

Introduction

September 2021 saw the appointment of a new Shared Head for Adult Learning and Skills to determine a clear strategic vision for the adult learning provision provided by North Yorkshire County Council and City of York Councils. This strategy and direction is required to support adults to access the training and support that can be provided by engagement in education.

Aligning both services across a common strategy is important to support the wider economic requirements of the region but also enable strong lobbying support for the services once the adult education budget is devolved under a combined mayoral authority which is expected in the 2024/2025 academic year

Background

The provision provided by both services is, in the majority, funded by grants from the ESFA for community learning and adult learning. Additional income into the areas comes in the form of additional funding for high needs provision in both services and through apprenticeship provision supported via the apprenticeship digital account as grant funded apprenticeship contracts are wound down.

The funding received by both services is grant delivered with the expected income each year provided through an annual funding statement, there is an expectation that at least 97% of this funding is used, as defined by the ESFA, 'to engage adults and provide the skills and learning they need to progress into, or within, work; or equip them for an apprenticeship or other learning. It enables more flexible tailored programmes of learning to be made available, which may or may not require a qualification, to help eligible learners engage in learning, build confidence, and/or enhance their wellbeing.'

The ESFA specify that the purpose of Community Learning is to develop the skills, confidence, motivation and resilience of adults of different ages and backgrounds in order to:

- progress towards formal learning or employment
- improve their health and well-being, including mental health
- develop stronger communities

Community learning courses are delivered and reported under the following 4 delivery strands:

- Personal and Community Development Learning
- Family English, Maths and Language –
- Wider Family Learning
- Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities

In contrast to FE colleges and other independent providers of adult education, community learning makes up a significant proportion of the funding provided to both services. This funding reflects the expectation on local authority adult education who are seen to have the reach and community engagement points to reach a wide and diverse range of learners.

Expectations on the post 16 education sector have never been greater, with the focus of national policy firmly fixed on the sector as a cornerstone of post Covid-19 recovery. The 'Skills for Jobs – Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth' whitepaper published in January 2021 laid out a bold ambition to place employer skills needs at the heart of the post-16 system and to empower individuals to use learning to progress into work and in the workplace to higher paid and higher skilled jobs. Local Authority adult education is discussed in this paper alongside FE colleges as a key cornerstone of the policy and the importance of community level education is stressed, but the context stresses the importance of progression to higher level qualifications and in offering provision that meets local and national skills needs.

The paper added detail on targeted funding to support those without full Level 3 qualifications and discussed the introduction by 2025 of personal study funding accounts that will fund flexible learning up to levels 5 and 6. Recent announcements of schemes such as 'multiply', the targeted scheme to improve numeracy in adults, indicate that the funding landscape may be further complicated with funding for targeted initiatives to come from bids into the Shared Prosperity Fund. This fund being the replacement for schemes previously funded through the European Union.

An education landscape that is driven by the skills needs of employers is essential for economic development. The importance of this is set out in the Skills Strategy devised by York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership, (YNYLEP) through its co-ordination of the Skills and Employability Board. Co-ordinated local skills plans are a cornerstone of 'Skills for Jobs' and although likely to have a different format will consult and set strategy for the development of skills in the area. This may be at a more local level than the LEP strategy document but likely to use the comprehensive strategy as a basis for working. This strategy details four ambitions:

- Young people are equipped to make quality decisions about education, training and careers
- Employers have the skills to grow inclusive and productive workplaces where everyone can achieve their potential
- The local skills market meets the needs of local businesses in a dynamic economy
- Communities are empowered by learning and skills that enable everyone to participate fully in society

Local Government re-organisation that will create two unitary authorities in 2022 is seen as the first stage of a move toward a devolved mayoral authority as potentially early as 2023. A devolved authority will have responsibility for its own adult learning funding. Whilst the decision making process will be determined by a team set up by the elected mayor it is clear that work such as the skills strategy will determine a direction of travel for this funding. It is therefore essential that we are able to support a strong argument for protection (or growth) in our funding to support the needs of our communities.

