the number that are considered to be performance targets.

6.3.3. Our performance targets will focus on those realised by priority provision only. This includes:

- Unemployed Priority Residents.
- Employed Priority Residents.
- Residents undertaking Green Skills provision.
- Residents undertaking NSFL3 provision.

6.3.4. Outputs and outcomes achieved in relation to low priority provision will not factor into performance management.

6.3.5. Our output and outcome targets for 2023/24 will be:

OUTPUTS

- Achieving Lit / Num / ESOL at L2
- Achieving Digital Skills at L2
- Achieving a Qualification at FL2

OUTCOMES

- Measured on Exit:
 - Progressing Immediately into Employment [ILR]
 - Progressing Immediately into Further Learning [ILR]

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Achieving a Qualification at FL3 ▪ Completing a Work Experience Placement ▪ Completing an Access to HE Course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Measured c.6 months following exit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sustained Progression into Employment ○ Sustained Progression to Further Learning ○ Sustained Progression to Other Positive Destinations
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- 6.3.6. Outcomes will be measured at two points. Positive destinations are currently measured at the end of a learner's participation in adult education and may be reported up to three months following the learners actual end date. This measurement will continue and will primarily be reported by the provider as part of the exit interview process using the limited range of destinations contained within the individualised learner record.
- 6.3.7. We anticipate that targets for positive progression immediately following exit from AEB provision to be relatively modest. We do however expect the proportion of learners for whom the destination is 'not known' at this point to reduce significantly (currently 79%).
- 6.3.8. From 2023/24 we will also measure sustained progression to positive destinations. We will gather this information through learner surveys and the Combined Authority will either share or absorb the costs associated with this work.
- 6.3.9. Through adopting a survey-based approach to understanding sustained progression we will be able to consider a far wider range of positive outcomes that are currently possible via the ILR.
- 6.3.10. Our aim will be to measure sustained progression in the December / January following the end of the academic year in which the learner exited AEB provision. This is sufficiently long after exit to both demonstrate that progression is sustained and confidently assert that it is as a result of the provision undertaken, whilst sufficiently early to utilise the data within the planning and allocations process for the following academic year.
- 6.3.11. We will incentivise the delivery of targets in the following manner:
- Where a provider fully delivers their output and outcome targets, we will consider them to be eligible to either apply for growth funding or be automatically allocated growth funding at the next academic year (subject to affordability).
 - Where a provider is deemed to have critically under-delivered in relation to output and outcome targets, we will reserve the right to reduce their allocation in the next academic year (in addition to any adjustments that may be attributable to reconciliation).

- Such decisions would only be taken following the exhaustion of normal performance management processes. Where in the past these have focussed almost exclusively on the utilisation of funding, in 2023/24 they will also consider recruitment, outputs and outcomes.
- We anticipate that targets will be expressed in percentage terms (of leavers and of respondents)

7. KEY POLICY AND FUNDING RULE CHANGES FOR 2023/24

7.1. In addition to the simplification of AEB as set out above, the following changes to West of England Combined Authority AEB policy and funding rules will be implemented from 1st August 2023:

7.2. FUNDING RATE CHANGES

7.2.1. We will continue to honour the general 5% funding rate uplift applied from the beginning of the 2022/23 academic year.

7.2.2. We will increase funding rates by a further 15% in the following sector subject areas (equating to a 20% uplift in total, matching that recently confirmed by the Education and Skills funding Agency:

- Engineering
- Manufacturing Technologies
- Transport Operations and Maintenance
- Building and Construction
- ICT for Practitioners
- Mathematics and Statistics

7.2.3. We will also increase funding rates by a further 15% (20% in total) within the following sectors which have been identified as being of particular importance to the West of England Economy.

7.2.4. We will increase funding rates for all regulated literacy, numeracy and ESOL qualifications delivered at level 2 by 50% to incentivise increased participation and achievement at the level which equates to functionality. Eligible qualifications at level 2 that fall within the Mathematics and Science Sector Subject Area will attract the 50% uplift described here rather than the 20% uplift described above.

