

City of York Council –

York Learning Accountability Statement 2024/25

Purpose

York Learning will transition into the Children and Families directorate of City of York Council in the 2025-26 funding year. The primary objective of York Learning is to serve as the gateway to opportunities for adults and also young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, enabling them to reach their full potential. Whether that be greater integration into society or to move into more fulfilling employment roles, supporting individuals to thrive, improving their physical and emotional health, and recognising the opportunities available to them.

We will achieve this by celebrating our key strategic purpose and utilising our funding to engage with our communities, supporting residents to feel confident, inspired, and empowered to pursue learning opportunities.

Under a single Shared Head of Adult Learning and Skills, serving both City of York and North Yorkshire councils, we work towards shared aims.

1. To clearly define the purpose of the adult learning services for all stakeholders.
2. To develop a curriculum, offer that is in line with local skills needs.
3. To reach and inspire learning for the full breadth of the community demographic with the offer.
4. To be the provider of choice for those furthest away from the skills offer
5. To protect the full aims of Tailored Learning within York and North Yorkshire
6. To grow provision into areas not well supported by other providers.
7. To support a clear progression pathway for all adult learners from entry through to higher education and into sustained employment.
8. To provide effective value for money for the communities of York and North Yorkshire.

We consider ourselves a vital service within the authority, utilising our funding to align with the city's priorities for residents and to meet the broader objectives of the City's 10-year skills plan, the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) for York and North Yorkshire, and the skills aspirations of the Mayoral Combined Authority as we approach the devolution of the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) from this academic year.

The accountability statement for 2025-26 builds upon the work initiated last year in response to the needs of the city and region. We have established strong foundations in celebrating transferable skills across all aspects of our curriculum. Our engagement with a wider and more diverse cohort of learners has increased through, employability and digital inclusion efforts, family learning, multiply activities and successful boot camps.

We have begun employing a more strategic pipelining approach to key sectors for the city and region, including health and social care, enhanced digital skills, and project management. This work has been bolstered by greater integration into the council's operations and the broader further education sector, allowing us to supplement our funding through the Learning Skills Improvement Fund, UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and targeted funding for individuals recovering from substance abuse.

With a strong emphasis from central government on the importance of skills and education in reducing economic inactivity and achieving economic growth, our service aims to capitalise on additional supplementary funding streams. Several funding streams linked to the 'Get Britain Working' whitepaper will be managed locally by the Combined Authority, and York Learning will be a key partner in this initiative.

Context and Place

York Learning, as part of City of York Council, provides largely Education and Skills Funding Agency funded adult and tailored learning provision, with additional income from dedicated project work, apprenticeships, and support for learners aged 19-25 with Education Health and Care Plans.

In 2023, the council set out key ambitions in the council plan for 2023-2027, 'One City for All', detailing the city's considerable assets in heritage and culture, pride in being a City of Sanctuary, a Human Rights

City, and UNESCO City of Media Arts, and its proud history of social justice and collective action.

We are rightly ambitious as a city within the regional economy, with world-class innovation at the core of the combined authority's ambitions. York, a city of over 200,000 residents, boasts around 60% of its population qualified to NVQ 4 or above, with less than 4% having no qualifications. The city contributes over £5bn to the UK economy, making it a key driver of regional growth. Over 86% of the working-age population is economically active, while the 13.5% economically inactive includes over 6,500 students and 2,900 retired individuals. However, these figures often mask widening education and health inequalities, particularly in areas of acute deprivation, with six York districts among the 20% quintile that indicate the most deprived areas in England.

Our service, alongside our colleagues with North Yorkshire's Adult Learning and Skills Service, plays a crucial role in enabling residents across the region to achieve their best and benefit from our thriving economy. Our offer is delivered face-to-face from venues across the city, including community centres, libraries, council-owned buildings, and increasingly, other important community hubs such as foodbanks. Since the pandemic it has been a strategic aim to widen the mode of delivery, increasing face-to-face interactions while expanding our blended, bite-size, and on-demand provision.