A key area of consideration is the use of community learning funding, a report commissioned by YNYLEP published in February 2021 detailed that, '90% of CL provision is delivered by three providers, which has both positive and negative impact'. Two of these three providers are York Learning and North Yorkshire Adult Learning and Skills Service. The report suggested that innovation in community learning was limited by the significant presence of the largest grant funded providers and that widening the base of providers would offer greater flexibility. The report goes on to detail that 'There has been a major change in the types of CL provision delivered with a substantial reduction in Family English, Maths and Language (FEML) and Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities provision (NLDC). This has resulted in a decrease in capacity building activity in the VCSE sector, which is seen as an issue by many providers and stakeholders.' Should the report's recommendations be considered as part of any funding devolution this could have a marked impact upon the viability of the current curriculum offer delivered by each service.

The YNYLEP report on community learning and its companion reports, 'Analysis of Adult Education Budget (AEB) funded provision in York and North Yorkshire – June 2020', 'Digital Skills in York & North Yorkshire: An Assessment of Supply and Demand – April 2021' and 'Upskilling and Reskilling across York and North Yorkshire – Stakeholder and Provider perspectives – March 2021' paint a picture of an educational landscape that has the intention to meet the demands of the community but a failure to engage individuals in the breadth of learning experiences necessary to meet the aims of skills strategy. The reports stress the disconnect between the majority of adults and the skills sector, with largest proportions of training being in English and Maths or delivered to those already in work, largely in Health and Social Care. Engagement from adults tends to be in general, (some exceptions exist) low level in FE institutions when compared to provision for 16-18 year olds or is very targeted with large groups of employed individuals under the legal entitlements. National and local strategy as set out in 'Skills for Jobs', the LEP Skills Strategy and City of York's own 10-year Skills and Employment Strategy are, by design, based upon the needs of employers, local economies and future jobs markets. The digital skills report however details that there is a clear disconnect. 'There is a gap between digital skills needs in the community, and the extent to which these are translated into demand for learning. Lack of confidence, fear of the unknown, and "not knowing what you don't know" contribute to this, and learning is likely to revolve around informal routes.' Although this statement relates specifically to digital skills it should be similarly applied across the whole adult learning provision. This strategy must seek to provide a solution to this. Whilst some work has started with City of

York's 10 year draft plan this does not yet go far enough in detailing how learners are to be targeted or identify the key gateway points for this activity.

The two services receive further income for the support of individuals who are aged between 16-25 and are subject to an Education, Health and Care plan. This is managed through subcontracting within City of York Service and a combination of Subcontracting and delivery through the Personalised Learning College which is direct delivery from North Yorkshire ALSS. Provision and particularly progression for learners on an EHCP has received significant national negative publicity, following publication by Ofsted of a number of local authority reports. NYCC have recently published a draft SEND strategy and it is essential that the strategic direction of the service in relation to these High Need's learners is set against the outcomes of these two key contexts and as such will not form part of this document, but will be covered in a subsequent review to be concluded by the end of December 2021.

Both services have coped admirably to adapt to new ways of working due to the pandemic. Delivery moved swiftly online and across two funding years have enabled the full grant funding to be received for work carried out with only minimal clawback due to ring-fenced funding initiatives that have taken place after curriculum planning has taken place. Movement to online delivery has for some programmes been effective and led to more efficient deliver models, but this movement has been taken as a direct result of the pandemic and not through formal strategic planning for a modern and responsive service. The significant learning gained by the team needs to be capitalised on but any strategic review of curriculum needs to reflect and develop a strong blended learning offer matched to programme type, demand and opportunity.

Significant to this discussion is the two pronged need to digitally upskill individuals, whilst also meeting the digital demand for skills from employers. AEB funding contains a similar entitlement to digital qualifications that exist for English and Maths. This stated by the ESFA as, 'We will fully fund individuals aged 19 or older and assessed at below level 1, including individuals who are employed, as part of their legal entitlement on the day they start the following qualification: Essential Digital Skills qualification (EDSQ up to and including level 1).' Unsurprisingly the pandemic has limited the ability of those who are not digitally skilled to learn, whilst some uptake issues have been driven by limited ranges of awarding body offers and associated curriculum, significant digital poverty in relation to hardware and stable broadband access have also impacted on this vital area of provision.

