



Report to Policy Committee

Author/Lead Officer of Report:

Richard Smith – Head of Service – Lifelong Learning and Skills

Shabaz Abbas- Operations and Partnerships Manager (FACES)

Tel: 077 2041 4523

Report of: *Richard Smith*

Report to: *Economic Development and Skills Policy Committee*

Date of Decision: *June 2024 (date tbc)*

Subject: *Approval of SYMCA Adult Skills Fund grant allocation to Sheffield City Council and the commissioning of adult education and skills training within Sheffield by the Lifelong Learning and Skills Service.*

Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? 2630				
Has appropriate consultation taken place?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:				
<p><i>“The (report/appendix) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (insert relevant paragraph number) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).”</i></p>				

Purpose of Report:

SYMCA have confirmed Sheffield City Council's indicative 2024/2025 Adult Skills Fund (ASF) grant allocation for the purpose of enabling the Local Authority to provide adult education and skills training to learners aged 19+.

The Council's Constitution requires the Economic Development and Skills Policy Committee to make a formal decision to allow the Council to become the accountable body for this grant before the Council can agree the terms of a Grant Funding Agreement or apply the grant money.

The Family Adult Community Education Services (FACES) which manages and administers this grant funding are seeking approval from the committee to approve the Council becoming the accountable body for this grant and then authorise it to spend a proportion of this grant (£650,000.00) and to move to a formal procurement procedure for the necessary employment, learning and skills activities from partners and training providers across the city.

Recommendations:

The Economic Development and Skills Policy Committee is recommended to:

a) Accept the Adult Skills Fund grant allocation for Sheffield and for the Lifelong Learning and Skills Service and to become the accountable body for this grant allocation for the academic year 2024/2025; and,

b) Approves the Commissioning and Procurement of 19+ Adult Learning and Skills activities in community settings across Sheffield from external providers for a period of one year [from 1st August 2024 to 31st July 2025] and an estimated value of £650,000.00.

Background Papers:

(Insert details of any background papers used in the compilation of the report.)

Lead Officer to complete: -							
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	<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>						
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Date: 9/7/24							

1. PROPOSAL

(Explain the proposal, current position and need for change, including any evidence considered, and indicate whether this is something the Council is legally required to do, or whether it is something it is choosing to do)

- 1.1 Lifelong Learning, and Skills receives the Adult Skills Fund as a grant allocation from the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) for the delivery of Adult and Community learning activity across the city.

The grant is managed and administered by the Family Adult Community Education Service (FACES) who commission a proportion of the grant for adult learning provision.

FACES are seeking approval to move forward to commission the necessary Adult Skills and Tailored Learning activities from appropriately qualified and capable partners and training providers for 2024/25 so that they contribute to the regional skills needs and priorities.

FACES are seeking to commission both non-qualification (“Tailored Learning”) and qualification based (Adult Skills) programmes and activities that support adult learners aged 19+ to acquire the skills they need to move towards meaningful, sustained, and relevant employment or enable them to progress to further learning.

Before the Council can proceed to apply the grant, the Economic Development and Skills Policy Committee is required under the Constitution to make a formal decision to allow the Council to become the accountable body. This report is intended to enable the Committee to make that decision and to enable the proposed procurement procedure to commence.

2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE?

- 2.1 Family Adult Community Education Service and the delivery of family adult and community education through the Adult Skills Fund contributes to the following ambitions in the City Goals
- We build a fair, inclusive & creative local economy that attracts and retains talent, supports local businesses, and invests in opportunities for all.
 - We have the education, training, skills and resources we need to pursue our curiosity and develop new ideas for the benefit of ourselves, others and Sheffield’s reputation regionally, nationally and globally.
 - We adapt our economy and city to a changing climate, restore our relationship with nature and safeguard it for future generations, while ensuring a just transition for people of all abilities.