7.3. SUPPORTING REMOTE CLASSROOM BASED DELIVERY

7.3.1. We want to encourage and support providers to deliver more classroom-based provision within deprived communities and within the workplace. In order to make this happen we are willing to offset the additional costs associated with such delivery to make it as financially viable as direct delivery from existing premises. We will therefore permit providers to utilise Learner Support funding to offset increased delivery costs. The following rules will apply to this flexibility:

- Providers may utilise up to 5% of their Learner Support Funding to support such expenditure at their own initiative. Increased expenditure may be granted by the AEB Team, but this must be agreed in advance of delivery.
- This flexibility may not be used to support delivery within your existing estate or in locations that are easily accessible from within your existing estate.
- For delivery within deprived communities, the delivery location should normally either be within or within 15 mins walking distance of a local super output area that falls within the three most deprived deciles as identified by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019:

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiaOTdjYzlyNTMtMTcxNi00YmQ2LWI1YzgtMTUyYzYxOWQ3NzQ2IiwidCI6ImJmMzQ2ODEwLTljN2QtNDNkZS1hODcyLTl0YTJlZjM5OTVhOCJ9>

- The Combined Authority may agree to other deliver locations, but these must be approved in advance by the Combined Authority.
- Delivery on employer premises may take place in any location that is owned / used by the employer.
- The provision delivered should not include low priority resident provision unless this is agreed with the Combined Authority in advance of delivery.
- The flexibility may support the actual costs of remote delivery only.
- The flexibility may not include any form of employer incentive payment.
- Providers should retain evidence of actual costs for audit purposes.

7.4. ESOL

7.4.1. 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.

7.4.2. We wish to significantly increase the proportion ESOL learners who reach the point of functionality through achieving at Level 2, hence incentivising this provision through increasing funding rates by 50%

7.4.3. We will work with providers and other relevant parties to explore the development of an ESOL strategy for the West of England.

7.5. ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT OF LEARNERS & IMPROVING ALIGNMENT

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

7.5.2. 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.

7.5.3. 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/>

7.5.4. 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.

7.6. CAREERS EDUCATION, INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE & INITIAL ASSESSMENT

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

7.6.2. 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.

7.7. COLLABORATION & COMMUNICATION WITH PROVIDERS

7.7.1. The Combined Authority sees adult education provision as part of a pathway of learning for the adults in our region.

- 7.7.2. 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.

7.8. BLENDED & DISTANCE LEARNING

- 7.8.1. 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.
- 7.8.2. 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.
- 7.8.3. 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

8. OTHER POLICIES

- 8.1. Other policies for the 2023/24 academic year include:
- 8.1.1. 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.
- 8.1.2. Open application process: We may launch a second open application process in a similar way to the 2022/23 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.

9. EVIDENCE BASE

9.1. BACKGROUND

- 9.1.1. We are using the recent Evidence Base created for the 2022/23 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.
- 9.1.2. 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.
- 9.1.3. 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 to which the Combined Authority is seeking to respond.