Both services are rated as 'good' by Ofsted, but these outcomes were not based on the new Education Inspection Framework (EIF) with its greater emphasis upon intent, implementation and impact. Early feedback from other LA providers inspected under the EIF have stressed that Intent is key so this must be clearly articulated with in strategy and effectively translated down to course level. This intent must be shown to flow through the impact upon individual learners through robust assessment and individualised learning plans linked to assessed RARPA where appropriate, but with clear emphasis upon progression. Sessions must demonstrate impact that is wider than the subject area and be linked back to the overall intent for the provision for the learner and forward to their next stage progression, there is an expectation that this will linked to an employment or economic impact focus. Careers guidance and advice should be accessible to all and evidenced within the ILP activity and clear impacts should be seen on life opportunity, job prospects and confidence to progress further.

Aims

Against this backdrop the strategy must meet the following aims:

1. To clearly define the purpose of the adult learning services
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 community 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
8. To provide effective value for money for the communities of York and North Yorkshire

1. To clearly define the purpose of the adult learning services

Why is this important?

To support adults to engage in learning that will improve prospects and benefit their communities we need simplicity in what could be seen to be a complex offer. It is clear that the majority of adults, of almost all demographics, are not engaging in further learning. With those with the lowest base level qualifications the least likely to engage. The complexity of the skills landscape may be one of the reasons, whilst duplication of offer, difficulties in accessing provision or fear built on previous poor experience may be further challenges. It is therefore important for both services to be able to communicate to learners what we are about and why they should engage with us.

What will success look like?

- A clearly defined mission statement for both services
- A publicly communicated purpose and strategy communicated to all stakeholders, funders and partner organisations
- Clear pathways for engagement with learning developed in collaboration with local partners and within the authorities
- Increased engagement and recruitment of learners from a wider demographic that encompasses differences including prior qualification levels and employment status

What do we plan to do?

- Use the full range of available media to clearly position the adult learning services as the gateway to learning and future progression
- Develop a marketing strategy that conveys our passion for learning and the positive impact that life-long learning can have for individuals, families and their communities
- Work in partnership with other local educational providers to develop key progression pathways from engagement into programmes that support local and national skills strategies
- Increase collaboration with internal stakeholders within both authorities to support engagement with learners and to maximise the outputs from adult education provision.
- Develop relationships with a greater range of community groups and partners to provide community level engagement points that will allow progression into wider learning
- Strengthen progression from all strands of community learning into adult education budget funded learning and in turn into specialist skills progression and higher education

2. To develop a curriculum offer that is in line with local skills needs

Why is this important?

The pandemic has had a marked impact upon the world of work, whilst the expected increase in unemployment has not yet had a marked impact the experience has led many people to re-evaluate what is important to them. Many workplaces have also seen changes in the way that they do business, increasing demand for digital and transferable skills, whilst areas such as care, hospitality and logistics have seen marked increases in job vacancies.

The challenge for the area, ahead of potential devolution of skills funding, is that there was pre-Covid challenges in moving toward a greener economy, dealing with an ageing workforce and increased automation also impacting on the demand for skills to increase productivity.

Although this strategy firmly places a flag in the ground to determine that local authority adult learning should be the gateway to skills learning, this must be set into the context of progression into learning that supports the skills needs of the local economy.

Developing a curriculum that leads to effective up-skilling and re-skilling is therefore essential, it must however be set in a context of ensuring that is progression through the most appropriate provider of those skills and facilities rather than a one-size fits all curriculum that is too broad and therefore inefficient.

The LEP skills strategy describes the importance of building the capacity and resilience of the community and voluntary sector, supporting this aim maximises the engagement points for future learning, but will enable the community as a whole to be more resilient.

What will success look like?

