Adult Skills Fund
Annual Report 2024-25

June 2026

West Yorkshire Combined Authority | Tracy Brabin Mayor of West Yorkshire

Foreword: Tracy Brabin, Mayor of West Yorkshire

Across West Yorkshire, adult learning and training is transforming people's lives, strengthening our communities and helping us build a more confident, more prosperous region. The determination shown by our learners - people who make the decision to take a new step, change direction, try something unfamiliar, or return to learning after many years – is inspiring. Their ambition is what sits at the heart of our Region of Learning and Creativity.

Through devolution, we have been able to design an approach that reflects the strengths and challenges of our towns and cities. We have worked closely with colleges, training providers, community organisations and employers to make sure learning is accessible in the places people already know and trust. This has meant reshaping provision around the needs of residents who have been furthest from opportunity and ensuring that barriers such as health, childcare or confidence do not stand in the way of personal progress.

I am proud that our skills system treats people as people, not statistics. Their stories show the impact. It's adults rediscovering their confidence, parents developing new skills to support their families through exciting new careers and a new recognition that lifelong learning opens doors of opportunity. We have also supported those who face some of the greatest challenges, including refugees, people in recovery and women experiencing the justice system, accessing support through innovative, compassionate programmes created specifically for their needs.

At the same time, we are laying the foundations for the jobs and industries that will shape West Yorkshire's future. Our partnerships with employers help ensure learning leads somewhere meaningful - whether that's a new career, a better-paid role, or the first step on a long-term journey of development.

With our Local Growth Plan in place and the Integrated Settlement on the horizon, we are entering an exciting new phase where we can align investment, ambition and opportunity at scale. My commitment is that we will use these powers to go further and faster, so every resident feels the benefits of devolution and economic growth.

Together, we are building a region where learning is part of everyday life and a region where everyone has the chance to succeed.

Tracy Brabin
Mayor of West Yorkshire

Chair of the Economy Committee

The progress shown in this report reflects the strength of a system shaped by collaboration between local authorities, providers, employers, the voluntary sector and national partners. Adult learning works best when it responds to real people, real places and real economic need and devolution has enabled us to build exactly that kind of system here in West Yorkshire.

Over the past year, we have worked to join up what residents need with what employers require and to do so in a way that feels accessible rather than complex. Our aim has been simple: create clear pathways into work and progression, while ensuring the support around each learner is strong enough to help them succeed. This means offering flexible routes, improving how learning links to employment and investing in programmes that reflect the evolving needs of our labour market.

Partnerships with employers across transport, manufacturing, digital, health and social care and other key sectors remain vital. Their insights shape the curriculum, the training standards and the expectations that help residents move into good jobs. Likewise, the involvement of community groups and local services has opened the door to people whose circumstances mean they might not otherwise engage in learning and training.

We have also taken an increasingly place-based approach, looking at which communities face the biggest barriers and ensuring support is targeted where it will make the greatest difference. This means not only providing courses but also creating the conditions that help adults sustain learning, from community-based delivery to support for wellbeing and progression.

As we look ahead to the introduction of the Integrated Settlement, we have an opportunity to build a more joined-up skills system - one that connects training to the major investment programmes across the region and prepares residents for the future economy. That opportunity comes with responsibility: to simplify access, strengthen quality and ensure that adult skills continue to drive both inclusion and growth.

I want to thank all partners who contribute to this shared mission, including members of the Economy Committee. Through collective effort, we are building a stronger, more resilient West Yorkshire where residents have the chance to learn, progress and build secure futures.

Councillor James Lewis
Chair of the Economy Committee

Terminology

The following terminology will be used throughout this report:

Terminology	Description
AS	Adult Skills
ASF	Adult Skills Fund
AEB	Adult Education Budget
TL	Tailored Learning (previously known as Community Learning)
FCfJ	Free Courses for Jobs
LLDD	Learning difficulty and / or disability (self-reported declaration of learning difficulty and/or disability)
LSIP	Local Skills Improvement Plan
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
Learning Support	Putting in place a reasonable adjustment, as set out in the Equality Act 2010, for learners who have an identified learning difficulty and/ or disability, to achieve their learning goal
Learner Support	Providing financial support for residents with a specific financial hardship preventing them from taking art/continuing in learning

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Executive Summary

- **37,900 residents participated** in Combined Authority-funded adult learning in 2024/25
- Total participation fell by 13%, but this was driven largely by increased national funding rates that **reduced the affordability of support**
- Delivery continued to target **those most in need**, with **91% of learners fully funded**
- **75%** of learners supported were unemployed, the highest since devolution
- The proportion of learners from the most deprived neighbourhoods rose to **43%**
- More than **6,700 residents achieved their first ever qualification**, supporting long-term progression and labour market engagement
- Provision supported industry needs, filled key vacancies and strengthened growth and foundation sectors:
  - **92%** of learners who gained their licence progressed into employment in the *Routes to Success* bus driver programme
  - Sector-specific pathways in logistics, security and construction supported people directly into employment (an average progression rate **55%**)
  - Wider targeted delivery in **digital and rail engineering** provision demonstrated strong employer alignment and progression rates

In academic year 2024-2025, the Combined Authority used its devolved Adult Skills Fund (ASF) and Free Courses for Jobs (FCfJ) funding to deliver a responsive, employer informed skills system focused on inclusion, progression and addressing regional labour market needs.

Since devolution, participation has shifted strongly towards priority learners. In 2024/25, 91% of starts were fully funded, removing financial barriers and enabling access for those who would otherwise be least able to participate. This represents a marked rise from 76% in 2020/21, before devolution.

The profile of learners engaging has also continued to change. In 2024/25, three quarters - 75% - of enrolments were people who were unemployed, the highest proportion seen since devolution. Learners from the most deprived neighbourhoods were also increasingly represented. In 2024/25, 43% of learners lived in the most deprived areas (Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) decile 1), up from 37% pre-devolution. In Bradford and Leeds, this proportion rose to over 50%, showing particularly strong progress in areas facing the greatest disadvantage.

There has been sustained improvement in participation from learners with additional needs. In 2024/25, 21% of learners declared a learning difficulty, disability or health condition, up from 18% in the previous year and 16% pre-devolution in 2020/21. This reflects progress against a specific improvement goal to better align participation with the region's demographics.

A significant number of learners entered provision with no prior formal qualifications. In 2024/25, 9,300 new learners had no qualifications on entry – 25% of the full cohort. The proportion of learners with no qualifications has increased from 23% pre-devolution, reflecting a stronger focus since devolution on supporting residents with the lowest starting points.

The Combined Authority continued to deliver high-impact, employer-endorsed programmes in transport, digital infrastructure, telecoms, rail engineering, construction, health and social care and other priority areas. In 2024/25, this delivery supported significant achievement milestones, including 6,700 West Yorkshire residents attaining their first ever qualification, 3,800 learners achieving their first qualification at Level 2 and 1,300 learners achieving their first Level 3 qualification.

Inclusion remains a core priority embedded in all of the Combined Authority's commissioning, targeting and delivery. The proportion of learners declaring a learning difficulty, disability or health problem (LLDD) rose from **18% to 21% and** learning support claims increased accordingly.

Provision of spending on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) continued to grow, now representing 18% of total funding, supporting communities with high levels of need and enabling progression for learners with the lowest starting points. Tailored Learning delivered wide-ranging social, economic and wellbeing benefits, with **27%** of learners progressing into Adult Skills Fund provision and strong outcomes in confidence, essential 'soft' skills and parental engagement.

The Combined Authority also strengthened quality, compliance and value for money through enhanced performance management, monitoring through internal audit activity. Success rates for Adult Skills learning aims has seen a steady upward trend since devolution, increasing by 3 percentage points from 86% to 89% between 2020/21 (immediately before devolution) and 2024/25, and by one point between 2023/24 and 2024/25.

The Combined Authority maintained close engagement with employers across key sectors through established committee representation, industry roundtables, employer panels, surveys and supply chain engagement linked to major regional infrastructure projects. This ensured provision remained closely aligned to both immediate demand and long-term economic needs, helping lay the foundations for growth outlined in the Local Growth Plan in 2024, including supporting major infrastructure programmes such as mass transit and housing retrofit.

Finally, the Combined Authority continued to celebrate learner achievement through the Adult Skills Awards and strengthened the Region of Learning Ambassadors programme. This enables learner 'voice' to be amplified, ensuring adult learners are at the centre of delivery and crucially, inspiring future participation.

Overall, the 2024/25 programme demonstrates improved performance since devolution: a higher quality, more inclusive, employer responsive adult skills offer, delivering meaningful outcomes for residents, communities and the regional economy, while continuing to evolve in preparation for deeper devolution under West Yorkshire's Integrated Settlement and in response to national reforms.

Since publishing the Local Growth Plan, the Combined Authority has made real progress in delivering for the region and continues to work closely with businesses and sector partners to drive positive change, listening to their needs regarding the skills they need now and in the future. Through Adult Skills funds, the Combined Authority is helping to turn the region's Local Growth Plan into results, by significantly reducing the number of residents without a Level 2 qualification and providing access to a full Level 3 qualification for all residents who want one.

West Yorkshire's devolution journey so far

March 2020	• Devolution deal agreed between West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Government, unlocking over £1.8 billion of investment and control of the Adult Education Budget
September 2020	• Adult Education Budget Strategy published
May 2021	• Tracy Brabin elected Mayor of West Yorkshire
March 2022	• Low wage threshold Increased to widen access to those earning below the real living wage
June 2022	• Expanded the age of entitlement for a first full level 2 to 19+, number of courses 19-23s are entitled to increased • Expanded Digital Entitlement to ensure digital skills for all • Introduced Bridging programmes to support progression to level 3 • Waived the three-year UK residency status for full funding • Provided full funding for eligible asylum seekers
September 2022	• First responsiveness opportunity live to address emerging skills needs
February 2023	• Increased Funding Rate by 10%
May 2024	• Tracy Brabin elected as Mayor for second term, pledging to create a 'Region of Learning and Creativity'
March 2025	• Adult Education Budget Strategy evaluation commenced
August 2025	• Level 3 funding devolved from government (Free Courses for Jobs)
October 2025	• Adult Education Budget Strategy evaluation concluded
December 2025	• West Yorkshire's Integrated Settlement confirmed, announcing £2 billion for the region
January 2026	• Adult Skills Plan published, setting the direction for investment over the coming five years
April 2026	• The region's first Integrated Settlement comes into effect

Devolution has enabled the Combined Authority to shape provision around local priorities, widen participation among disadvantaged groups and support more residents into learning, employment and career progression.