9.2. SUMMARY

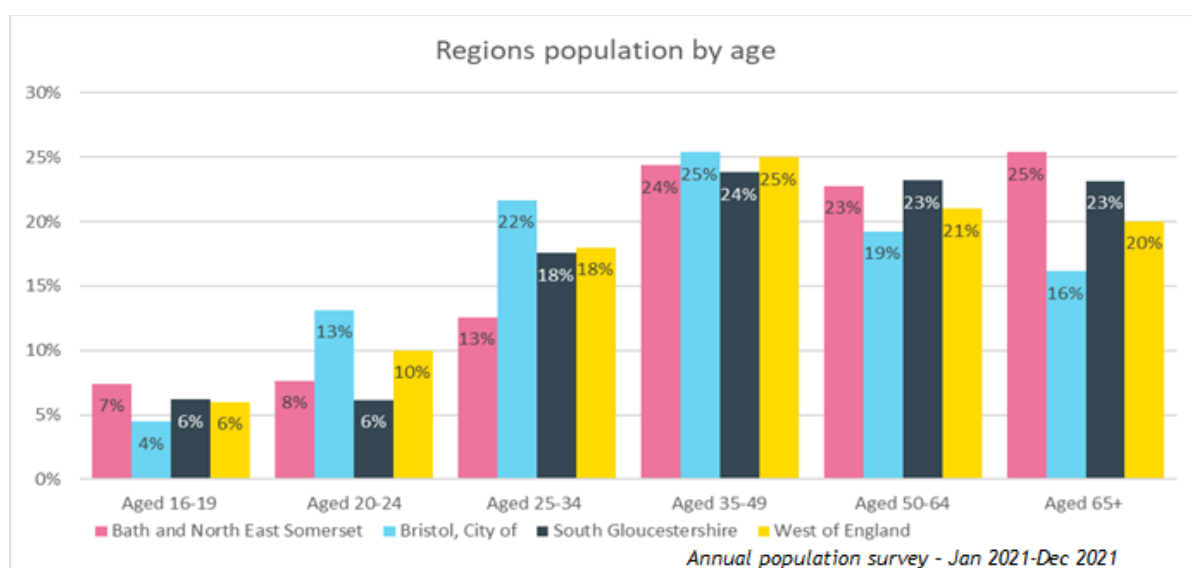
- 9.2.1. Bristol holds approximately **52%** of the population in the West of England aged 16 to 64. This is followed by South Gloucestershire with **29%** and Bath and North East Somerset with **19%**. Bath has a greater aging population compared to the other two regions.
- 9.2.2. Bristol has the highest percentage of deprivation in the region, South Gloucestershire and Bath have significantly less deprivation in comparison however there are areas of high deprivation on the borders on these local authorities.
- 9.2.3. **15%** of residents in the West of England are classified as priority learners, South Gloucestershire has the highest percentage in the region.
- 9.2.4. Economic inactivity has gradually increased in the last 5 years by 5%, ill health and retirement are the two main reasons for this increase.
- 9.2.5. 52% of residents aged 16-64 in the West of England have a NVQ 4 qualification or higher, **9%** higher than the national average. There are **3%** more females than males with NVQ 4 and higher qualifications in the region.
- 9.2.6. Bath has a significant number (**8%**) of unemployed residents with no qualifications compared to Bristol and South Gloucestershire.
- 9.2.7. There has been a **23%** increase across the West of England in people aged 16-64 with no qualifications between 2020 and 2021
- 9.2.8. On average **7.1%** of 16 and 17 year olds in the West of England are classified as NEET or not known compared to the national average of **5.5%**.

9.2.9. Real Estate is currently the highest growing industry in the West of England (1- Digit SIC codes).

9.3. DEMOGRAPHICS

	BANES	BRISTOL	S GLOUCS	WEST OF ENGLAND
TOTAL POP AGED 16-64	119,100	319,900	177,800	616,800
MALE POP AGED 16-64	58,400	162,000	89,700	310,100
FEMALE POP AGED 16-64	60,700	157,800	88,000	306,500

9.3.1. This table shows the population of all residents aged 16-64 in 2021 split by local authorities and gender. There is approximately 1% difference between genders which is not a significant gap between males and females in the area.



9.3.2. Apart from residents aged 35-49 there is a significant fluctuation between ages in the local authorities.

9.3.3. Bath has the greatest ageing population in the West of England with 47% of their residents aged 50+ compared to Bristol who has 35%.

9.3.4. Bristol has a higher portion of people aged 20 to 34 which means the area contains a higher number of the younger generation compared to the other regions.