- A curriculum offer where each course is designed with individual learning progression in mind
- A curriculum offer that supports engagement with a digital community
- Programmes of learning in literacy , numeracy, ESOL that allow a non-threatening gateway to qualifications
- A wider family learning offer that supports parents to fully understand the skills landscape and local Labour Market Information to support their own progression as well as that of their children
- A community learning offer that supports individuals to develop and recognise their transferable skills to maximise their opportunities to develop in or change career or to seek out opportunities for self-employment
- An effective commissioning approach for community learning funding that will support a range of partners and increase the opportunities for touch-points for further learning

What do we plan to do?

- Use an appropriate combination of digital and face-face IAG to work with learners to identify appropriate next steps at the start of provision
- Use RARPA to maintain 'next-steps' focus and measure progress in the development of transferable skills
- Develop a suite of gateway provision that matches learner communities of interest to literacy, numeracy , communication or digital learning outputs
- Use partnerships with LEP, NYBEP and within the authorities to create learning opportunities for parents to better understand the local skills landscape and its opportunities for their children (and in-turn themselves)
- Work with the local Community Learning Partnerships to develop a commissioning framework that will see a ring-fenced proportion of community learning funding co-delivered by the adult learning teams and community groups to meet a wide range of community aims.

3. To reach and inspire learning for the full breadth of the community demographic with the offer

Why is this important?

For the local skills strategies to succeed members of the local community will need to see themselves as learners. As reports, cited in the background, suggest this is not currently the case. There is a clear disconnect between the needs of local employers, local economy, local skills offer and the majority of the local adult population. Whilst some provision targets, for very good reasons particular groups, the wider offer is not attractive to the majority of people who will benefit from it. The impact of cuts in careers funding since the late 1980's cannot be underestimated with the vast majority of individuals currently in work, likely to have secured jobs and currently working within them, without having given any thought to planning a career. These individuals are making an active financial contribution but the difference between having a job and doing a job you enjoy can have a marked effect on an individual's mental health.

Shaping a service offer that engages these individuals is as important as the targeted work as movement across workplaces, the development of new businesses and a happier workforce will all make from increased productivity as it is very likely that many of the skills needed within developing and priority industries are already in the current workforce. The key being that individuals do not see that these roles are opportunities for them. Setting out an intent to recruit wider, recognising our starting points and strengths will enable the services to have a marked impact on the local economic needs and support a greater range of individuals to meet their potential.

What will success look like?

- A wider range of gateway partners that services work with to provide the 'right door' that learners will choose to step through to engage with the wider progressive learning offer
- Greater proportionate levels of engagement with learning programmes
- Reduced levels of job vacancies in key sectors
- Greater progression from engagement programmes into main curriculum offer and onwards to specialist skills and higher education provision.

What do we plan to do?

- Use established links with community learning partnerships, CVS, intra- and inter-authority networks to develop a wider network of community groups to plan engagement opportunities with
- Provide key partnership development roles within authority teams to reach out to wider communities of interest to identify potential 'communities of interest' that can support learning opportunities.
- Use intelligence from the partnership roles to inform curriculum planning activity
- Use end of programmes to support engagement with progression focused IAG linked to the local skills strategy and captured through RARPA
- Use a range of media to reach out to groups that are not linked into existing collaborative groups

4. To be the provider of choice for those furthest away from the skills offer

Why is this important?

Data on a local and national scale clearly demonstrates that those with the lowest skills are those least likely to engage with further education and training. Often this is a result of poor experiences at school or college and the perceived fear of further 'failure'. This perception creates a significant barrier to engagement with provision and whilst some will engage in creative or leisure provision this is likely to be either later in life or to overcome other barriers.

For this group of people engagement with FE colleges can seem particularly daunting particularly when coupled with the high number of 16-18 learners that these centres support. It is important to note that this FE demographic is a result of funding restraints and not direct actions on behalf of the institutions themselves. However these barriers must be overcome to support adults to engage with the high quality provision that FE and HE colleges provide. Exceptions to this do exist, particularly in Craven, and good practice seen here can create elements of an effective engagement blueprint.