This continues to unlock the potential to deliver on the priorities for the region, which were most recently articulated in West Yorkshire's Local Growth Plan, which aims to boost the region's economy by adding £26 billion in additional Gross Value Added (GVA) across the next ten years.

This report provides progress against the Adult Education Budget Strategy, as the strategic document in place for academic year 2024-2025. In line with the planned strategy's cycle, the 2020 Adult Education Budget (AEB) Strategy for West Yorkshire was evaluated in 2024-2025

(Adult Skills in West Yorkshire - Evaluation November 2025). The evaluation commenced in March 2025 and considered the Adult Skills Fund (and wider delegated adult skills funds) and how well commissioned provision has aligned to the priorities set out in the AEB Strategy.

The evaluation concluded in October 2025 and has informed Adult Skills priorities and the development of the new Adult Skills Plan, approved in December 2025 to follow the previous strategy. The Adult Skills Plan focuses on the next five years of delivery, meeting the ambitions of the Local Growth Plan and delivering skills provision under the forthcoming integrated settlement.

Strategy and Priorities for Adult Skills

Priorities for Adult Education in West Yorkshire

From 2021 to 2025, the Combined Authority worked to deliver adult skills and training under the previous Adult Education Budget (AEB) strategy. From 2025, after the AEB Strategy's lifecycle came to end, the Combined Authority created the Adult Skills Plan (ASP), publishing this in late 2025.

Devolution of the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) - formerly the Adult Education Budget (AEB) includes taking control of the annual £66 million budget for West Yorkshire residents and direct management of the training providers in the region who deliver the funding provision.

As part of preparation for devolution, the Combined Authority developed and consulted upon the West Yorkshire Adult Education Budget Strategy to determine the priorities and principles for the devolved fund.

The 5 priorities for funding as articulated in the AEB Strategy were:

- Support the unemployed to gain and sustain employment
- Unlock progression opportunities and career adaptability through skills, particularly for those on low wages and with insecure work
- Make learning more inclusive to support disadvantaged residents
- Increase the supply of skills to support key sectors in West Yorkshire
- Improve West Yorkshire's resilience by identifying and delivering the skills needed for the future

The ambition for devolution is to:

- Make the skills system more responsive and accessible through stronger local influence with all training providers
- Focus on our 'place' and ensure the right training and support offers are made to fill the skills gaps which are most prevalent locally
- Deliver a more efficient system by focussing on quality of provision and the impact it has on learners
- Make sure learning opportunities are joined up to local progression opportunities in life and work
- Work closely in partnership with providers to bring together planning of the wider skills and post-16 education system

The Strategy provides six values which guide and govern the approach to the commissioning and delivery of adult skills provision in the region:

Place-based

Develop a place-based curriculum offer and wrap-around support with a clear focus on learner progression

Outstanding

Strive to deliver outstanding provision that puts the needs of learners and employees at the centre of delivery

Partnership

Work with partners and stakeholders in a positive and effective way, sharing best practice and improving the impact of skills system across West Yorkshire

Openness

Communicate openly and transparently with stakeholders, learners and partners

Progression

Develop approaches and partnerships which support adults to progress and prosper within their communities and employment

Subcontracting

Subcontract with integrity and ensure that positive outcomes for learners and employers is at the heart of all arrangements

To enable West Yorkshire to respond to local needs as they arise, an allocation of ASF is available each year to be utilised and commissioned in response to activity based on economic and sector intelligence. This is likely to include (but not limited to):

- Targeting underrepresentation in local authority areas, e.g. ‘cold spots’ where participation is low in deprived areas.
- Responding to the needs of the Digital Blueprint.
- Skilled sectors (‘good jobs’) with vacancies.
- Supporting ex-offenders.
- Supporting care leavers.
- Emerging economic needs.

The principal purpose of the Adult Skills Fund is to engage adults and provide them with the skills needed for entering and sustaining work, an apprenticeship or other further learning and to achieve the equivalent of GCSE and A Level qualifications. The funding pays specifically for learning programmes (predominantly qualifications) and provides an element of learner support funding for those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Adult education supports the following legal entitlements by providing full funding for eligible learners:

- First Full Level 2
- First Full Level 3
- English and Maths
- Digital

In the national system, there are age restrictions regarding these entitlements, however as part of devolution, those barriers were removed and simplified access for West Yorkshire residents.

Any adult over the age of 19 is eligible for support. In particular, the following people are entitled to access free training if they are:

- Unemployed and seeking work
- Wanting to achieve Level 2 in Maths or English for the first time
- Earning a low wage (currently less than £25,000)
- Wanting to achieve basic digital skills
- Wanting to achieve their first GCSE or A Level equivalent qualification and are aged between 19 and 23.

The AEB Strategy sits within the context of wider Combined Authority Strategies, such as the West Yorkshire Plan and the Local Growth Plan. The Combined Authority also works closely with wider partners, such as the West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce, to help deliver the current and future version of the Local Skills Improvement Plan for the region.

Adult Skills Funding Lines

Adult skills funding is made up of 4 components. The first 3 components are commonly referred to collectively as Adult Skills (AS) Funding.

1. **Formula funding** – funding per learner and per qualification delivered under Adult Skills programme strand. The funding rate achieved is based on the size/type of qualification and is weighted depending on a learner's status (e.g. unemployed) and based on areas of disadvantage. This constituted around £63.1 million of the West Yorkshire ASF pot in 2024/25 and funds sector specific vocational programmes, along with English, Maths, ESOL, digital skills and employability programmes.
2. **Learner support** is available to provide financial support for residents with a specific financial hardship preventing them from taking part/ continuing in learning (i.e., travel, equipment, fee waivers).
3. **Learning support** meets the cost of putting in place a reasonable adjustment, as set out in the Equality Act 2010, for learners who have an identified learning difficulty and/ or disability, to achieve their learning goal.
4. **Tailored Learning** is a sub-set of the Adult Skills Fund. It is exceptionally flexible and operates on an open book accounting basis, with providers able to set their own fee policy, based on a set of funding principles. The purpose of Tailored Learning is to develop the skills, confidence, motivation and resilience of adults of different ages and backgrounds. Only Local Authorities, FE Colleges and Designated Institutions (e.g. the Workers' Educational Association) hold this funding. Tailored Learning allocations in 2024/25 accounted for **£8.83 million** of the allocated ASF funds in West Yorkshire, which was **12%** of the total ASF pot.

Free Courses for Jobs

In September 2020, the Prime Minister announced the Lifetime Skills Guarantee. As part of this, DfE introduced Free Courses for Jobs (FCfJ), previously known as National Skills Fund (NSF) Level 3 offer for adults.

Given that its offer is fundamentally an extension of the Adult Skills Fund's eligibility, the delivery of Free Courses for Jobs has been aligned to the West Yorkshire AEB Strategy in terms of its objectives and priorities.

Free Courses for Jobs investment helps adults to train and gain the valuable skills they need to improve their job prospects. It supports the immediate economic recovery and future skills needs by boosting the supply of skills that employers require.

Any adult aged 19 and over, who does not already have a level 3 qualification (equivalent to an advanced technical certificate or diploma, or A levels) or higher, can access hundreds of fully funded level 3 courses to support them to gain new skills and access opportunities to gain employment.

In addition, from April 2022, any adult in West Yorkshire earning below the Real Living Wage or unemployed has been able to access these qualifications for free, regardless of their prior qualification level.

This offer is part of the government's long-term commitment to help everyone gain skills for life. Courses are available in a variety of lengths, to support adults to get the skills they need to boost their careers.

DfE identified the sectors for this offer by reviewing the criteria used to identify qualifications for the high value course premium (HVCP) and adding other relevant sectors based on an assessment of economic need and strategic priority. Combined Authorities continue to have the flexibility in 24/25 to offer qualifications outside of the national list, which West Yorkshire Combined Authority has utilised to approve additional qualifications for delivery that meet the skills shortages of West Yorkshire.

Priorities, Outcomes and Partnership Impact (2024/25)

Progress in 2024/25 was driven by strong partnership working across West Yorkshire, enabling the Combined Authority to align its priorities with real delivery on the ground. The evidence of impact shown in the table below reflects not only the outcomes achieved through devolved Adult Skills funding, but also the contribution of partners including employers, local authorities, FE colleges, VCSE organisations, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Police and the Trade Union Congress (TUC). By integrating partnership activity with programme delivery, the Combined Authority ensured that each priority translated into meaningful, measurable outcomes for residents and for the region's labour market.

Adult Skills Priority	Key Outcomes Delivered	Partnerships & System Enablers
1. Support unemployed residents to gain and sustain employment	• 75% of starts were jobless learners — highest since devolution. • 92% of Passenger Carrying Vehicle (PCV) licence achievers progressed into bus driver roles. • An average of 55% of learners progressed into jobs across construction, security, warehousing. Across all Targeted Employment Programmes (TEPs) an average of 50% of learners progressed into work	• Strong DWP & Maximus partnership ensuring referrals and linking claimants to provision. • Employer co-design with Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT), bus operators, construction & logistics employers. • VCSE partners providing trusted community access points for inactive learners.
2. Unlock progression and career adaptability, especially for low-paid workers	• 6,700 residents gained their first-ever qualification. • Expansion of Level 3 provision and bridging programmes. • 5,600 low wage starts via ASF + 850 via Free Courses for Jobs.	• TUC partnership enabling Union Learning Reps to promote upskilling in workplaces. • FE colleges delivering structured progression pathways and bridging curriculum. • Employer engagement via Business Board and Mayor's Council

3. Make learning more inclusive and widen participation	• 43% of learners from IMD decile 1; 53%+ in Leeds & Bradford. • LLDD declarations increased to 21%; rising demand for Learning Support. • Tailored Learning supported 32% of inactive residents. • ESOL reached 25% of total Adult Skills spend.	• VCSE partners delivering ESOL, community learning and outreach in trusted spaces. Local authority collaboration targeting cold spots (e.g. Holme Wood). • Police partnership delivering Out of Court Pathways for women and linking skills to diversion routes. • Housing Associations and recovery services supporting specialist inclusion pathways.
4. Increase skills supply in West Yorkshire's key sectors	• 56% job outcomes in digital infrastructure & telecoms; 48% job outcomes in rail engineering. • TEPs embedding guaranteed interviews, employer endorsement and licence to practise. • High demand in construction, logistics and security reflected in rapid response procurement.	• Sector-specific roundtables (Digital, Rail, Manufacturing, Construction, Health Tech). • Employer bodies (FSB, CBI, Chambers, CITB) shaping curriculum relevance. • Supply-chain engagement linked to Mass Transit and retrofit programmes. • Close collaboration with DWP on labour market intelligence and vacancies.
5. Improve regional resilience and prepare for future skills needs	• 60% increase in digital entitlement starts (to 3,300). • Growth in green skills & leadership pathways. • Strengthened early years and health & social care capacity.	• Work & Health Trailblazer integrating employment support and health services. • NHS partnerships through Health & Growth Accelerator informing skills needs. • Early Years providers informing Level 2–3 curriculum (EY Workforce Plan). • Engagement with Skills England, LSIP partners and major

		employers on future workforce demand.
6. Cross-cutting: Quality, performance and system improvement	• Success rate increased to 89% (up from 88%). • Increased spending on Learning Support for LLDD learners. Better tracking through DAM codes for distance learning and TEPs. • Young people (19-23) accounted for a relatively large proportion of learners. Around 4,800 Adult Skills and FCFJ learners were aged 19-23 years, 18% of total learners for this programme strand. This is an increase on the 15% recorded in 2022/23. Across the wider population this age group accounts for 11% of people aged 19-64.	• Internal audit, compliance checks and GLH tracking improving value for money. • Adult Skills Conference bringing all providers together to shape future priorities. • Joint provider–LA planning meetings aligning supply to local need. • External evaluation informing future commissioning and data improvements.