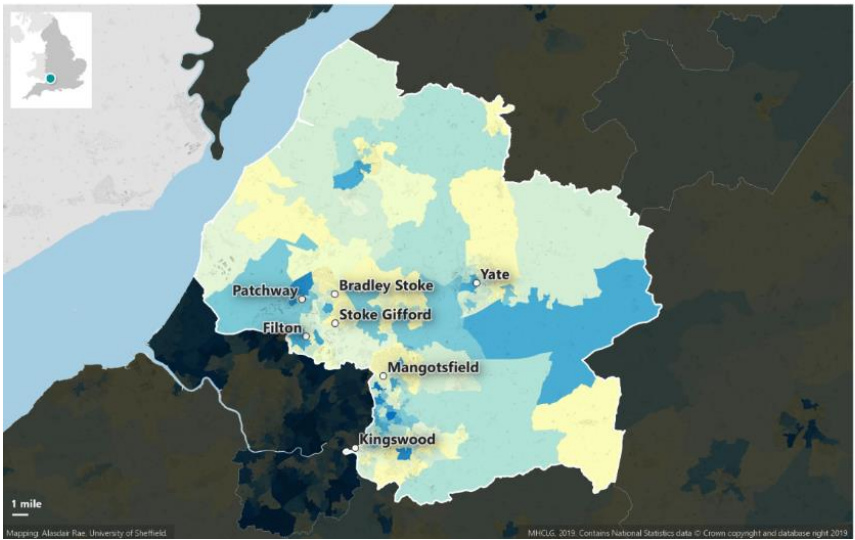
9.4. INDICES OF DEPRIVATION

AUTHORITY	TOTAL POPULATION	POPULATION DECILE 1	PERCENTAGE DECILE 1	POPULATION DECILE 1+2	PERCENTAGE DECILE 1+2	POPULATION DECILE 1+2+3	PERCENTAGE DECILE 1+2+3
BANES	196,357	3,004	2%	7,629	4%	15,002	8%
BRISTOL	465,866	71,059	15%	139,509	30%	19,5087	42%
S GLOUCS	287,816	0	0%	3,214	1%	11,401	4%
TOTAL	950,039	74,063	8%	150,352	16%	221,490	23%

- 9.4.1. This table has been produced with data from the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019. It is designed to show an overview of the deprivation levels of the three local authorities in the West of England and give a clear comparison between them. Figures above are approximations of residents in each area, the Index of Multiple Deprivation is analysing areas and not targeting individuals.
- 9.4.2. Population decile 1 is the most deprived, the higher the percentage the greater number of areas have been classified as deprived. Bristol has the highest percentage of deprivation in the region, although South Gloucestershire and Bath has very little deprivation in comparison the maps below show there is areas of high deprivation on the borders of these local authorities. The closest educational provider to residents along these borders may not be in Bristol but in South Gloucestershire or Bath.
- 9.4.3. A lower percentage of deprivation does not mean that these areas are more affluent - although an area is among the least deprived does not mean the residents have higher incomes.

English Indices of Deprivation 2019

SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE



Local deprivation profile



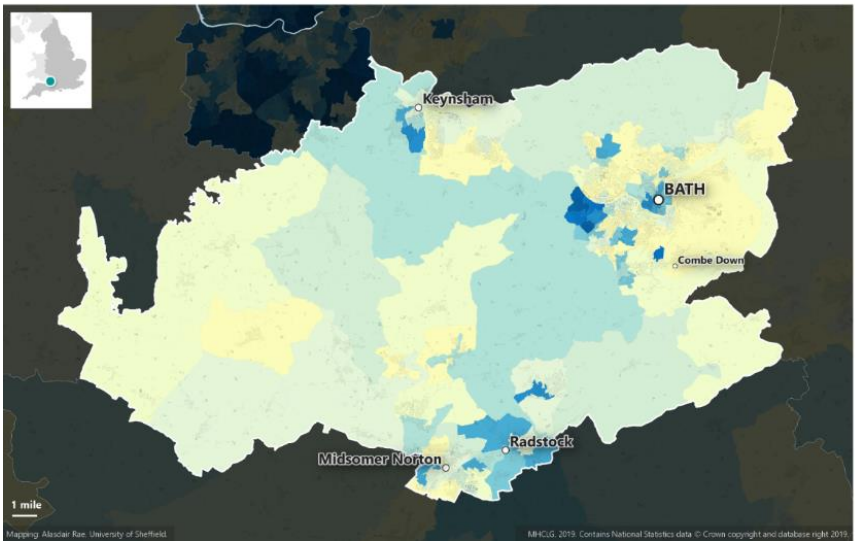
What this map shows

This is a map of Indices of Deprivation 2019 data for **South Gloucestershire**. The colours on the map indicate the deprivation decile of each Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) for England as a whole, and the coloured bars above indicate the proportion of LSOAs in each national deprivation decile. The most deprived areas (decile 1) are shown in blue. It is important to keep in mind that the Indices of Deprivation relate to small areas and do not tell us how deprived, or wealthy, individual people are. LSOAs have an average population of just under 1,700 (as of 2017).