It is therefore essential that the offer provided via the adult learning services seeks to overcome these barriers in a way that can support individuals to engage in learning that progresses them, through effective curriculum design and collaborative arrangements, to the best provider to meet their skills and progression goals

What will success look like?

- As previously stated, a wider range of gateway partners that services work with to provide the 'right door' that learners will choose to step through to engage with the wider progressive learning offer
- Effective and locally driven collaborative arrangements with FE colleges, training providers and HE to support progression into specialist skills provision and apprenticeships were appropriate
- Co-delivery that shares resources and staff to support progression through shared curriculum planning that offers clear progression in line with local skills needs.
- Greater progression from authority-led adult learning programmes into specialist skills and higher education provision.

What do we plan to do?

- Use established links with community learning partnerships, CVS, intra- and inter-authority networks to develop a wider network of community groups to plan engagement opportunities with hardest to reach individuals

- Promote through case studies, shared in a variety of formats, the success stories that indicate the benefit of engagement with adult and community learning
- Celebrate our entry point into the market and encourage cross-promotion across community and education partners.
- Seek to work closely with other education providers to develop clear progression pathways for learners through our provision onto the most appropriate specialist provider
- Develop relationships with other providers that reduce duplication in the offer to adults

5. To protect the full aims of community learning within York and North Yorkshire

Why is this important?

As stated earlier the ESFA specify that the purpose of Community Learning is to develop the skills, confidence, motivation and resilience of adults of different ages and backgrounds in order to:

- progress towards formal learning or employment
- improve their health and well-being, including mental health
- develop stronger communities

Community learning courses are delivered and reported under the following 4 delivery strands:

- Personal and Community Development Learning
- Family English, Maths and Language –
- Wider Family Learning
- Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities

The community learning report commissioned by the LEP heavily criticised the provision across York and North Yorkshire showing a bias towards personal and community development learning as gateways to English and maths at the expense of the other strands, largely as a result of the majority of funding being allocated to the adult education service of both authorities. It was suggested that this ‘monopoly’ resulted in reduced innovation in delivery. Whilst it is recognisable that this pattern exists it is driven by the successful gateway to learning that we offer and does result in some effective progression to AEB funded programmes.

It does however move away, particularly in North Yorkshire, from the reason that the local authority is funded in this way. North Yorkshires geography creates a significant barrier to learning and the flexibilities in community learning funding should support the authority to address these rural issues in line with the fullest use of the funding strands. What this means for an educational landscape post-Covid is not clear, but it does provide a clear opportunity to re-evaluate the current usage of the funding and should support innovative approaches.

Many local AEB skills devolutions have resulted in less money being directed toward community learning with a greater budget proportion given over to skills funding through mainstream AEB. With potential devolution of skills funding on the horizon it is important that we are able to realise the potential of community learning now so that it is protected.

This re-defined approach to community learning should take key learning from the LEP report and seek to be innovative, collaborative and supportive of communities.

What will success look like?

- Collaborative commissioning of community learning programmes that support targeted community work, that will see co-delivery of programmes by local authority and community partners negating the need for complex sub-contracting arrangements

- Closer working relationships within authorities that result in community learning funded programmes that support the learning needs of schools and their communities
- As detailed earlier, a wider family learning offer that supports parents to fully understand the skills landscape and local Labour Market Information to support their own progression as well as that of their children
- An effective blended community learning offer to support individuals in rural communities to learn with others
- A RARPA based focus on the wider progression into further adult education learning that supports a gateway to funded adult education learning

What do we plan to do?

- Use established links with community learning partnerships, CVS, intra- and inter-authority networks to develop a wider network of community groups to plan engagement opportunities with hardest to reach individuals
- Work with the local Community Learning Partnerships to develop a commissioning framework that will see a ring-fenced proportion of community learning funding co-delivered by the adult learning teams and community groups to meet a wide range of community aims.
- Support the work of school improvement teams, NEET steering groups and other similar steering groups to effectively target community learning to support areas of greatest need
- Develop a suite of community learning provision around key themes that can start on a small cohort basis but again economy of scale and richness in collaborative learning by moving to online learning. For example, provision that may start as a small scale session that links local single parents on low income to learn how to cook on a budget as a gateway to numeracy and financial literacy could develop into an online digital community sharing recipe ideas and cook-alongs across the county. This in turn will be developing digital literacy, communication skills and may enable a greater development of transferable skills and self confidence that would lead to engagement in employment.
- Use transferable and progression skills through RARPA outcomes as a core part of curriculum planning. This creates a genuine and directly measurable link between all engagement and progression learning and skills outcomes.
- Plan the 2022/23 curriculum offer to ensure effective representation of all aspects of community learning funding.