DWP and Restart programme

Regular strategic and operational meetings encourage a collaborative, cohesive offer to residents' benefit claimants. This included appreciation and understanding of emerging priorities, ensuring the required skills were available through current providers or through procurement opportunities if required.

ESOL partnerships

The Combined Authority also plays an active role in ESOL partnerships across West Yorkshire, working with VCSE organisations that deliver informal ESOL in local communities. Providers are supporting progression from these community-based sessions into funded ESOL courses where appropriate. Most Tailored Learning delivered by local authorities is done directly with VCSE partners or in close collaboration with them, providing support in trusted local spaces.

Providers continue to work closely with groups facing the greatest barriers, including people in recovery services and residents supported by Housing Associations. They deliver learning in places where people already feel safe and supported, helping them move on to further training or work.

Investment in ESOL has grown significantly, rising from £5 million in 2020/21 to more than £12 million in 2024/25. ESOL now represents 25% of all Adult Skills spending. This level of investment is being reviewed to ensure the right balance and prioritisation amongst the many calls on the adult skills fund.

Tackling Cold Spots

Using local data and insight from local authorities (LAs), areas were identified where engagement in adult learning was low. This led to commissioned programmes in Kirklees and Bradford, focused on groups and neighbourhoods that are underrepresented.

One example is Holme Wood in Bradford, where almost half of adults have no formal qualifications and parts of the estate are among the 1% most deprived areas in England. Working with the LA, independent training providers, the local college and community partners, courses are delivered in maths, English and digital skills, as well as employment focused training such as SIA security and teaching assistant qualifications.

The Holme Wood Training Hub is now a trusted support point in the community, helping residents build confidence, gain skills, move into work and often achieve their first qualification. It also provides wider support, including mental health help and opportunities that strengthen community cohesion.

West Yorkshire Police partnership

The Combined Authority has worked closely with the Police, the Prison Service and probation to create clear skills referral routes, including for people about to leave prison. A 12-month pilot with West Yorkshire Police has tested an Out of Court Pathway for women, designed to divert them away from the criminal justice system.

Using Tailored Learning funding, a specialist programme was created and delivered for women, by women, in a trusted community setting. It includes employability support, role models, job matching, confidence building and self-esteem. Although the groups are small, early results are strong:

- 100% completion rate
- 96% of tracked participants did not reoffend within six months

The pilot is now being expanded in Leeds, where there are higher levels of need.

Trades Union Congress (TUC) partnership

The Combined Authority recognises the value of Union Learning Representatives, within West Yorkshire employers, to promote skills opportunities and qualifications for Union representatives are funded through the Adult Skills Fund. An agreement between the Combined Authority and the TUC supports a dedicated Project Officer who recruits and supports Union Learning Representatives and champions to raise awareness of adult learning.

The TUC has concentrated its efforts on promoting inclusive access to skills and raising awareness of neurodiversity by providing employees with training opportunities designed to break down barriers and strengthen understanding. In addition, 272 employees were signposted to learning, with 170 enrolling in training that ranged from employer-led sessions to formal qualifications such as Functional Skills.

Work & Health Trailblazer

This initiative represents a significant shift in how employment and health services are delivered in West Yorkshire. It moves away from "one-size-fits-all" national programs toward a localised, integrated model.

This is a specialised programme (part of the Get Britain Working White Paper) specifically designed to tackle economic inactivity—people who are out of the workforce due to long-term sickness or disability. Its goal is to break the cycle where health issues lead to unemployment and unemployment worsens health.

Employer Engagement

Over the past 12 months the Combined Authority has held strategic engagement and structured collaboration with regional employers to influence skills priorities.

This includes:

- **Economy Committee and Business Board:** the Board provide updates and consult to inform and receive input on annual performance and strategic development. Membership across these includes employers, local authorities, the West and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce, local education and training providers including Higher Education Institutions, DWP, TUC and the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise sector.

- **Regional employer panels:** Employer voice is fed in through the Mayor's Council (made up of the region's largest employers including Morrisons, Sky, Haribo and Asda) and the West Yorkshire Business Board where employer representatives from key industries discuss what their skills needs are and to ensure their perspectives directly influence decision making, priority-setting and feedback on new initiatives.
- **Sector-specific and themed roundtables:** In the past twelve months the Combined Authority has organised several forums for specific industries to share skills challenges and opportunities, particularly in vital sectors and themed challenges to the local economy. This includes developing the employer voice to shape the soft skills gaps businesses face, convening employers and providers to understand the challenges in tutor shortages and technical pathways for key sectors and more specific industry roundtables such as in Health Tech and Manufacturing.
- **Surveys and consultations:** The Combined Authority has consulted with businesses on skills via targeted surveys to gather data on current and future skills gaps directly from employers. This has particularly focused on barriers employers face taking on someone with health conditions and around leadership and management.
- **Collaboration with industry associations:** The Combined Authority continues to leverage existing organisations that represent employers, such as the Federation of Small Businesses, the Confederation of British Industry and other sector-specific associations including the Manufacturing Alliance and Construction Industry Training Board. The Combined Authority has also undertaken specific collaboration and partnership work with the regional Chambers of Commerce on the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), ensuring the priorities identified align with existing and planned adult skills activity.
- **Supply chain engagement:** The Combined Authority continues to collaborate with colleagues working on large scale regional regeneration programmes, including the West Yorkshire Mass Transit Programme, as well as retrofitting ambitions, to reach out to both large employers and their suppliers to get a broad perspective on emerging skills needs and challenges to ensure these are deliverable.
- **Responding to government changes:** Discussions have taken place with employers to understand the effects of the recent budget changes (such as changes to National Insurance employer contributions) factor in new challenges or barriers employers may face which could influence their recruitment and skills decisions. Local employers have been suggested to feed into national government discussions held with Skills England, including the development of the new Growth and Skills Levy (replacing the Apprenticeship Levey from April 2026).
- **Ongoing communication:** A team of business engagement officers maintain regular contact with employers through long standing relationships, newsletters, focus groups and one-on-one meetings to keep the dialogue open and capture acute skills challenges businesses face in the region.

Adult Skills Conference

In 2024/25, the scope of the annual Adult Skills Conference was expanded to include all providers involved in Adult Skills across West Yorkshire, commissioned and funded by the Combined Authority.

This included those delivering programmes such as Skills Bootcamps, ASF and Free Courses for Jobs, with the aim of bringing the whole provider network together to focus on the impact of adult learning rather than the complexities of individual funding streams.

The Mayor, alongside the Director of Inclusive Economy, Skills and Culture, set out the region's vision through the Mayor's Manifesto for the Region of Learning and Creativity and outlined the development and future direction of the Adult Skills Plan. With a diverse range of workshops led by Ofsted, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), colleges and internal specialists, the conference supported providers to strengthen delivery and improve outcomes for adult learners across the region.

The conference also made purposeful use of having a wide range of Adult Skills providers in the room by consulting on the emerging themes of the Adult Skills Plan, gathering insight on future priorities and exploring the implications of moving to an integrated funding settlement. This engagement provided valuable intelligence to shape the Plan, ensuring it reflects provider expertise, regional needs and the opportunities presented by a more flexible, integrated approach to adult skills funding.

Adult Skills Awards and Region of Learning Ambassadors

In June 2025, the second West Yorkshire Adult Learner Awards were held to celebrate the outstanding achievements of individuals involved in adult learning.

The event was a great success, with over 150 nominations and 10 adult learners recognised for their dedication to learning and personal development, often overcoming significant challenges. The nominees represented a diverse range of backgrounds, including refugees, individuals who had learned English as a second language and those returning to education after difficult childhood experiences. Some of the learners applied their new skills to support their communities, helping others overcome mental health issues, while others made remarkable progress, such as relocating to West Yorkshire from another area of the UK and overcoming fears of public speaking and interacting with others around them.

The 2026 awards will continue to celebrate the efforts and successes of adult learners, as well as the dedicated educators who contribute to learning delivery across the region.

Building on the enthusiasm generated, the nominated individuals were invited to become Region of Learning Ambassadors, a role launched by the Mayor in October 2024. These ambassadors play a key part in supporting the Mayor's vision for West Yorkshire as a Region of Learning, sharing their personal experiences with Adult Skills development and promoting future learning opportunities.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Evaluation findings:

- **Strong alignment** with regional economic needs and inclusivity goals.
- **Effective use of devolution powers**: Adjustments to funding rules (e.g. Real Living Wage threshold, ESOL support, expanded eligibility) increased participation and access.
- **Well-managed programme**: The Adult Skills team at the Combined Authority is praised for being flexible, responsive and collaborative.

In previous years, a provider survey has been undertaken annually to gather feedback on progress made and understand where to focus improvements for future years.

During the academic year 2024/25, providers were invited to participate in a large, external evaluation of adult skills provision commissioned by the Combined Authority, covering the period 2021-2024.

The full evaluation report will be published in Spring 2026. The recommendations are below. These have informed the key priorities in the Adult Skills Plan:

- Create a clear impact framework that sets out what outcomes the region needs from adult skills and how to measure them.
- Improve how the Combined Authority collect data on learner intent, progression and destinations.
- Support more referrals and joint working between providers.
- Strengthen routes from Community Learning (Tailored Learning) and ESOL into further study or training.
- Look at ways to help more ESOL learners, older learners and certain ethnic groups move into work.
- Promote the use of bridging programmes, such as courses that help learners move from Level 2 to Level 3.
- Keep a flexible pot of funding to respond quickly to new or emerging needs, utilising full use of the Integrated Settlement.