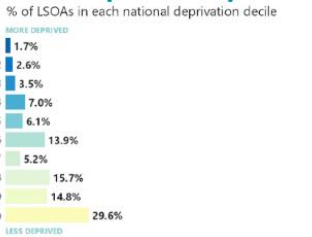


English Indices of Deprivation 2019

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET



Local deprivation profile



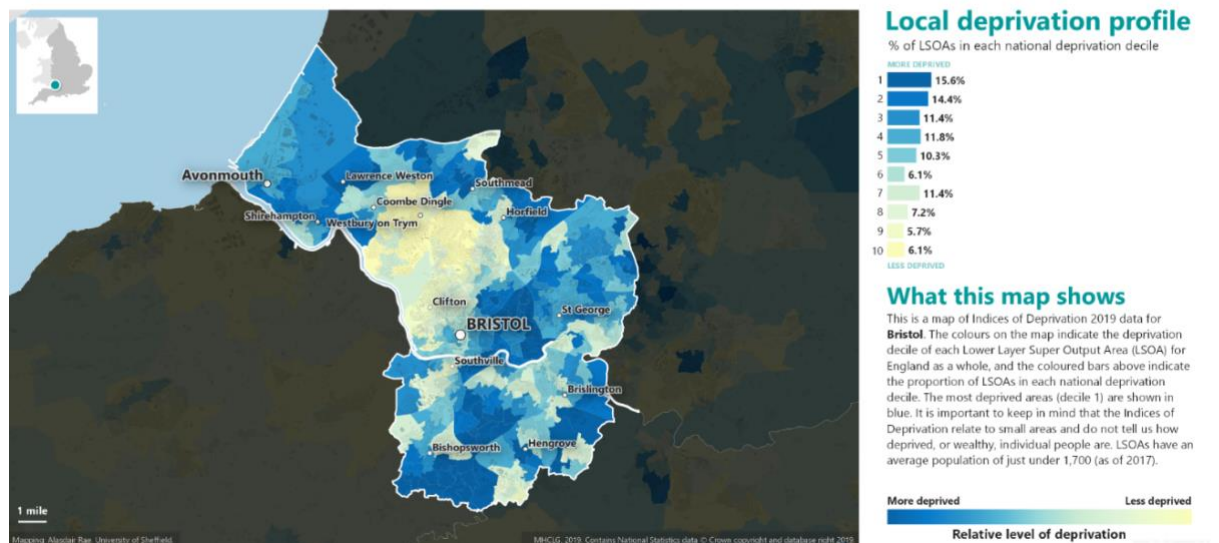
What this map shows

This is a map of Indices of Deprivation 2019 data for **Bath and North East Somerset**. The colours on the map indicate the deprivation decile of each Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) for England as a whole, and the coloured bars above indicate the proportion of LSOAs in each national deprivation decile. The most deprived areas (decile 1) are shown in blue. It is important to keep in mind that the Indices of Deprivation relate to small areas and do not tell us how deprived, or wealthy, individual people are. LSOAs have an average population of just under 1,700 (as of 2017).