6. To grow provision into areas not well supported by other providers

Why is this important?

The importance of growth should be considered from two distinct aspects, the first is geographical the second economical.

The geography of North Yorkshire combines large conurbations with areas of rural isolation, in addition not all of the larger conurbations are supported by easy access to learning institutions particularly at times that fit around work and family life. The funding offered to North Yorkshire County Council in particular is directed to support this wide diversity. This has traditionally meant offering small provision in remote areas which has not necessarily been cost-effective and may have limited learning through smaller group sizes. The rapid move toward on-line learning has partially addressed the cost-effectiveness of provision but has in some ways made isolation worse in those areas not well served by digital infrastructure or not open to any learning in the first place. Provision must be developed to meet these combined geographical and skills development needs. Effective library partnerships already underway offer a possible solution as will further work with community groups, but this must be aligned with a curriculum that will allow progression into a wider funded offer.

Funding for the services comes largely from ESFA grant funding, this sets the parameters for all activity. This funding is lag funded so reflects the provision offered within the previous academic year. Within a usual funded year there is a requirement to meet 97% of the funding allocated to receive the full grant with

the option to deliver over by 3%, which should result in additional funding the following year. Within the grant two particular areas are ring-fenced for funding these are 19-24 Traineeships and the level 3 National Skills fund offer. Neither of these areas have seen successful take up on a national scale but as ring-fenced provision will see a funding reduction the following year if not spent. Being able to capitalise on this ring-fencing is therefore essential but a challenge but one that can be faced by a flexible and county wide offer.

Additional areas of funding growth can now be seen through the delivery of apprenticeships, (and work to support effective transition into apprenticeships). Apprenticeships are seen as key to the development of a strong economy and with an ageing workforce are seen as an effective way of developing talent pipelines. Within York and North Yorkshire there is a very high proportion of micro and small enterprises which will struggle to provide the levels of supervision needed to effectively support an apprentice. In areas of work delivered by the local authority the ability to grow apprenticeship volumes and support the development of a skilled workforce would make an important contribution to the circular economy but also would enable additional income to be received into the adult learning services.

Support for apprenticeships is challenging in sectors such as care where standards are not high in monetary value, making it difficult for local providers to be able to support teams to assess and support delivery. The scale of delivery across the services allows for an economy of scale that will support employers in sectors such as these to access the training opportunities offered by apprenticeships.

Grant funding supports learners to gain access to additional learning support where necessary. This funding comes directly out of the allocation at a flat rate, enabling us as a provider to support learners to overcome what may have been previous barriers to learning. Many adults with low level qualifications have undiagnosed learning difficulties that have led to poor exam results in Maths and English in particular. More effective use of this funding should enable a greater proportion of learners to succeed and progress.

What will success look like?

- A suite of blended community and adult learning that is available to support learners in all parts of the county
- Full utilisation of ring fenced funding in both services
- An adult learning service supported suite of traineeships, apprenticeships and supported internships allowing progression into roles within the authority and onwards to support local micro-enterprises to support trained staff.
- Achieving over 100% of grant funding across both services

What do we plan to do?