Monitoring and Measuring Impact Using Data Markers

During 2023/24, the Combined Authority improved how delivery is monitored by using data markers for two areas: courses delivered fully via distance learning; and Targeted Employment Programmes (TEPs). This has helped in getting better information about what is being delivered and the impact it is having.

A review showed there was previously no way to identify courses delivered entirely through distance learning. From 2024/25, all providers have now labelled this provision. This identifies

learning that is done at the learner's pace, without a tutor delivering a live learning session, with learners studying online in their own time. This improved data is now helping by being able to:

- track what types of distance learning courses are being delivered;
- understand the profiles of learners, including their background and prior attainment and analyse how learners progress afterwards; and
- assess the overall impact of distance learning on outcomes.

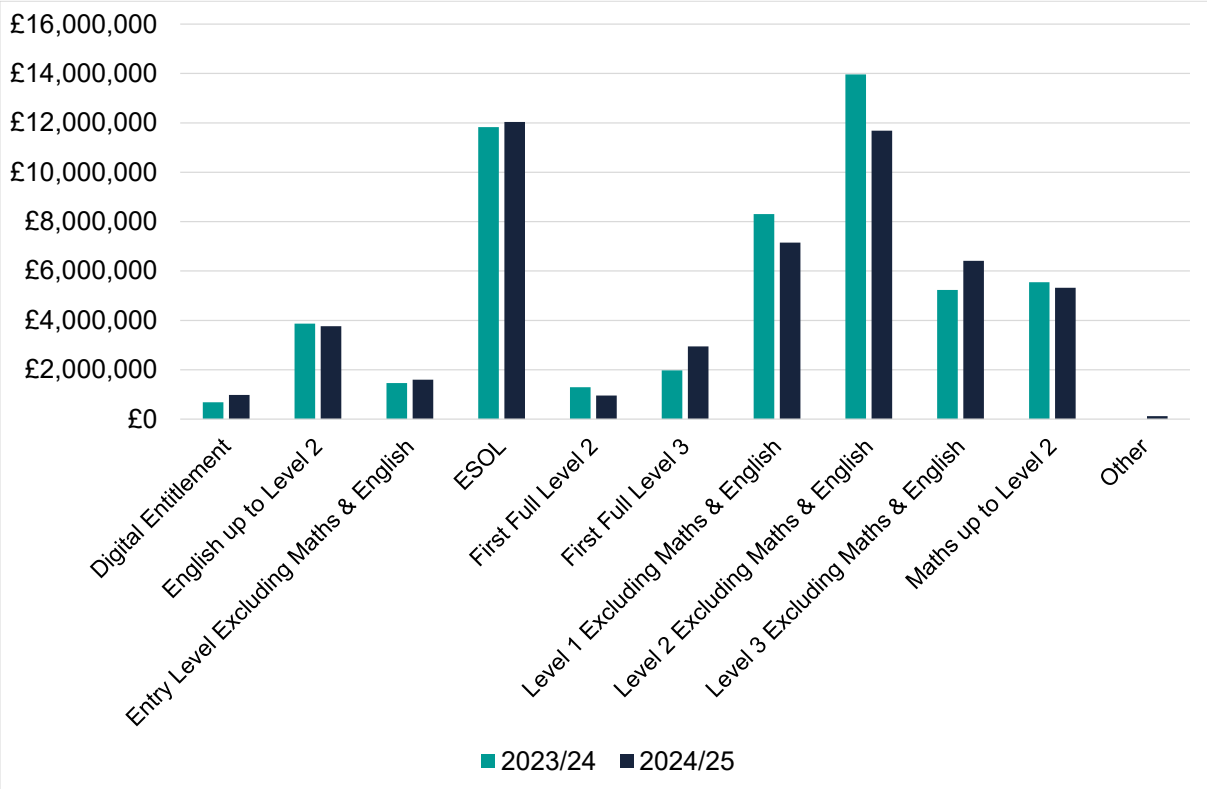
The organisation previously lacked clear information on which SWAP and TEP courses were linked to employers and how many learners progressed into work. Two new data markers have now been introduced to address this: one to identify SWAP and TEP courses and another to record when a learner moves into employment.

These changes are already improving how impact is tracked. Early findings are positive, with over half of TEP learners securing jobs. This information is reviewed throughout the year to understand how well employer-focused provision is performing, highlight any gaps and inform future commissioning decisions.

- Around **2,300 learners completed TEP aims** (including Sector-Based Work Academy aims) in 2024/25
- 55% or **1,270 learners progressed into work**
- 27% of Tailored Learning learners or **4,100 people moved on to an Adult Skills course** during the year

How Adult Skills Funding is spent

Figure: Spend on Adult Skills and Free Courses for Jobs by provision type, West Yorkshire

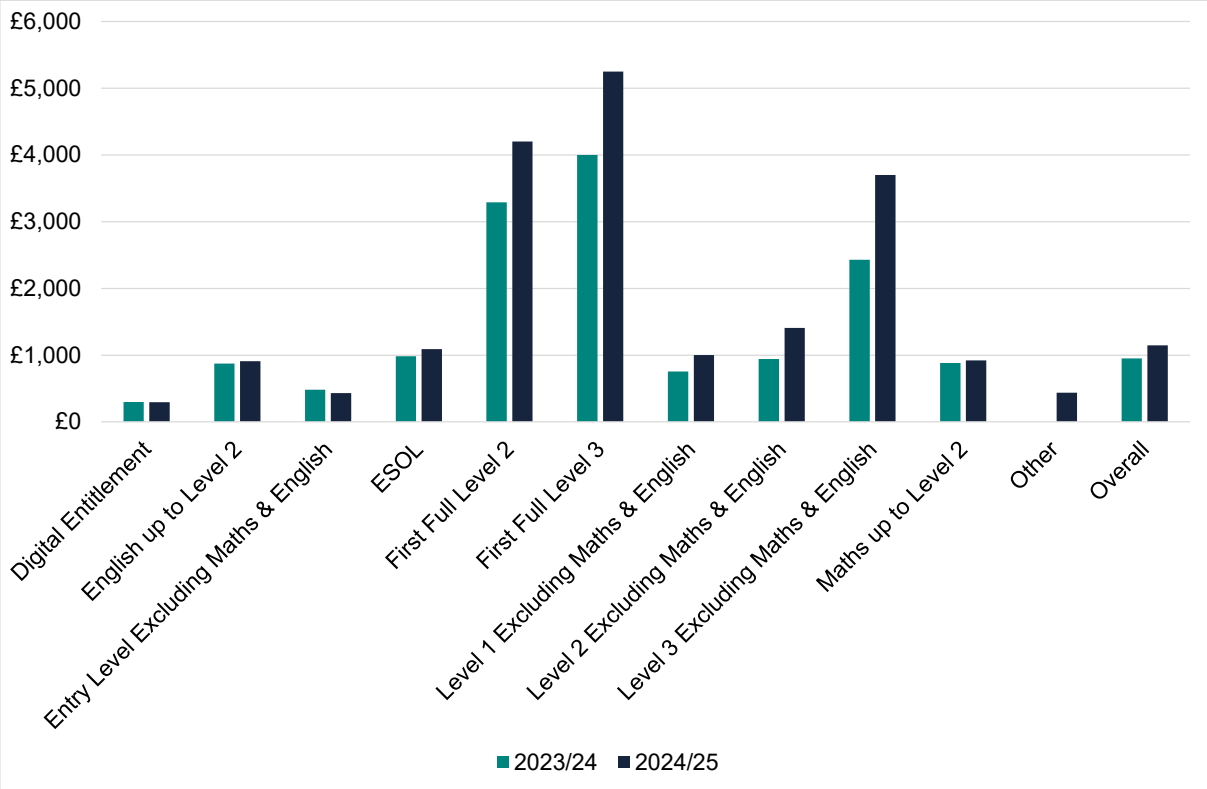


The largest areas of spend by provision type in 2024/25 were for ESOL (accounting for 23% of total earned cash) and Level 2 Excluding Maths & English (22%).

Several provision types saw significant year-on-year increases in spend: Level 3 aims of various types saw an increase of £2.1m or 30%, whilst there were increases of nearly £300,000 (43%) in spend on the Digital Entitlement and more than £200,000 on ESOL (2%).

There were pronounced falls in expenditure on Level 1 and Level 2 vocational aims, which fell by £2.3m (-16%) and £1.2m (-14%) respectively.

Figure: Average spend per aim Adult Skills and Free Courses for Jobs by provision type, West Yorkshire



An increase in unit costs in the context of a fixed funding envelope has been the main driver of reduced volumes in the devolved programme in 2024/25. This was driven primarily by changes to the national funded rates implemented by the Department for Education.

The programme's overall cost per aim grew by 20% or £194 year-on-year, with the biggest increases for Level 3 vocational aims (+52%) and Level 2 vocational aims (+49%). The cost of delivering each Level 3 aim grew by more than £1,200 year-on-year in absolute terms. The impact of this was compounded by an increase in the share of starts at Level 3 in 2024/25.

An increase in the share of fully-funded starts also had an impact – fully-funded starts increased their share from 84% of total starts in 2023/24 to 91% in 2024/25. This is significant because average spend on fully funded starts is more than 2.5 times greater than for co-funded starts.

In addition, the share of starts for which the learner received learning support nearly doubled, growing from 14% in 2023/24 to 27% in 2024/25. This reflected an increased focus on learners with additional needs. Average spend for starts attracting learning support was 32% higher than for starts without learning support.

Investing in high-quality, high-value provision

All providers continue to submit delivery plans which are reviewed by the Combined Authority and local authority colleagues. This is to consider the provision in each local authority area against local priorities. Where there has been an increase in demand – for example ESOL – the Combined Authority works with providers to ensure the demand is met within existing contracts or through additional procurement if required.

Local partnership meetings are held in each local authority area, bringing together all delivery providers. This includes colleges, the local authority and independent training providers as well as wider key stakeholders. These sessions focus on the specific needs of the area, using labour market intelligence and local authority insights to inform discussions on current delivery, sector priorities, delivery locations and identifying under- or over-provision and cold spots.

Since January 2024, a traffic-light system has been used to check whether courses are delivering the amount of teaching time they should. If a course offers less than 70% of the expected hours, it now needs approval. If it drops below 50%, the funding is reduced.

As a result, 670 courses have had their funding adjusted — mostly because they were offering fewer hours than expected or because learners already had some prior learning. This has released around £560,000, which can now be used to support more learners.