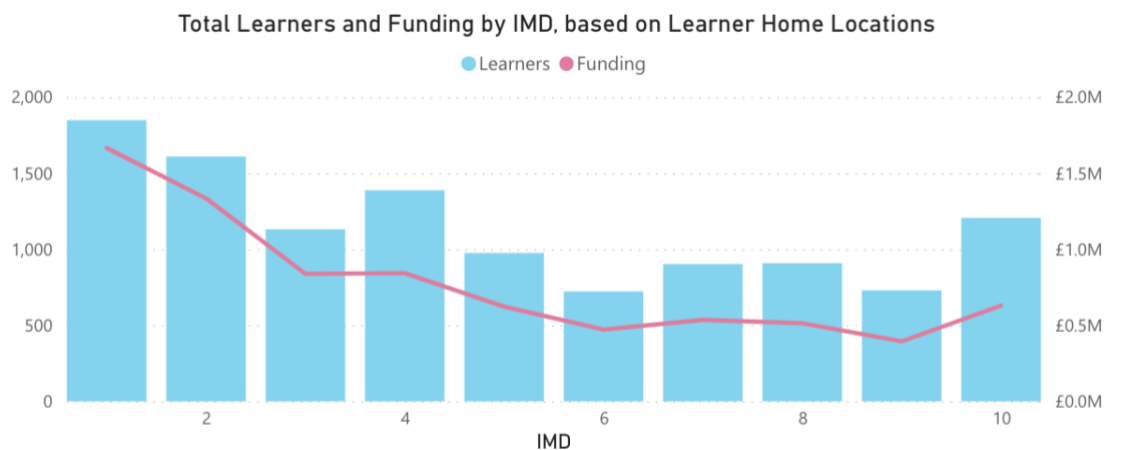


English Indices of Deprivation 2019

BRISTOL

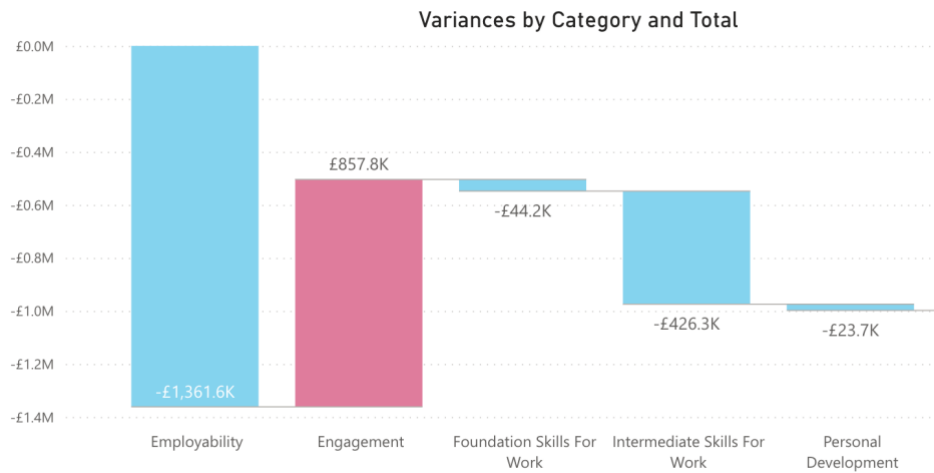


- 9.4.4. The distribution of both learner numbers and funding across deprived areas is generally good with by far the most funding and learner numbers focussed on the most deprived decile. However, where we would normally expect an incremental reduction in focus as the deciles reduce from the most to least disadvantaged, the pattern we see (ILR 2022/23 R10) is not linear and includes a significant and concerning spike in investment amongst residents of the least deprived parts of the West of England.