- Develop a curriculum offer that will support learners in any part of the county to be able to engage with learning through community learning or wider AEB funding. This will combine opportunities for face to face with on demand content, live teaching sessions and high quality tutorial and ILP support
- Develop a collaborative approach in consultation with other providers of National Skills fund Level 3 learning to enable these intensive programmes to be delivered at a time and place that suits the individual in line with the previously discussed model.
- Work with partners across both authorities to raise the profile and viability of an adult learning service supported suite of traineeships, apprenticeships and supported internships allowing progression into roles within the authority and onwards to support local micro-enterprises to support trained staff.
- Ensure that learners are fully aware of their entitlement to learning support in a way that reduces stigma but overcomes barriers to learning. Providing support through the availability of support sessions, learning support assistance and technological adaptations as necessary.
- Consider the development of a commercial offer that supports local skills priorities or offers further engagement opportunity in areas not supported by grant funding

7. To support a clear progression pathway for all adult learners from entry through to higher education

Why is this important?

The AEB Skills Report stated that, 'The nature of the approach to the allocation of AEB funding by ESFA with the lack of a place-based focus means that the link between the level of need at district level and the level of funding available to meet it has become weakened over time' as detailed earlier Adult education funding is lag-funded so is representative of provision in previous years. This statement does not however reflect if supply of training has just not been met by demand for it. As discussed nationally there is an issue of those with the lowest qualifications being the least likely to take up further training, but if the only training that is visible to them does not feel relevant they are even less likely to engage in it. As a key business principle is for supply to meet demand then it is not surprising that programmes will fall back to what has been done before, therefore potentially excluding those most in need.

What is needed is a clear progressive offer that starts with courses that feel relevant, that engage, build confidence and offer suitable routes of progression. This offer should not have points of duplication, but should be simple to navigate and known by all stakeholders. With all of those stakeholders playing to their strengths and collaborating on provision not competing.

It is not however a case of, 'if you build it they will come'. This must be built on the pathways to engagement discussed within earlier aims and supported by a strategic community and skills infrastructure that is built at a local level. The role of the adult learning services being that gateway point with community partners, being the vanguard of engagement, using on programme IAG to support effective progression to specialist providers when necessary.

What will success look like?

- Clear curriculum offers that are promoted to learners and understood by all stakeholders at a local level.
- Effective progression ladders that show clear pathways (both forwards and sideways) from engagement through to specialist skills development and HE opportunities that are in line with local skills priorities
- Regular attendance and contribution to local skills boards to support the most appropriate curriculum offers for local residents

What do we plan to do?

- Hold discussions at a local level with all providers of post 16 to gain support and traction for co-ordinated skills planning
- Seek opportunities for combined curriculum planning with other providers to support the brokerage of learners from engagement into specialist study
- Work with local providers to develop a collaborative approach in consultation with other providers of National Skills fund Level 3 learning to enable these intensive programmes to be delivered at a time and place that suits the individual

8. To provide effective value for money for the communities of York and North Yorkshire

Why is this important?

Adult Education Services must be seen to provide an effective investment of the public pound. Adult Education budget funding as discussed has the aim of 'engaging adults and providing the skills and learning they need to progress into work or equip them for an apprenticeship or other learning. It enables more flexible tailored programmes of learning to be made available, which may or may not require a qualification, to help eligible learners engage in learning, build confidence, and/or enhance their wellbeing'.

To offer the greatest return on this investment provision must be cost-effective, must reach the widest possible range of participants and not duplicate other investment made with other providers or with other services.

What will success look like?

- Full utilisation of grant funding on a wide ranging and well supported adult learning offer
- Services operating within effectively set budgets and not requiring further investment of additional public funds

- A co-investment structure that is fully reflective of need on all provision
- Greater integration of adult learning services within the authorities they are part of to reduce duplication of offer and increase engagement
- Greater integration of the teams delivering across York and North Yorkshire reducing staffing costs freeing up a greater portion of the budget to support learning resources and infrastructure

What do we plan to do?

- Increase community knowledge of the curriculum offer and its benefits using the full range of available media to clearly position the adult learning services as the gateway to learning and future progression
- Develop a marketing strategy that conveys our passion for learning and the positive impact that life-long learning can have for individuals, families and their communities
- Increase collaboration with internal stakeholders within both authorities to support engagement with learners and to maximise the outputs from adult education provision
- Conduct joint curriculum planning across both services to support integration of offer
- Consider a joint role first approach to vacancies within each service