Desk-based compliance checks and full provider audits are carried out by the Combined Authority's internal audit team. Recent findings have led to increased scrutiny of Learner and Learning Support, highlighting the need for a comprehensive deep dive into Learner Support during 2025/26.

An independent evaluation of Adult Skills provision took place in 2024/25, completing in 2025. The findings and recommendations from the evaluation fed into the development of the Adult Skills Plan, which sets out an approach to reviewing several aspects of delivery and types of provision, to be carried out from 2026.

Local impact and analysis of delivery

- The devolved ASF programme **supported 37,900 learners** during the 2024/25 academic year
- **6,700** West Yorkshire residents attained their **first ever qualification**
- **3,800** achieved their **first Level 2 qualification**
- **1,300** achieved their **first Level 3 qualification**
- ASF continues to be champion of inclusivity: **65% of new learners were from ethnic minority groups**, compared to 61% the previous year.

Despite national rate uplifts leading to significantly higher delivery costs, the programme has remained highly resilient, with overall learner volumes falling by only 13%. Given the scale of Adult Skills delivery in West Yorkshire, this relatively modest reduction demonstrates that providers have continued to support substantial learner numbers even as costs have grown.

In 2024/25, total learners fell by 13%, new learners by 12% and starts by 10%—a comparatively small shift considering the scale of cost increases. The number of starts per learner rose.

There were also standout areas of growth. Essential Digital Skills continued its rapid expansion, with starts increasing by more than 60% year on year—mirroring the previous year's growth—to reach 3,300 starts. This highlights both emerging learner needs and provider capability to scale delivery in priority areas.

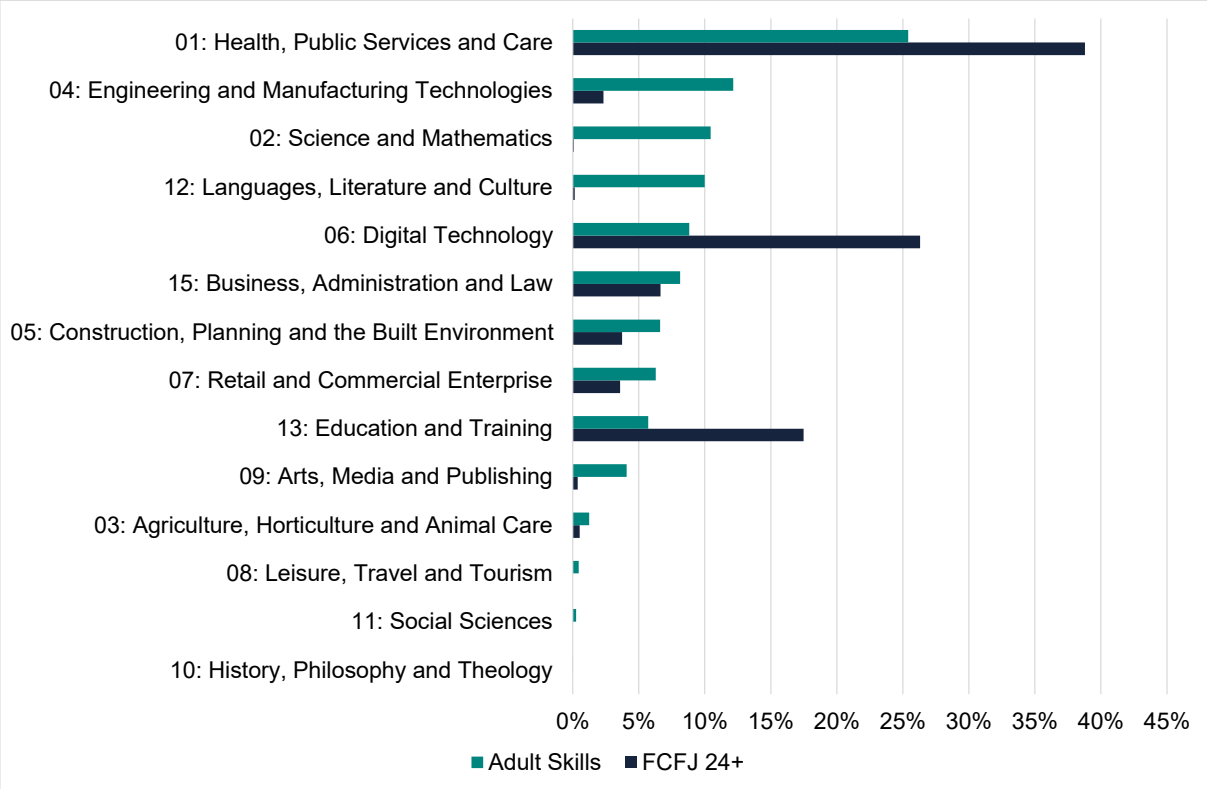
West Yorkshire's learner profile in 2024/25 was more diverse compared with the previous year: the proportion of learners with a LLDD or health problem increased from 18% to 21%. A higher proportion of people from ethnic minority backgrounds took part in learning in 2024/25. The share of new learners from these groups went up from 61% to 65% compared with the previous year.

A higher proportion of learners started courses in 'Preparation for Life and Work' in 2024/25. This area grew from making up about half of all starts (49%) to well over half (59%). These are courses that help with basic skills, confidence, employability and personal development, while fewer people are starting vocational or job specific courses.

Most other vocational subjects saw their share drop. The only exception was Engineering and Manufacturing, which grew slightly from 4% to 5%. Subjects that lost share include:

- Health, Public Services and Care – fell from 14% to 11%
- Business, Administration and Law – fell from 7% to 3%

Figure: Subject profile of starts by funding line, 2024/25, academic year (excludes Preparation for Life and Work starts)



Health, public services and care is the leading subject area for Adult Skills Fund core provision and Free Courses for Jobs, driven by starts on health and social care aims. Digital Technology and Education and Training are also key subjects for Free Courses for Jobs

There was a strong focus on disadvantage in 2024/25. Nearly 5,600 Adult Skills Fund starts were supported through the low wage pilot during the academic year, accounting for 51% of starts for employed learners. A further 850 starts were supported through the low wage offer for Free Courses for Jobs (Level 3) learners. The proportion of starts for learners who were out of work increased from 73% to 75%.

The proportion of learners from the most acutely deprived neighbourhoods (decile 1 of the Index of Multiple Deprivation) was 43% in 2024/25 (compared with 37% immediately pre-devolution in 2020/21), increasing to 56% in Bradford and 53% in Leeds.

There was strong targeting of people with no qualifications or existing skills and qualifications at the lowest level and a focus on promoting progression. Basic skills starts increased their share of total Adult Skills Fund starts substantially, from 46% in 2023/24 to 54% in 2024/25.

The proportion of starts for learners with no qualifications or qualified at Entry level or Level 1 only was 68% in 2024/25, compared with 61% in the previous academic year. For 45% of starts, the course offered progression: this means that learners undertook a course with a level higher than their prior attainment.

27% of Tailored Learning learners (a total of 4,100 learners) progressed to an Adult Skills Fund course during the academic year.

- The **overall success rate** for the Adult Skills strand in 2024/25 was **89%**, a small increase on the 88% recorded in 2023/24, following a similar increase in the previous year.

Overall participation in ASF-funded provision

The following table sets out an analysis of participation and enrolments, comparing 2023/24 academic year with the latest year of 2024/25. These measures reflect those used by the Department for Education in their official statistics.

West Yorkshire had total participation of around 38,000 in 2023/24, a reduction of 13% on the previous year. This was driven by a decrease of 20% in Adult Skills core participation and a more modest 2% reduction in Free Courses for Jobs participation. Tailored Learning participation grew by 7%.

Table: Summary of participation and enrolments undertaken through devolved programme in West Yorkshire

	2023/24	2024/25	Change	% change
Participation				
Community Learning/Tailored Learning	11,900	12,800	832	7%
Adult Skills	33,000	26,400	-6,591	-20%
Free Courses for Jobs 24+	1,700	1,600	-31	-2%
Total	43,700	37,900	-5,797	-13%
Enrolments				
Community Learning/Tailored Learning	19,200	19,700	502	3%
Adult Skills	55,200	46,200	-9,031	-16%
Free Courses for Jobs 24+	1,700	1,600	-37	-2%
Total	76,100	67,500	-8,566	-11%

Note: All values are rounded to nearest 100 and may not appear to sum correctly; percentage change figures may not appear to be consistent with values due to rounding

Source: ILR

Enrolments figures are based on the number of learning aims that were active at any point during each academic year i.e. starts plus carry-in. There was an overall decrease of 11% in enrolments. Adult Skills core enrolments declined by 16% and Free Courses for Jobs enrolments fell by 2%. Community Learning/Tailored Learning enrolments grew by 3% on the previous year, in line with participation.

Local flexibilities

The local flexibilities implemented to enhance devolved provision in West Yorkshire are described in the policy section, above. The level of take-up achieved under these flexibilities is examined in the following table. When considering volumes of take-up it should be noted that this is primarily pilot activity.

Flexibility	Take-up
Increasing the low wage threshold	• 5,600 Adult Skills starts supported through the low wage pilot during the academic year • A further 850 starts were supported through the low wage offer for Free Courses for Jobs (level 3) learners
Expanding the age of entitlement for a 'first full level 2' from 19-23 to 19+	• 50 starts under this flexibility during 2024/25
Expanding the 'Digital Entitlement' to ensure digital skills for all	• 104 starts during 2024/25 academic year • 40% of starts were for unemployed learners
Test Pilot: Bridging programmes that support progression to Level 3	• 60 starts during academic year • Among learners who undertook a Bridging programme 41 have progressed onto a Level 3 aim so far
Test Pilot: Increasing the number of Level 2 courses 19-23s are entitled to	• 270 starts during 2024/25 academic year • 72% of starts for unemployed learners.
Providing full funding for eligible asylum seekers	• 2,003 starts during 2023/24 academic year, for 1,137 new learners

Some of the flexibilities introduced in 2022/23 have continued to enable large numbers of starts and therefore widened participation in the programme during 2024/25. This was particularly the case for full funding for asylum seekers and access to full funding for people in low wage employment. The value and impact of all the flexibilities is currently being reviewed.

Legal Entitlements

The Combined Authority's ASF includes support for four legal entitlements to full funding for eligible adult learners. These entitlements apply nationwide and devolved areas are required to honour them.

These entitlements enable eligible learners to be fully funded for the following qualifications:

- English and Maths, up to and including Level 2, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have not previously attained a GCSE grade 4 (C), or higher and/or
- first full qualification at Level 2 for individuals aged 19 to 23 and/or
- first full qualification at Level 3 for individuals aged 19 to 23
- essential digital skills qualifications, up to and including Level 1, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have digital skills assessed at below Level 1.