9.5. EMPLOYMENT

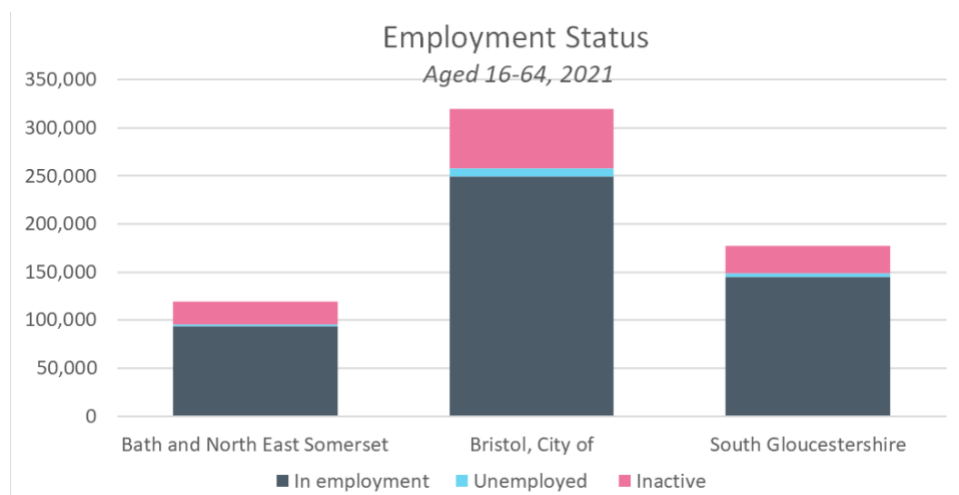
- 9.6. Over the 2022/23 academic year thus far (R10) there has been a significant unplanned shift in investment away from the Employability category of adult education and into engagement:



9.6.1. This shift seems appropriate as we remain within a period of very high employment levels which means that the residents in need of support are further away from being work ready and therefore require more substantial interventions before they are in a position to successfully apply for employment. Given this a greater proportion of learners are more appropriately placed in engagement provision (which for the purposes of this strategy will equate to Priority Unemployed Residents in 2023/24).

9.6.2. Even though employment levels are high, the number of residents who are unemployed remains far greater than the number that could be supported through the Adult Education budget.