- We invest in our wellbeing and mental health, and work with nature to create better, more resilient places and communities that can better understand and act on the challenges they face.
- We're able to embed strong and caring relationships that bring people together and bridge divides across generations, neighbourhoods and communities.
- We invest in children, young people and families, giving them a strong start to life with affordable, healthy, secure homes and inspiring places to learn, play and lead.
- The funding will enable the service to build on the success of the Multiply three-year project, funded by SYMCA through the Department for Education's UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- The purpose of Multiply was:
 - To reach adults across the UK to improve their functional numeracy skills, regenerate people's interest in maths.
 - To support people to overcome their barriers to maths.
 - To support the Levelling Up mission
 - To help people improve their ability to understand and use maths in daily life, home, and work. Whether that be improving household finances, helping children with homework, making more sense of the facts in the media, or improving numeracy skills specific to a line of work.
- We are now in year 3 of Multiply Sheffield. The project has engaged 2800 residents and had 2670 participants undertaking learning intervention over the lifetime of the project.
- In 2023/24 96% of participants stated that Multiply Sheffield had helped them to overcome their barriers to maths. 49% of the participants moved on to further learning or employment.
- Over the three-year period Multiply Sheffield has engaged with 13 delivery partners covering the city which supports the services intent to continue to subcontract a proportion of the ASF grant to deliver the appropriate and necessary learning and skills activities across the city.

3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?

(Clearly indicate the degree and character of public engagement and participation which has been undertaken on the issue. *Refer to the Consultation Principles and Involvement Guide. Indicate whether the Council is required to consult on the proposal and provide details of any consultation activities undertaken and their outcomes.*)

- 3.1 The FACES strategy, vision and approaches to service planning and delivery and how this was developed to meet the needs of the adults and communities across the city, has been shared and consulted with various key partners and stakeholders (2023/2024). They included presentations to key partners, regular briefings to our Advisory Board

and surveys with learners. They were also shared and consulted with Ofsted Inspectors in May 2023.

- 3.2 Learners are surveyed at key points every year to ascertain if we are meeting their needs, making learning accessible, and to reinforce the accuracy of other sources of data intelligence for the curriculum plan.
- 3.3 The Service has just completed its annual consultation with the public through learner surveys on the Intranet and through Local Area Committee networks (May 2024) and the results of this have just been analysed. From the 163 responses the most popular adult learning demand was for Digital Skills followed by Functional Skills English and Wellbeing classes. 61% of the responses wanted an opportunity to gain a qualification and the top 3 barriers cited to participating in learning were timing of classes, cost and travel. These findings will be considered in the 24/25 Service Strategy for FACES and inform future curriculum planning.
- 3.4 The service is continuing to utilize several aspects of data intelligence to ensure all activity is mapped proactively to areas of the city that need adult learning the most. This includes, but is not limited to, the following information:
 - Community Knowledge Profiles
 - Ward Census Data
 - UC claimant data
 - NEET unemployment
 - Academic achievement in maths and English at GCSE
 - Free School Meals
 - Learner Voice
 - Sheffield Labour market Information

4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

4.1 Equality Implications

- 4.1.1 Decisions have taken into consideration the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in Section 149 (1) of the Equality Act 2010.

As part of documenting the meeting of the requirements of the duty, we have carried out an Equality Impact Assessment and this highlights the provision will particularly aim to engage young people and adults from disadvantaged areas of the city and/or in disadvantaged households and will contribute towards improved financial inclusion; including specifically targeted at people with learning difficulties and disabilities; targeting of specific BME groups and providing ESOL for adult

learners; in addition to generic activity, the provision commissioned will include specific activities including adult learning provision targeted at lone parents as well as targeted skills programmes for men and women seeking employment.

4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

Financial Implications:

The Service Grant Manager will read, understand and comply with all of the grant terms and conditions and will need to develop a viable exit strategy for when the grant funding ends to ensure that there are no unfunded ongoing costs.

On 27th March 2024 SYMCA confirmed Sheffield City Council's indicative allocation for the Adult Skills Fund which totalled £2.27m. This is to enable the Authority through Lifelong Learning and Skills FACES team deliver employment and skills activities to improve the life opportunities for Adults and Families across the city.

The 2024-25 grant agreement has not yet been received. A full review and confirmation of the financial and commercial implications will only be possible once this has been received. In 2023-24 the grant was approved via the Annually Recurrent Grant process. To adopt this process in 2024/25 we will review the new terms and conditions to identify any material changes once the agreement has been received and confirm via communication with the Head of Service.

Commercial Implications:

All public sector procurement is governed by and must be compliant with both the Grant Agreement, UK National Law and where relevant EU law. In addition, all procurement in SCC must comply with its own Procurement Policy, and internal regulations known as 'Contracts Standing Orders' (CSOs)

CSO requirements will apply in full to the procurement of services, goods or works utilising grants. All grant monies will be treated in the same way as any other Council monies and any requirement to purchase / acquire services, goods or works will go via a competitive process. On receipt of the grant allocation the Portfolio / Service Grant Manager will contact the Commercial Services Team for detailed guidance on adherence to these rules when spending grant monies.