The following section examines the take-up of each entitlement in terms of enrolments during the 2024/25 academic year and highlights any changes with the previous year.

English and Maths, up to and including Level 2, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have not previously attained a GCSE grade 4 (C), or higher

- There were 5,900 starts under this entitlement in West Yorkshire in 2024/25,
- 4,400 learners took up the entitlement.
- 44% of starts were for literacy and 56% for numeracy.
- There was a decrease in starts under this entitlement of 10%, or around 620, between 2023/24 and 2024/25.
- Total spend on this entitlement during 2024/25 was £6.1m, including the Combined Authority's funding uplift of 10%.

First full qualification at Level 2 for individuals aged 19 to 23

This is one of two entitlements for learners aged 19-23. These entitlements are important for West Yorkshire because the proportions of young people in the region achieving a qualification at Level 2 and Level 3 by the age of 19 is below the national average.

- There were around 140 starts (undertaken by 110 new learners) under this entitlement during 2024/25, less than 1% of total starts on the Adult Skills programme. These figures were slightly lower compared with those recorded for the previous year.
- There were 270 starts under this flexibility during the academic year, with nearly three-quarters of them being associated with unemployed learners.
- Total spend (total earned cash) on this entitlement during 2024/25 was £418,000, including the Combined Authority's funding uplift.

As a supplement to the national entitlement the Combined Authority has brought in a flexibility which allows learners aged 19-23 who lack a full Level 2 to undertake a qualification at Level 2 that is not classed as 'full', to support progression and upskilling. This is not permitted under the national funding rules.

First full qualification at Level 3 for individuals aged 19 to 23

- There were approximately 550 starts under this entitlement during the 2024/25 academic year, relating to 5
- 30 learners. This makes it another small element of total Adult Skills provision, accounting for less than 1% of total starts.
- The number of starts for this entitlement saw a notable increase of 30% compared with the 2023/24 academic year.
- Total spend (total earned cash) on this entitlement during 2024/25 was £2.7m, an increase of 60% on 2023/24.

Essential Digital Skills qualifications, up to and including Level 1, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have digital skills assessed at below Level 1

- During 2024/25 there were 3,300 starts under the Essential Digital Skills entitlement.
- This represents a net increase of more than 60% on starts recorded in the previous academic year.
- The national entitlement was supplemented by 100 starts delivered under a local flexibility that provides access to additional digital aims.
- Total spend (total earned cash) on this entitlement during 2024/25 was £980,000, including the Combined Authority's funding uplift.

Learner Support

Across the four most recent academic years, Learner Support expenditure, as a proportion of overall Adult Skills Fund utilisation has remained broadly consistent, ranging between 6.2% and 7**%** of total delivery. The year-on-year position is as follows: on-year position is as follows:

Academic Year	LS as % of ASF Utilisation
2021/22	6.4%
2022/23	6.2%
2023/24	7.0%
2024/25	6.8%

Learner Support usage has remained within a narrow and stable range across the past four years. Providers report that recent increases reflect rising learner need in areas such as transport, childcare and wider cost of living pressures. The Combined Authority continues to monitor Learner Support through routine contract discussions, data returns and internal audit activity to ensure spend remains eligible, proportionate and compliant with Adult Skills Fund rules. This ongoing monitoring has also highlighted areas where approaches vary between providers, which has informed the decision to undertake a structured Learner Support Review.

Learner Support Review

To ensure Learner Support is being deployed effectively, consistently and in line with The Combined Authority's funding rules, a structured Learner Support Review is being undertaken. The aims of the review are to:

- Develop a clearer understanding of how support is being used across the provider base.
- Analyse expenditure patterns, including concentrations of spend within certain institutions or geographical areas.
- Identify areas where use of Learner Support may not clearly align with funding rules or intended purpose.
- Engage with providers to understand local delivery models and the drivers of LS demand.

- Inform future policy decisions, including whether any adjustments to LS guidance, expectations, or allocation mechanisms are needed to balance access, value for money and learner need.

The review will support the Combined Authority in ensuring Learner Support is used appropriately to remove barriers to participation, while maintaining fairness and sustainability across delivery in future years.

Learning Support

Learning Support expenditure remained stable at 6% of total ASF spend across 2021/22 to 2023/24, indicating a consistent level of need for learners requiring additional support.

In 2024/25, this increased to 8%, which aligns with the rise in learners declaring LLDD, particularly those presenting with mental health–related needs. Providers have reported more learners requiring additional in-class support, reasonable adjustments and pastoral interventions to sustain participation and achievement.

Completion and achievement rates

The Combined Authority continues to investigate and understand how many people who start a course that leads to a formal qualification actually go on to achieve that qualification. This is an important way of measuring how well the Adult Skills programme is working.

Official achievement data for each provider isn't available at a local level, so the figures in this report are based on the Combined Authority's calculations. The method used to calculate success rates for Adult Skills is detailed in the box below.

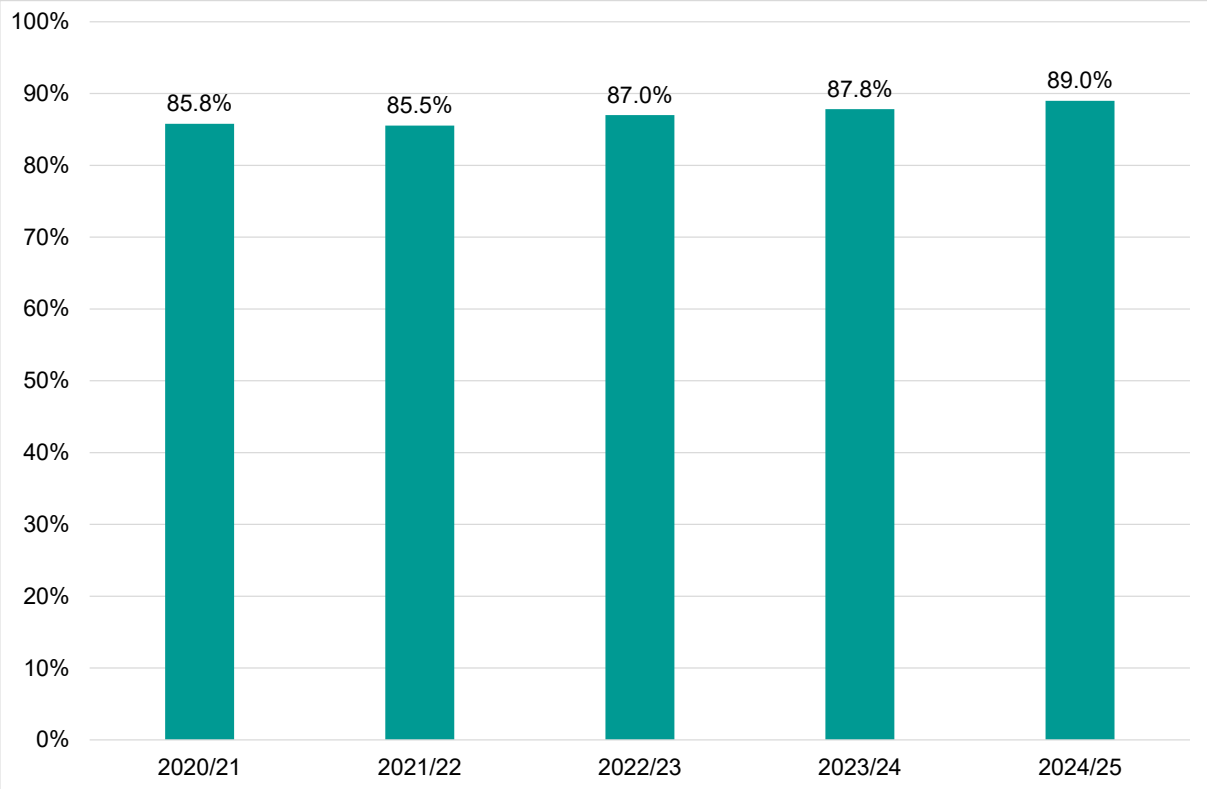
Calculation method for success rate

1. Success Rate = Leavers x Retention x Achievement
2. Retention = Completion status of 2: The learner has completed the learning activities leading to the learning aim (expressed as % of total leavers)
3. Achievement = Achievement Status of 1: Achieved (expressed as % of retained).

The overall success rate for the Adult Skills programme for 2024/25 academic year was 89%. This means that for 94% of starts on a learning aim the learner was retained; of these retained starts, 95% of learning aims were achieved. When multiplied together these two figures give the overall success rate of 89%.

The success rates for the devolved Adult Skills programme have improved over time, increasing by 3 percentage points from 86% to 89% between 2020/21 (immediately before devolution) up to the current period of 2024/25.

Figure: Success rates for Adult Skills learning aims over time, West Yorkshire

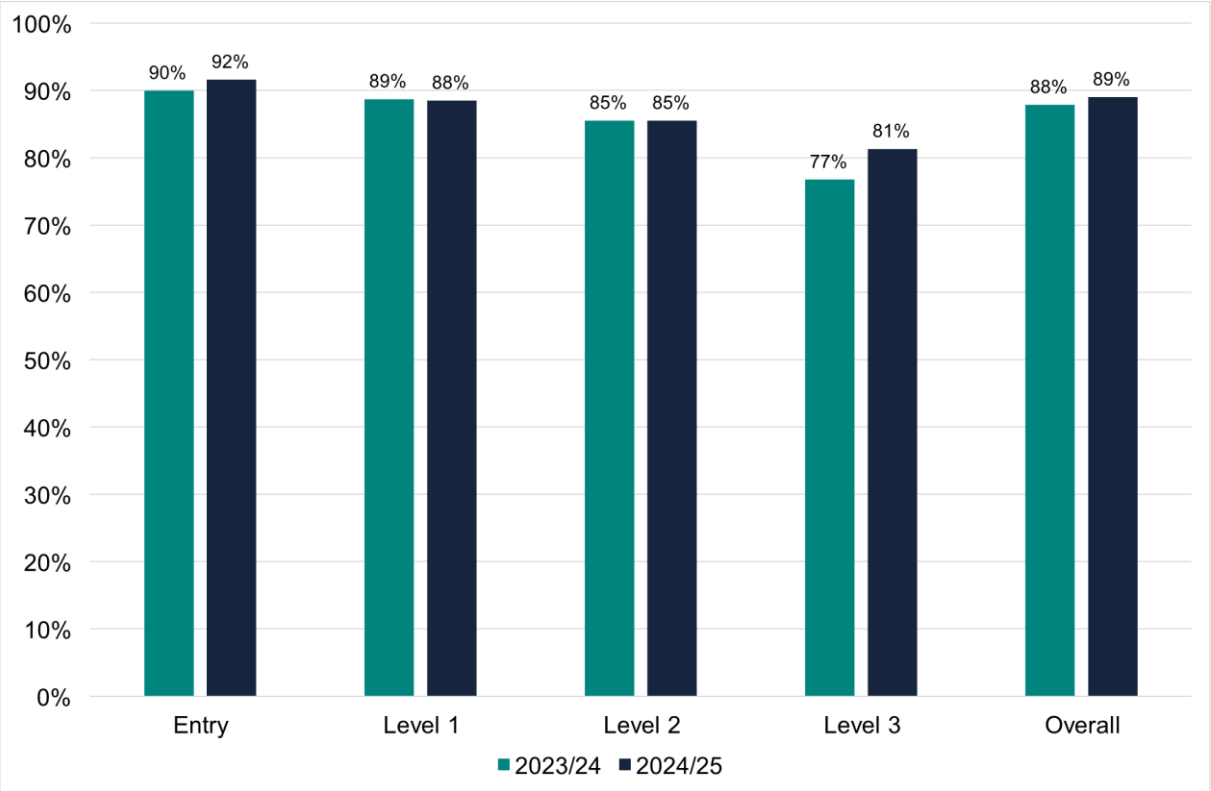


Success rates differ by the notional level of the learning aim. Entry Level and Level 1 aims have the highest success rate and Level 3 courses have the lowest.

