

**Decision Session – Executive Member for
Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care**

18 July 2023

Joint Report of the Director of Customer & Communities and the Shared Head of Adult Learning and Skills (York and North Yorkshire)

Approval for submission and publication of the Accountability Statement for York Learning

Summary

1. The Skills for Jobs White Paper set out the government’s plan to put employers more firmly at the heart of the skills system to help ensure businesses and people have the skills they need to thrive and progress. Central to this process were Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP) which are documents written by approved Employers Representative Bodies (ERBs) that set out clearly employer’s skills needs, and the priority changes needed in the areas post-16 technical and skills provision.
2. All providers in receipt of £1m or more of funding for post-16 provision have a statutory responsibility to produce and publish an annual accountability statement that reflects the LSIP. The first draft agreement was returned in draft form on 31 May 2023 and this final approved ‘basic’ version by 31 July 2023. This report accompanies the final version of the agreement and seeks approval for its submission by 31 July 2023. Following successful submission of the plan a final version will be published on our website, this will only vary in format without changes to narrative.

Recommendations

3. The Executive member is asked to consider:
 - 1) The Approval of the submission of the final version of the accountability agreement (Annex 1) and to agree its publication.

Reason: For the service to continue to meet its funding obligations to ESFA we must submit a final version of the accountability statement by 31 July 2023.

Background

4. [Skills for jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth](#) published in January 2021 laid out key reforms to post-16 technical education and training that aims to support people to develop the skills needed to get good jobs and improve national productivity. This paper and its subsequent legislation stipulated a clear plan to place employers at the heart of the skills system through the production of an LSIP.
5. The draft LSIP was submitted on 31 May 2023 by the North and West Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce as the approved Employer Representative Body (ERB).
6. The LSIP report presented a strategic document identifying clear priorities for skills in the local area. The document suggested necessary key changes needed to make post-16 technical education and training more responsive to the skills needs of employers in our area.
7. The draft LSIP was written and submitted to the Secretary of State for Education in draft form on 31 May 2023 but no formal feedback has been received and the document is not yet published. Publication is expected in late July 2023.
8. The whitepaper detailed how providers would need to publish an annual accountability statement, that would form part of their annual funding agreement, that will indicate how funding received is to be used in line with local and national skills priorities as detailed by the LSIP.
9. The Department for Education (DfE) describing the annual accountability statement as the provider setting out a small number of outcome targets for areas of your curriculum that you are planning to change for the coming year. These targets reflecting how the provider is contributing to priorities outlined in the LSIP, and to National Skills Priorities Completion and receipt of the annual accountability statement is a requirement of funding for organisations in receipt of post-16 funding in excess of £1m.

10. These top-line priorities were shared locally on 31 March 2023 and were used to fully shape the accountability statement in line with service curriculum planning.
11. The DfE stipulated that we must return our annual accountability statement by 31 May 2023, so that they could link to Part 1 of the funding agreement which will be issued for signing in June/July 2023 for the 2023 to 2024 academic and funding year.
12. In recognition of the need for local authority providers to gain executive approval, the DfE stated that for this first year they will extend the deadline for submission of the accountability statement up to 31 July 2023. In this scenario we submitted a draft accountability statement to DfE by 31 May and will need to submit a signed and agreed the final accountability statement by 31 July. We will then sign a variation to our accountability agreement at a date to be confirmed by ESFA.

Consultation

13. The Accountability Statement, Annex 1 of the report, has been drafted in line with the 'Adult Learning and Skills Engagement strategy 2022-2025', previously approved by the former Executive member and subject to public consultation.
14. The accountability statement also references the city's 10-year skills plan approved by the York Skills and Employability board.

Options

15. The draft plan was written and agreed for submission by the Corporate Management Team as at the time no Executive was in place due to the recent local election. The accountability agreement must be submitted by 31 July as a condition of payment of the council's adult education budget grant. However, it is recognised that amendments may be necessary before final submission and the option would be to detail those changes in the meeting and agree a date for review by the executive member prior to 31 July in line with those recommendations.

Analysis

16. Adult Learning can provide support for all aspects of the council's key themes, to do so requires effective and efficient use of the resources available. The service strategy details how we aim do this, and the

priority responses listed within the accountability statement are in line with those ambitions.

17. We have considered the LSIP and national priorities and consider those actions named as the keyways that the service can respond to those priorities. To take a more specific approach would require significant investment in technical facilities.
18. It is important to note that the LSIP does not prevent us from doing additional activities with our grant funding, so does not change the services core approaches of engagement and progression. The accountability statement just details how we align our core aims with the skills needs of local employers.