York is home to two General Further Education Providers, Askham Bryan and York College, and two universities. The wider geography of North Yorkshire hosts four General Further Education (GFE) providers: Craven, Scarborough TEC, Selby, and Harrogate Colleges. Additionally, provision is offered by Darlington, Middlesbrough, East Riding, Bishop Burton, and Stockton Riverside GFE providers. There are over 40 Training Providers operating in the county, offering apprenticeships and accredited adult learning courses.

Our passion for adult learning drives us to deliver effective programs to a diverse range of adults, with a particular focus on those from disadvantaged and marginalised communities. We aim to offer inclusive services with high-quality learning provision and support that cater to the spectrum of needs, while fully aligning with the local economy's requirements. In line with the 'One City, for all' initiative, we strive to set strong ambitions to increase opportunities for everyone living in York to lead healthy and fulfilling lives.



The city plan sets four core commitments: Equalities, Affordability, Climate Change, and Health. These commitments align with the city's 10-year plans and are reflected in the city's 10-year skills strategy. At York Learning, we are ambitious in highlighting the significant impact that adult learning can have in meeting these commitments. By leveraging creativity, innovation, and our community roots, we can utilise our Adult Skills funding to:

- Increase opportunities for people to manage through the cost-of-living crisis by understanding waste, energy bills, and practical hints and tips, with embedded core numeracy, literacy, and digital skills
- Enhance the independence of adults with disabilities, enabling them to take personal responsibility for their health and wellbeing

- Encourage families to work, learn, and play together, promoting green ambitions, utilising the city, and strengthening connections with arts and heritage.
- Support the training of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and community champions, equipping them with the skills to do more.
- Foster a combined pride in and understanding of our diverse and welcoming heritage.
- Work within community spaces to make them more useful and vibrant.

Through all these efforts, we will demonstrate clear pathways that:

- Improve essential skills.
- Help people overcome digital poverty.
- Enable individuals to secure better jobs that align with their skills, ambitions, and aspirations, and progress into the broader economic infrastructure.

The York and North Yorkshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) highlights that the area is well-served by high-quality education at all levels, but there is a clear challenge in connecting with those individuals who would most benefit from this provision.

Research conducted for the LSIP describes an economic landscape in the region characterised by a high proportion of higher-skilled, non-manual sectors such as education, finance, and professional services, contributing to a resilient economy. Unemployment levels are low, with a significant number of jobs available in highly skilled sectors such as agritech, engineering, and life sciences.

The proportion of people with higher-level qualifications in the region is higher than the national average (48% versus 43% in the Annual Population Survey Jan-Dec 2021). The region has an aging demographic, with an older-than-average working age population and increasing replacement demand in industries where large numbers are soon to or have retired. The LSIP emphasises that retaining talent in the workforce at all ages is critical. The working-age population contracted by 2% between 2011 and 2021, in contrast to the national picture, which expanded by 4% based on census information. The plan, published in July 2023, detailed that there were 9,445 unemployed claimants,

accounting for 2% of the working population in the region, against a national average of 3.7%. Despite this, there remained a high number of jobs available in highly skilled sectors such as engineering and life sciences, and high-quality learning institutions provided a significant graduate pipeline attractive to employers.

The region now benefits from the opportunities afforded by devolution, with the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority established on 1st February 2024 and its first Mayor elected in May 2024. As part of the devolution deal, alongside the wider opportunities, comes the devolution of the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) from 2025/26. The Combined Authority published its economic framework for the region in August 2024, drawing on the strengths of the two constituent authorities. Underpinning this work is a skills strategy and a strategy and commissioning approach for ASF.

Echoing the LSIP, and through close collaboration with the combined authority skills team, these approaches emphasize that the supply of learning opportunities is not an issue. Instead, engagement with these opportunities and greater awareness are paramount. The Combined Authority has outlined their ASF priorities as follows:

- Widening Access and Participation by using the ASF as a gateway to learning and progression.
- Embedding Basic and Transferable skills in provision to support higher skill and employment transition.
- Unlocking Progressive Pathways to develop underutilised talent by using ASF in a targeted manner that supports upskill and re-skill opportunities to meet the workforce demands of the region.
- Developing Flexible provision to improve access to training for employers, employees, and the public at times and in ways that meet the availability of the learner.
- Building Capacity and Capability to support an integrated, flexible, and responsive provider base.
- Enabling effective collaboration to drive partnerships between institutions, supporting learners and employers in navigating the skills landscape

Approach to developing the plan.