This is to be expected since Level 3 courses are generally longer and more demanding on the learner.

However, it is notable that the success rate for Level 3 aims increased significantly in 2024/25 (following improvements in previous years) and this was the main driver of improvement in the overall success rate.

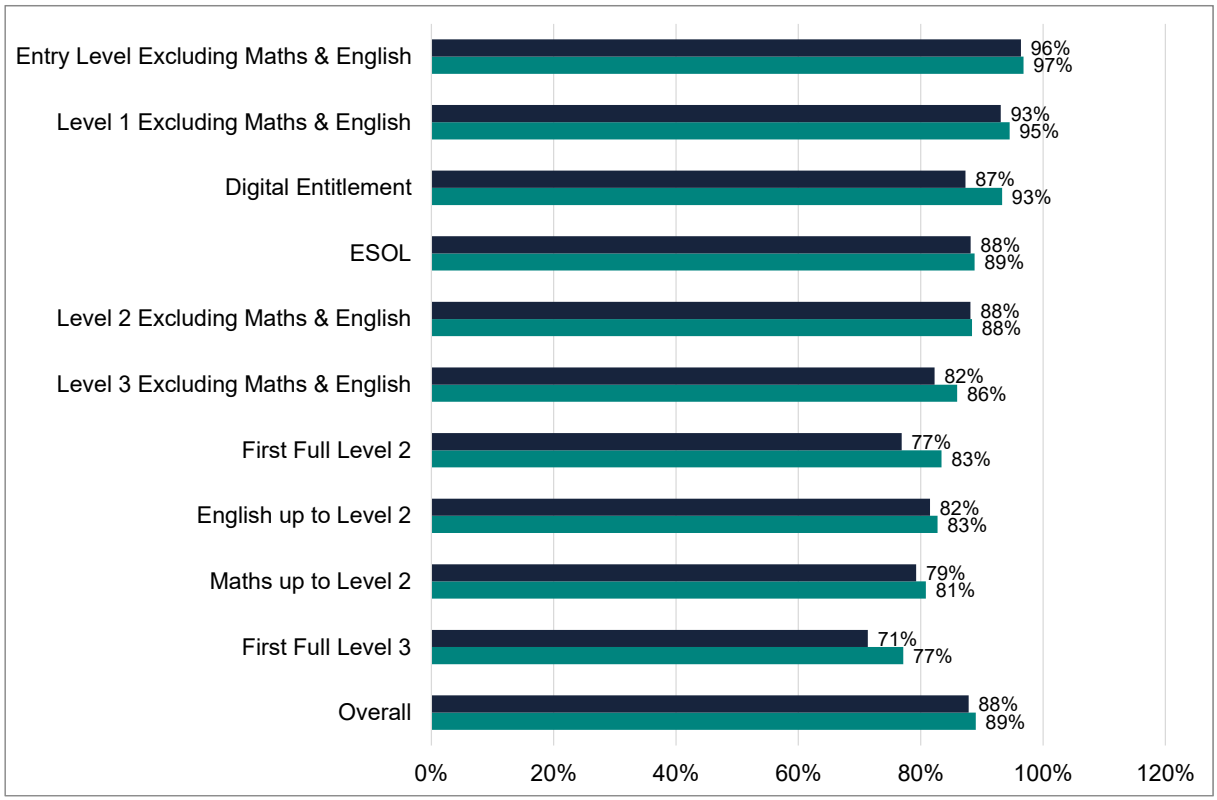
Figure: Success rates for Adult Skills learning aims by level, West Yorkshire



The chart below shows that Level 1 and Entry Level vocational courses had the highest success rates. Digital entitlement courses and ESOL also performed well.

Full Level 3 qualifications had the lowest success rates but improved compared with last year. The same is true for full Level 2 courses, which also saw year-on-year improvement

Figure: Success rates for Adult Skills learning aims by provision type, 2024/25, West Yorkshire



Success rates are fairly consistent across other variables, including residence of learner (at Local Authority level) but vary by sector subject area.

National figures are available for Education and Training provision for learners aged 19 and above for 2022/23, however they are not yet available for 2023/24. The scope of this provision is wider than the ASF and therefore the national figures are not directly comparable with local figures. However, they do show, on an indicative basis, that West Yorkshire's performance was similar to the national average during the period, including for the various qualification levels.

Key figures are as follows:

- The national retention rate was 92% in 2022/23 (excluding Level 4 aims).
- The national achievement rate (referred to as pass rate in national reporting) was 94%.
- The national success rate, based on our definition was 87%, below the West Yorkshire figure of 89%.

The pattern of success rates by qualification level is broadly similar at national level to the West Yorkshire position in that the lower qualification levels have better rates than higher level qualifications.

Local Skills Improvement Plan Alignment

The Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP) act as the strategic bridge between industry and education, identifying specific regional labour needs to ensure adult learning provision is led by needs of the regional economy. By placing employers at the heart of the system, they transform how funding and curricula are prioritised to close persistent local skills gaps. By targeting high-growth sectors, the LSIP helps ensure adult education, skills and training directly drives regional productivity and social mobility.

In 2023, the West Yorkshire Chamber published the LSIP for the region. This included focusing on key sectors for the region, including: Health and Social Care; Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing; Financial and Professional Services; Low Carbon; Digital and Technology; Creative Industries; Education; Construction; and Transport and Logistics.

As the following table shows, in most cases LSIP (2023) priority sectors for West Yorkshire have good coverage in terms of provision across programme strands, with the potential for occupational progression.

The West Yorkshire Chamber is due to publish an updated LSIP later in 2026, which will align more closely with the priority sectors outlined in the West Yorkshire Local Growth Plan. These are: Financial and professional services (including specialisms in fintech and green finance); Life sciences (specialisms in health tech); Advanced manufacturing and engineering (specialisms in textiles, chemicals, space, modern methods of construction and green technologies); and the creative industries. These are underpinned by wider sectors such as construction and the early years sector (which plays a crucial role in allowing parents of young children enter the workforce).

Digital provision is extensive at all levels and accounts for more than a quarter of starts in the Free Courses for Jobs strand. Health and social care is similarly strong regarding Adult Skills and Free Courses for Jobs provision.

The number of people starting courses in Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing is low, especially considering how many jobs there are in these sectors in West Yorkshire. This is a particular issue for Free Courses for Jobs, because Level 3 skills are important for the trade and technician roles the sector relies on.

Construction provision is strong in terms of Adult Skills provision, but further focus will be brought to Level 3, supporting more learners to attain a Level 3 qualification, in line with local economic needs and the region's major infrastructure and regeneration programmes. as laid out in the Local Growth Plan and the Local Skills Improvement Programme.

Much of the focus for employers in Finance and Professional Services sector is on qualifications at Level 4 and above. Nonetheless, there is significant provision in the relevant disciplines of *Accounting and Finance*, *Marketing and Sales* and *Law and Legal Services*.

There is substantial provision in the *Education and Training* subject area across both programme strands and is particularly strong in terms of Level 3 provision delivered through Free Courses For Jobs.

Transport and logistics is strongly represented within the Adult Skills core strand. Four-fifths of relevant starts fall within the *Transportation Operations and Maintenance* subject area, with the remainder in *Warehousing and Distribution*.

Table: Profile of starts by LSIP subject priorities and programme strand, 2024/25 academic year

	Total starts Adults Skills Core & Free Courses for Jobs	Total starts Adult Skills core % & Free Courses for Jobs %
Construction	1,220	3%
Creative Industries	730	2%
Digital and Technology	1,110	3%
Education	1,240	3%
Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing	1,070	3%
Finance and professional services	540	1%
Health and Social Care	3,960	10%
Transport and Logistics	1,390	3%

Tailored Learning purposes and outcomes

Tailored learning is important because it gives people the personalised support they need to build confidence, develop skills at their own pace and move towards positive next steps in work or further learning.

When learners sign up for Tailored Learning, providers record why they're taking the course. When they finish, or leave the course early, it is also recorded what happened as a result. This helps to understand how well Tailored Learning is helping people achieve positive outcomes.

Table: Profile of Tailored Learning starts by purpose recorded at outset of learning, 2024/25

Purpose	Proportion of starts
Improving essential skills including English, ESOL, Maths and Digital	28%
Engaging and/or building confidence	16%
Equipping parents/carers to support children's learning	16%
Preparation for further learning	14%
Preparation for employment	11%
Health and well-being	11%
Developing stronger communities	3%

Learners have a diverse range of purposes for undertaking Tailored Learning. The most common is to improve essential skills, which applies to more than a quarter of starts (28%). Building confidence and supporting children's learning are further purposes that are commonly highlighted. It should be noted that the Individual Learner Record only records one purpose for each start, which can be assumed to be the foremost purpose. However, learners may have additional, complementary purposes that are not captured.

The most common recorded outcome was improved essential skills, with confidence-building and supporting children's learning also ranking highly. Notably, improved skills for further

learning placed second as an outcome, higher than when learners first stated their reasons for enrolling.

Table: Profile of Tailored Learning starts by recorded outcome, 2024/25

Outcome	Proportion of starts
Improved essential skills	22%
Improved skills for progressing to further learning	19%
Increased confidence	18%
Improved ability to support a child's learning	15%
Improved mental health and well-being	10%
Improved skills for work	9%
No outcome area 1-10 achieved	4%
Improved skills to participate in community life	2%
Improved physical health	1%
Improved skills for Independent Living	1%
Increased understanding of democratic values	0%

Essential skills were the most common outcome, followed by confidence-building and support for children's learning. "Skills for further learning" ranked second as an outcome, despite being a lower initial motivation.

Case studies

Impact of Functional Skills

A learner from Bradford wanted to expand her career opportunities by strengthening her maths skills. She knew that achieving Functional Skills Maths Level 2 could open new pathways, but the idea of studying maths initially made her feel anxious. After successfully completing the qualification, she progressed to a Level 3 Access to Higher Education course in Psychology and is now exploring university options, a goal she never thought possible.

Similarly, a learner from Leeds said “When I pass both Maths and English, I can apply to university to do a nursing degree” enhancing her career in the healthcare sector.

A learner from Kirklees, who left school in the 1980s without any qualifications, built a successful career in retail. However, illness later in life resulted in a long-term disability, prompting her to reconsider her future. When an opportunity arose to become a tutor in adult community learning, she realised she needed Functional Skills maths and English to progress. Achieving her Functional Skills maths qualification became a significant personal milestone. She shared, “My teenage children saw me working hard and I think it set a great example for them.” She added, “Now I can tell my employer I’ve met their requirements and it’s far less daunting to apply for new roles knowing I have a maths qualification under my belt.”

Impact of Targeted Employment Programmes

A learner from Kirklees dedicated over thirty years to working as a carer before deciding it was time for a new career, one that would make use of the vigilance, observational skills and people-focused experience he had built over decades. The SIA security course covered everything from the history of the sector to modern practices, legal responsibilities and industry best standards. He shared, “In just a short period, I’ve been able to secure a new role with a security company”

Another learner, who previously worked as a cleaner and teaching assistant, chose to complete SIA training because of his strong interest in helping keep people safe in public spaces. He described his experience by saying, “We learned the law, First Aid and how to handle difficult situations professionally. Practising skills like conflict management and using reasonable force helped me feel ready for real-life scenarios.” He has since secured work with a security employer and added, “This course has given me the right to work in security and be part of something I really care about. It’s helped me in so many ways.”

Appendix 1 – Adult Skills provision beyond ASF

Devolution of the Adult Education Budget (AEB) has enabled West Yorkshire Combined Authority to provide the region's adults with the skills needed for entering and sustaining work, an apprenticeship or other further learning. The focus of the Adult Skills fund is to support learning from first steps through to Level 3 (equivalent to A Levels).

Alongside the devolved funds, the Combined Authority has supplemented Adult Skills provision through funding granted from the Department for Education (e.g. Skills Bootcamps), and its own Gainshare funding. This has allowed the Combined Authority to deliver provision outside of the eligibility requirements of Adult Skills Fund, including interventions focussed solely on maths (through the Multiply programme) and on upskilling adults via short interventions at Level 3 and above in key growth sectors for West Yorkshire, through Skills Bootcamps and the Gainshare-funded 'Skills Connect' programme.

This appendix provides an overview of these programmes and their impact. While the additional funds have allowed the Combined Authority to provide wider services and impact, drawing out comparison data between programmes is challenging due to the variation in reporting periods, systems and processes. The reporting periods are noted for each programme. This will be addressed in future years aligning the funds through deeper devolution within the integrated settlement.

Skills Bootcamps

Skills Bootcamps are flexible training courses for adults aged 19 and over, including employed, unemployed, or self-employed participants looking to enhance their career prospects. Courses last up to 16 weeks and offer fully funded participants a job interview on completion. The scheme can be used to hire new staff or upskill existing staff. Courses are delivered in formats that accommodate diverse learning needs, including online, face-to-face, or a hybrid models.

All courses are developed in consultation with employers to ensure alignment with industry standards and workforce requirements.

Skills Bootcamps are a national policy funded in alignment with financial years. West Yorkshire Combined Authority has been funding Skills Bootcamps since 2021. The table below shows the delivery for each financial year and the increase in enrolments, completions and progressions as the years (Waves) have progressed and the increase of funding utilisation across the financial years:

Skills Bootcamps	Financial year	Enrolments Claimed	Completions Claimed	Progressions Claimed
Skills Bootcamps Wave 3	2022-2023	140	97	53
Skills Bootcamps Wave 4	2023-2024	710	464	181
Skills Bootcamps Wave 5	2024-2025	982	639	367
Skills Bootcamps Wave 6 – delivery ongoing	2025-2026	1047	513	256

The table below shows the breakdown of enrolments by sector across the waves of delivery These sectors were selected due to their alignment to the needs of the labour market in West Yorkshire. The sector coverage of Skills Bootcamps has increased in flexibility year on year, enabling greater focus on West Yorkshire's priority sectors. Performance has increased across enrolments, completions and progressions with each financial/delivery year.

Sector descriptors are defined by DfE:

Sector/focus	**Wave 4 (23-24) enrolments**	**Wave 5 (24-25) enrolments**	**Wave 6 (25-26) enrolments (still in delivery)**
Construction	0	196	94
Creative and Cultural	195	254	143
Digital	491	190	168
Health and Social Care	9	130	69
Technical (incl engineering/manufacturing)	15	100	158
Education	0	0	210
Business Management	0	112	141
Hospitality	0	0	30
Preparation for Work	0	0	25
Total	**710**	**982**	**1047**

From April 2026, Skills Bootcamp funding will be received via Integrated Settlement, with an amount of funding ringfenced specifically for Construction Skills Bootcamps. The Combined Authority will continue to deliver an employed-focused model of training, supporting key local growth sector areas in West Yorkshire through Local Growth and Inclusivity Pilots, however the move to Integrated Settlement will allow West Yorkshire to deliver a model of training which aligns to the needs of the region, giving greater flexibility compared to a nationally designed programme. This includes flexibility in the delivery model, where amendments can be made to the model depending on the sector area that is being delivered in, to further enhance the impact of the training on West Yorkshire individuals and the economy.

Case study – driving innovation through skills

The Skills Bootcamp in Textile Manufacturing has supported individuals currently employed within West Yorkshire's textile sector to upskill, by equipping employees with practical, industry-relevant skills. The course was developed using real labour market insights and shaped in partnership with local employers, ensuring training directly reflects the needs of the region's textile businesses.

The programme provided a bespoke blend of technical knowledge training, customised to meet the needs of individual learners and companies with short, sharp, bespoke technical training, providing essential knowledge of materials and processes alongside an understanding of relevant digital technology applications and sustainability practices. The Skills Bootcamp provided local companies with the opportunity to upskill current and future technicians with the skills needed and provided enhanced opportunities for workers to progress into better paid

technician jobs. 36 individuals enrolled on the course, with 33 completing learning and all 33 accessing increased opportunities, achieving promotions, post course completion.

You can view a case study of the course on the Combined Authority's YouTube channel

Case Study – upskilling for the green economy

The Skills Bootcamp in Electric Heavy Vehicle Maintenance and repair, supporting 30 self-employed heavy vehicle technicians to upskill from working on diesel vehicles to the maintenance of Electric Vehicles.

Delivered through Pelican Engineering, the course supported the development of advanced skills in Electric Vehicle safety, diagnostics and maintenance. Post course completion, learners were able to access new contracts, working on new technologies whilst contributing to the regions wider ambitions linked to net-zero. Learners also received an accredited qualification at Level 3 or 4 in Heavy Electric/Hybrid Vehicle System Repair and Replacement.

You can view a case study of the course on the Combined Authority's YouTube channel

Skills Connect

Skills Connect, the Combined Authority's adult upskilling programme delivered short, demand-led, fully funded adult training courses across key sectors. Courses were predominantly at Level 3 and above, including the green economy, construction and manufacturing, digital and health & social care. The programme delivered a blend of face-to-face and online learning formats tailored to participant and sector needs, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity. Courses were shaped with employer intelligence to ensure alignment to industry need and with accredited elements if required to progress in specific sector areas.

Total delivery budget for Skills Connect: £5,521,924

Total programme target number of participants: 4500 participants

Skills Connect Success Measures:

- Address current and emerging skills gaps by delivering industry-relevant training.
- Collaborate with employers to align course content with workforce demands.
- Support participants in accessing high-demand sectors and progressing in their careers.
- Equip adults with practical, employer-focused skills across priority sectors.
- Foster partnerships with industry leaders to co-design courses for real-world applications.

Skills Connect Delivery:

The Skills Connect programme has been running since April 2021. The number of enrolments and performance on completions and progressions has increased year on year. Data on the page following illustrates overall performance and sectors supported.

Period	Enrolments	Completions	Progressions
August 2024-July 2025	1348	1134	473
Cumulative to July 2025	3959	3444	2373
Cumulative % to July 2025		87%	69%[3]

Sector/focus	21-22 enrolments	22-23 enrolments	23-24 enrolments	24-25 enrolments
Business management	0	0	41	38
Construction, planning and the built environment	12	277	100	614
Arts, media and publishing	0	0	175	51
Information and communication technology	0	56	65	0
Engineering and Manufacturing technologies	0	12	0	0

Green Skills (includes hybrid vehicle maintenance, organisation sustainability)	0	48	75	248
Health and Social Care	16	483	794	309
Other (advanced employability for specific demographics, i.e. graduates)	0	50	243	88
Total	**28**	**926**	**1493**	**1348**

Courses delivered in 2024-2025:

- Clinical Care Programme
- Advanced Skills for H&SC Workers
- Working in Civil Service
- Palliative Care in Health & Social Care
- Volunteer Pathway to Care (refugees)
- Jumpstart your Career GradSkills
- Graduate Accelerator - Making a Difference
- L3 Hybrid and Electric Vehicle
- Beyond Brontes: The Mayor's Screen Diversity Programme
- Reignite Your Career
- First Time Management Training for the Hospice and Health & Care Sector
- Supporting Hong Kong Migrants into Higher Skilled Work
- Health & Social Care Passport
- Organisation Sustainability Champion
- Hybrid Electric Vehicle Repair and Replacement
- Social Media for Manufacturing
- Real Site Skills - Forging Futures
- Women Into Construction- Level 4
- Site Supervisors Safety Training Scheme
- Site Managers Safety Training Scheme
- 18th Edition - Level 3 Award Electrical Requirements BS7671:2018
- NEBOSH Health & Safety Management for Construction

Find out more

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All information correct at time of writing

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