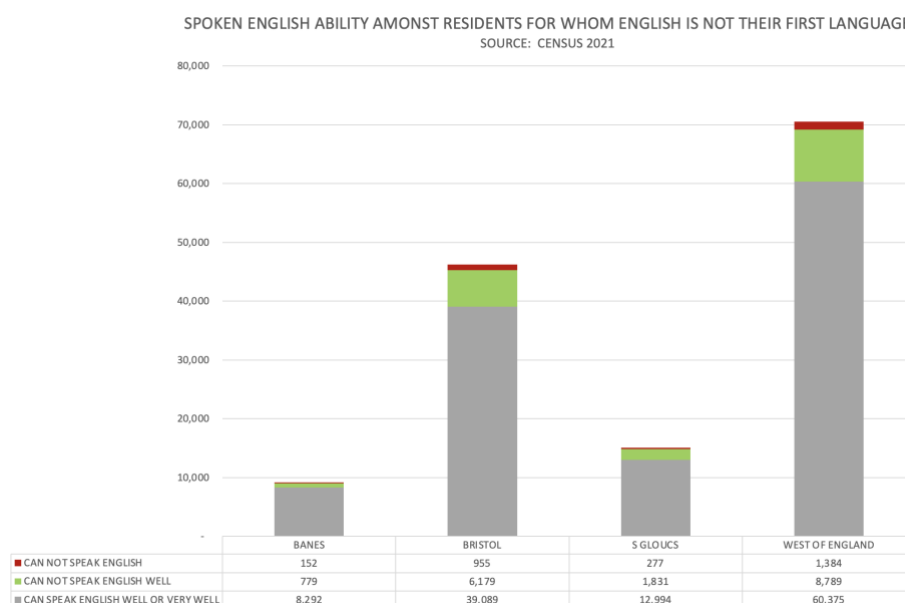
9.6.2.1. Employment Status



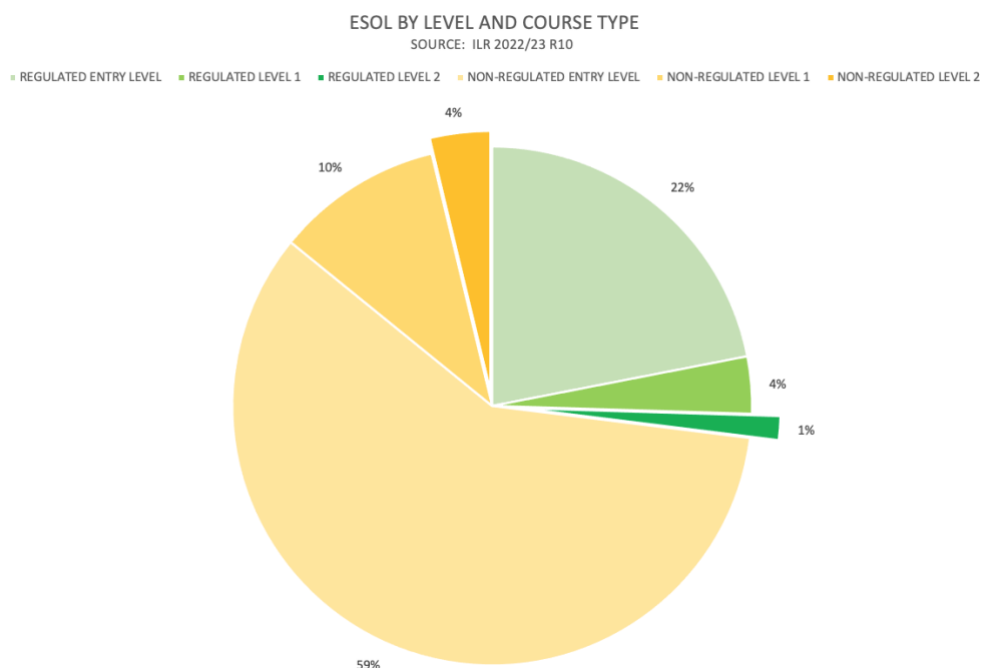
9.6.3. In addition to directly supporting unemployed residents, the Adult Education Budget (especially the community learning element) plays a significant role in supporting residents who are inactive to reach the position where they are able to actively seek employment.

9.7. ESOL

- 9.7.1. There appears to be a growing discrepancy between the ESOL needs within the area and the nature of provision offered.
- 9.7.2. Census data indicates that the West of England is home to c.950k residents for whom English is not their first language. Within this cohort the vast majority (85%) are already able to speak English either well or very well.
- 9.7.3. Of the remaining residents who may benefit from ESOL support only 14% are unable to speak English at all. The majority (86%) are able to speak English but ‘not well’.
- 9.7.4. This pattern varies a little between our constituent Local Authorities:



- 9.7.5. However, the overwhelming majority of AEB investment in ESOL provision continues to be focussed at entry-level with only 5% of ESOL learners undertaking provision at Level 2.
- 9.7.6. As has been highlighted within previous Adult Education Plans and Strategies, given the relative level of need as identified through data combined with the pipeline that has been established across recent years through largen numbers of residents completing ESOL provision at entry level and level 1, we would expect the majority of ESOL provision to be delivered at level 2. This is the point at which the learner is deemed to be functional so the task is not complete before they reach this level.



- 9.7.7. We are also concerned about the relative balance between ESOL support offered through regulated and non-regulated routes. Non-regulated provision plays an important role in supporting achievement through regulated routes but should not be considered to be an alternative for regulated routes as such provision has no guaranteed currency in terms of future applications.
- 9.7.8. For these reasons we wish to see a significant increase in the number of learners undertaking regulated ESOL provision at Level 2. In order to incentivise this (and in acknowledgement of increased delivery costs) we have increased the funding rate applied to this provision by 50%.

9.8. PRIOR ATTAINMENT

- 9.8.1. The adult education budget continues to invest a significant proportion of the available budget to undertake learning at levels significantly lower than that which they have previously achieved. This includes in excess of £1m invested in residents who are already qualified at Level 4 and above.
- 9.8.2. Although residents already qualified at Level 4 and above may legitimately benefit from AEB within the context of retraining it is difficult to argue that interventions at a significantly lower level are likely to have much transformational impact on their employment prospects.
- 9.8.3. Similarly, very few graduates engage in AEB learning at the level most likely to constitute effective retraining (i.e. level 3).
- 9.8.4. ILR Data (2022/23 R10) suggest that the West of England is currently investing almost £340k in qualifications at levels lower than GCSE

equivalent being delivered to graduates. This appears to be largely associated with courses delivered through distance learning which contain minimal input from tutors.