The commissioning of a proportion of that AEB funding (£650,000.00) for adult learning in community settings in accordance with Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and Contract Standing Orders will ensure that legal compliance is maintained thereby mitigating any risk of challenge in this regard.

As there are no financial changes from the current arrangements, there are no other financial implications.

4.3 Legal Implications

4.3.1 The proposed procurement process will adhere to the Council's own procurement rules and to the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (as amended)

4.3.2 By virtue of the statutory instrument South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SI 2020/806), the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) exercises, in relation to their area, certain adult education functions of the Secretary of State under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. This is the power under which the grant is being made.

4.3.3 Sheffield City Council has a general power under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything that an individual may generally do provided it is not prohibited by other legislation and the power is exercised in accordance with the limitations specified in the Act which enables the Council to accept the funding. The Council also has a specific power to secure adequate provision of vocational education and apprenticeships under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, as Section 15ZA of the Education Act 1996 (as amended), which provides for a local authority duty in respect of education and training for persons over compulsory school age in England.

4.3.4 The Committee is required to make the decision that the Council will be the accountable body for this grant before any funds can be applied. The relevant provisions of the Constitution are contained in Part 3.C.Para 3.3, which applies the requirement for prior approval to:

- Employment policy and programmes
- Enterprise, employment and digital skills
- Adult skills policy and programmes

And its remit includes the obligation to take decisions on any reserved matter.

Legal considers that the SYMCA grant falls within both the SYMCA competence to fund the proposed provision and the Council's duty under Section 15ZA to secure the services to be procured using the grant.

4.3.5

The framework terms and conditions and call off terms and conditions will be drafted by the Councils Commercial Legal team.

4.4 Climate Implications

- 4.4.1 Lifelong learning and Skills are committed to the principle and practice of environmental protection and sustainable development, with a focus on continuing improvement and reducing pollution.

Whilst the Climate Impact Assessment evidenced a minor reduction in emissions the service does play a key role in the community to champion an environmentally sustainable approach across its activities and shares this knowledge with learners, partners and key stakeholders. This includes:

- Adapting and sharing recognised best practice on environmental sustainability
- Delivering learning and skills activities that provide all students with opportunities to develop their awareness of sustainability issues through sustainability related curriculum, tutoring and enrichment activities.
- Promoting reduction of waste of natural resources, energy and water
- Inclusion of sustainability and environmental impact in procurement processes

Working with local suppliers to ensure that they consider the impact on the environment in their roles as educators and infrastructure organisations

4.4 Other Implications

(Refer to the decision-making guidance and provide details of all relevant implications, e.g. human resources, property, public health).

- 4.4.1 *None*

5. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

(Outline any alternative options which were considered but rejected in the course of developing the proposal.)

Do Nothing – This is not an option as the Council has agreed a delivery plan with SYMCA which includes sub-contracting a proportion of the AEB towards its overall targets and needs to proceed with delivery to ensure the contract for 2024/25 is met.

Self-Deliver – This is not an option; the service does not have the capacity to deliver the necessary skills activities where demand is high and does not have the staffing expertise to deliver diversity to meet the skills priorities for the region.

Working with appropriately qualified and capable partners / training providers will therefore enable FACES to:

- Help widen participation amongst niche groups that would otherwise be hard to reach, but only where this enriches the strategic curriculum intent learning offer.
- Address high demand in a specific curriculum that the service does not have the capacity to meet learner need through our direct delivery.
- Add diversity in the types of curricula we can offer to meet employment and skills priorities for the region.
- Secure expertise and skills that address key policy issues such as climate change and sustainability and increases skills within learning cultures to solve local issues.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

(Explain why this is the preferred option and outline the intended outcomes.

- 6.1 The recommended outcome is to allow FACES within the Lifelong Learning and Skills Service to accept the allocation to enable delivery of adult learning to begin in September 2024.

The further recommended outcome is to enable Lifelong Learning and Skills to move to procurement so that the service can deliver the necessary niche or high demand Adult Learning, Employment, Learning and Skills activities from partners and training providers to meet the regional skills priorities.

This recommended outcome will also enable the service to continue to reach to some of the most disadvantaged communities and those furthest from the labour market and offer those communities learning opportunities to begin a pathway towards employment and active citizenship.