In December 2021, the Shared Head for Adult Learning and Skills (York and North Yorkshire) established and consulted on a clear strategic vision for the adult learning provision offered by North Yorkshire and City of York Councils. This strategy emphasised the need to support adults in accessing training and support through engagement in education. This unified strategy is crucial for meeting the broader economic needs of the region and aims to fulfil the combined authority's aspirations outlined in the ASF priorities for the 2025-26 academic year.

The strategic document was consulted on in July 2022 and published in September 2022. It was developed using the extensively consulted research base of the York and North Yorkshire LEP and is one of several documents that contributed to the formulation of the York and North Yorkshire LSIP, which also cites a strong research and policy foundation. The Shared Head has collaborated closely with the combined authority team to shape the CA skills and ASF strategies, and these efforts have been integral to creating a robust collaborative platform for this plan.

The primary aim of this plan is to enhance the broader social value of our funding through a robust platform of learner engagement. By encouraging more residents to view themselves as learners and recognise their potential, we will establish a strong pipeline leading to improved productivity and better health and wellbeing outcomes.

As outlined in the service strategy, a key strategic direction is to collaborate with our Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) partners and coordinate progression pathways. This will serve as a pipeline for adult provision, supporting the region's wider economic growth through upskilling and re-skilling.

The final consideration in developing the plan has been the greater clarity provided by the definitions underpinning tailored learning. According to the ASF funding rules, adopted by the combined authority, "the primary purpose of tailored learning is to support learners into employment and to progress to further learning, in line with the overall purpose of the ASF. It will, however, also support wider outcomes including improving health and wellbeing, equipping parents/carers to support their child's learning, and developing stronger and more integrated communities". The funding rules further describe seven key purposes that recognise the broader benefits of learning:

1. Engaging and/or building confidence

2. Preparation for further learning
3. Preparation for employment
4. Improving essential skills (English, ESOL, maths, digital)
5. Equipping parents/carers to support children's learning.
6. Health and well-being
7. Developing stronger communities

Progress made in 2024/25

The recent Ofsted inspection of York Learning praised the strong progression of learners through various touch-point engagements. For example, the percentage of learners progressing from tailored learning to accredited learning was 22%, with progression to other learning outside of York Learning at 31% .

With an increasing number of learners presenting with mental health issues, and evidence suggesting that mental health is often a barrier to engagement, all managers undertook mental health first aid and advocacy in the workplace CPD to ensure that the overall program offer was more inclusive. Pilot work was completed with local partners on a small number of bespoke approaches to support learners in overcoming these barriers and achieving sustained engagement.

Wider support for adults with SEND is being mapped, with cross-directorate collaboration taking place to determine options for support. Provision will be planned for 2025/26 and will likely be a pilot supported through additional Trailblazer funding.

The opportunity to use the city's cultural heritage as a learner gateway remains an aspiration, and work has been undertaken to integrate this into program provision. As cultural passports become available, further opportunities for family learning in this area will be explored.

Transferable skills remain central to our offer, with learners clearly able to articulate the skills developed in review documentation. Progress to higher-level essential skills is strong, as is the greater integration of learners with ESOL needs into the main provision

Contribution to national, regional, local priorities

| Strategic Aim for 2025/26 | Actions | Targets | Link to local / National Skills Priority |
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| A. Increase participation and engagement in progression-based packages of learning | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop curriculum models that clearly link learning opportunities to job role in priority sectors with at least one pathway by sector area in place by January 2025 2. Provide wider range of learner touchpoints through on-demand, blended, hybrid and face to face interactions linked to each pathway with a pilot approach available by January 2025 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase participation in IAG linked multi-programme internal progression from 60% to 75% Increase progression into provision in: Wider FE/HE (from 30% to 40%) Progression into employment from 64% to 75% | <p>Local – engagement and participation; recruitment to target sectors.</p> <p>Regional – Widen access and participation; unlock progression pathways and underutilised talent; develop flexible provision.</p> <p>National – progression into bootcamps, Free courses for jobs (FCFJ), apprenticeships</p> |
| B. Develop curriculum pathways for adults who find mental wellbeing is a barrier to engagement with learning and employment | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a strand of tailored learning offer that engages with a group of individuals that struggle to see themselves in learning or employment due to health barriers. 2. Develop learning materials and support mechanisms. 3. Pilot programme to be up and running January 25 that recruits from JCP and partners and from those who are at risk of dropping out of programmes due to poor mental wellbeing. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SEMH programme that has clear wellbeing and employment / skills links created, target to deliver in 25/26 2. Support pathways identified but feedback will show adjustments needed or impact.. 3. Progression into wider learning or employment of 60% of the cohort. | <p>Local - Increase the levels of independence in adults with disabilities to take personal responsibility for health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Regional – Widen access and participation;</p> |

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| <p>C. Develop a culture-based pride in place thematic family learning offer</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify key council leads on heritage and culture, in particular those seeking to develop the young person culture passport. 2. Support working group to consider how this activity could support community development whilst improving essential and transferable skills in wider family members. 3. Develop learning materials and support sessions fundable as family learning to support this activity | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One pilot targeted parents in family learning program offered within 2025-6 academic year. 2. Progression into wider adult learning offer of 45% of this cohort. 3. 4% of that cohort with target IAG outcomes that lead to a national priority objective stated in their ILP. | <p>Local - Encourage families to work, learn and play together; Support combined pride in and understanding of our wide and welcoming common heritage; Work in spaces in communities to help them be more useful and vibrant.</p> <p>Regional – Widen access and participation; unlock progression pathways and underutilised talent.</p> <p>National – progression into bootcamps, FCFJ, apprenticeships</p> |
| <p>D. Reduce levels of digital inequality that impact participation and progression</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Roll out digital engagement programme (community workshops) to 3 IMD areas in York 2. Improve progression rates from engagement to formal quals 3. Increase the amount of learners engaging with new tech such as VR/AR, aerial technology | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Digital Engagement via Community Digital Menu has increased participation. Drones and VR rolling out in the summer in the Clifton and Acomb areas 30 new learners engaged by April 2025 2. 30% conversion rate from engagement to formal accredited IT routes 3. 3 community groups in IMD areas accessing new technology by July 2025 | <p>Regional – Widen access and participation; unlock progression pathways and underutilised talent; develop flexible provision.</p> <p>National – progression into bootcamps, FCFJ, apprenticeships</p> |

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| <p>E. Increase access to additional funding to support the ability to meet targets above.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seek out funding opportunities to increase venue opportunities from MCA, LA and Central Government. 2. Continue to explore venue availability across the city. 3. Continue to explore mayoral opportunities towards a Business Skills Centre to support provision of entry pathways to higher levels in specific skill sectors. 4. Cross council working to improve promotion of learning/employment pathways for those with SEND. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to seek out additional capital funding and/or support to achieve venue aims and expansion of provision into creating those entry pathways to higher level skills needs. 2. Clearly identify building needs and promote any possible locations with the planning team to explore further. 3. Present a business case setting out the capital investment and benefits of a skills premises for local and regional use. 4. Identify how growth for 16-24 offer could be serviced within a new building. | <p>Local and Regional - Widen access and participation; unlock progression pathways and underutilised talent; develop flexible delivery modes.</p> <p>Local - Increase the levels of independence in adults with disabilities to take personal responsibility for health and wellbeing.</p> |
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Corporation statement

This statement was agreed at a meeting of

Hyperlink

A copy of the accountability statement will appear on [our website](#) alongside the Service Strategy

Supporting Documentation

Will link to:

- [York and North Yorkshire Learning Skills Improvement Plan](#)
- [York and North Yorkshire Learning Skills Improvement Fund](#)
- [City of York : One City for all Council Plan 2023-2027](#)
- [City of York Economic Strategy](#)
- [York 10-year Skills Strategy](#)
- [York and North Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority Economic Framework](#)
- [York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority Adult Skills Fund and Strategic Skills Plan 2025-2028](#)