Corporate Priorities

19. The strong intention from government on how we use adult learning funding is to support progression on to provision that will upskill / reskill individuals to address the significant skills shortages in the city and wider region.
20. Provision of the right types of adult learning are seen as a key cornerstone of government 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 most effective use of funding received by York Learning within the city is to engage adults and support them to progress on their terms. Using the funding from adult education to not only upskill and reskill but also to help overcome poverty, inequality and health challenges.
21. By funding innovative ways to reach a wider demographic we can set an effective gateway to many of the UKSPF initiatives to follow. Maximising engagement and throughput to the strategic outputs of the skills plans, will support many of the UKSPF in levelling up disparities where clear disparities exist between those with qualifications and those without.
22. As detailed the accountability agreement is a statutory document that forms part of the funding contract with the Skills Funding Agency and should determine how we align our funding to national and local priorities determined by employers in the LSIP.

23. We strongly believe that we can deliver both against employer priorities but also make a significant contribution to our corporate priorities within the authority, for the benefit of York's residents.
24. The accountability statement is built upon our strategy offering a gateway to other learning opportunities for residents. This aim is to develop a 'why' or purpose for learning, so that learning forms part of a toolkit to enable residents to move to a better state. Be that improved health, personal wellbeing or improved economic activity.
25. Our suite of gateway programmes, already incorporates aspects of social prescribing. Working closely with the CVS to enable learners to access learning as a therapeutic tool, but we aim to go further, encouraging communities who don't currently engage to see learning as a method of overcoming social isolation, to improve own mental health and develop a sense of community. We want to use programmes that empower individuals to consider how to eat better, how to make exercise accessible and to see learning as a way of setting achievable goals.
26. All programmes throughout our offer will have a targeted aim of 'green upskilling' whether that be through overt topic driven methods in maths, English and digital skills, or a more subtle based teacher-led discussion approach, all learners engaging with our provision will develop improved awareness of sustainability issues.
27. Although we are bound by tight rules on who can obtain fully funded courses by the funding rules, much of our provision is free or subsidised. With a greater focus on the development of wider and transferable skills we are aiming to open residents' eyes to the art of the possible, to the opportunity to improve their own economic circumstances through engagement that will lead to higher paid or more stable roles, or in roles that they feel more satisfied in. We will also focus on further developing provision that will allow individuals to better navigate the cost-of-living crisis and will continue to use our funding envelope as creatively as possible to prevent barriers to access, including the provision of digital devices.

Implications

Financial Implications

28. Failure to submit the final accountability statement by 31 July will delay receipt of funding and will result in direction intervention by the FE

Commissioners office and colleagues from the Education Skills Funding agency.

Human Resources (HR)

29. There are no direct HR implications should the accountability agreement be submitted by 31 July 2023.

Equalities

30. The Equalities Impact Assessment, Annex 2 of the report, suggest no negative equality implications. Funding for the service is available for learners at risk of becoming disengaged, aged between 16-18, for learners with diagnosed disabilities from 19-25 and for adults aged 19+, the accountability statement, and its contributory strategic document actually describe positive impacts on all members of our community.
31. In line with corporate priorities on Human Rights. We will seek to engage with all learners in ways that they feel most comfortable to engage. Those who are already engaged with learning will likely to have already been subject to some levels of screening at enrolment and will likely be offered additional support.
32. By working directly with groups in the community we will show our openness to engagement with individuals within any protected characteristic and will aim to support those individuals in ways that they feel most comfortable with, engaging low level diagnostic activity and supporting access through use of funding to provide additional support.

Legal

33. The production of a final accountability statement is a statutory responsibility and condition of funding.

Crime and Disorder

34. It is not anticipated that there will be any crime and disorder implications.

Information Technology (IT)

35. There are no internal implications for IT but successful delivery of the objectives of the accountability statement would see significant benefit for residents in their ability to overcome issues with digital access.

Property

36. There are no expected implications for property, beyond those expressed previously around physical spaces for learning to take place.

Risk Management

37. The statement does not require approval by the Department for Education but will be monitored by Ofsted in future inspections. Whilst the approach taken shows a direct line of sight between the aims of the accountability statement and employment, some of the steps necessary for learners to engage will be small and Ofsted do not always see these micro-steps as progression. We will mitigate against this with strong case studies and a close attention to recognition of transferable skills at all levels.

Contact Details

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Report
Approved



Date 03/07/2023

Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

- York and North Yorkshire Skills Engagement Strategy (Annex 3)
- [Department for Education Accountability Statement Guidance](#)
- [Skills for jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth](#)

Annexes

- Annex 1 York Learning Accountability Agreement 2023/24
Annex 2 Equalities Impact Assessment
Annex 3 York and North Yorkshire Skills Engagement Strategy

List of Abbreviations Used in this Report

AD	Assistant Director
CMT	Corporate Management Team
DfE	Department for Education
ERB	Employers Representative Bodies
FE	Further Education
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
IAG	Information, Advice and Guidance
LSIP	Local Skills Improvement Plan
NYCC	North Yorkshire County Council
ALSS	Adult Learning and Skills Service (North Yorkshire Council)
SEB	Skills and Employability Board
UKSPF	UK Shared Prosperity Fund
YNYLEP	York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership