

Cumbria Adult Learning Accountability Statement and Business Plan 2024/25

Purpose

Statement of Purpose

Adult Learning provides opportunities for adults in Cumbria which develops their skills and education to raise confidence; increase empowerment and overall improve their wellbeing. We will use our network of community-based centres and subcontracted partners to target those adults left behind by education and encourage and allow these individuals to contribute and be part of a connected and inclusive community.

Service Vision

Strengthening and sustaining communities through the power of learning.

Strategic Aims and Objectives

Cumbria Adult Learning delivers adult education and tailored learning provision across both Westmorland & Furness and Cumberland Council areas. The service is hosted by Westmorland & Furness Council on behalf of both authorities.

Our strategic aims for Cumbria are as follows:

- Establish our Service as an outstanding and leading provider of adult skills provision in Cumbria
- Use learning to empower communities to live healthy, fulfilling, and independent lives
- Provide skills pathways to help people into work and to progress their careers

Linking to both Council Plans and the Cumbria Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) we will use adult learning funding to support the following collective objectives:

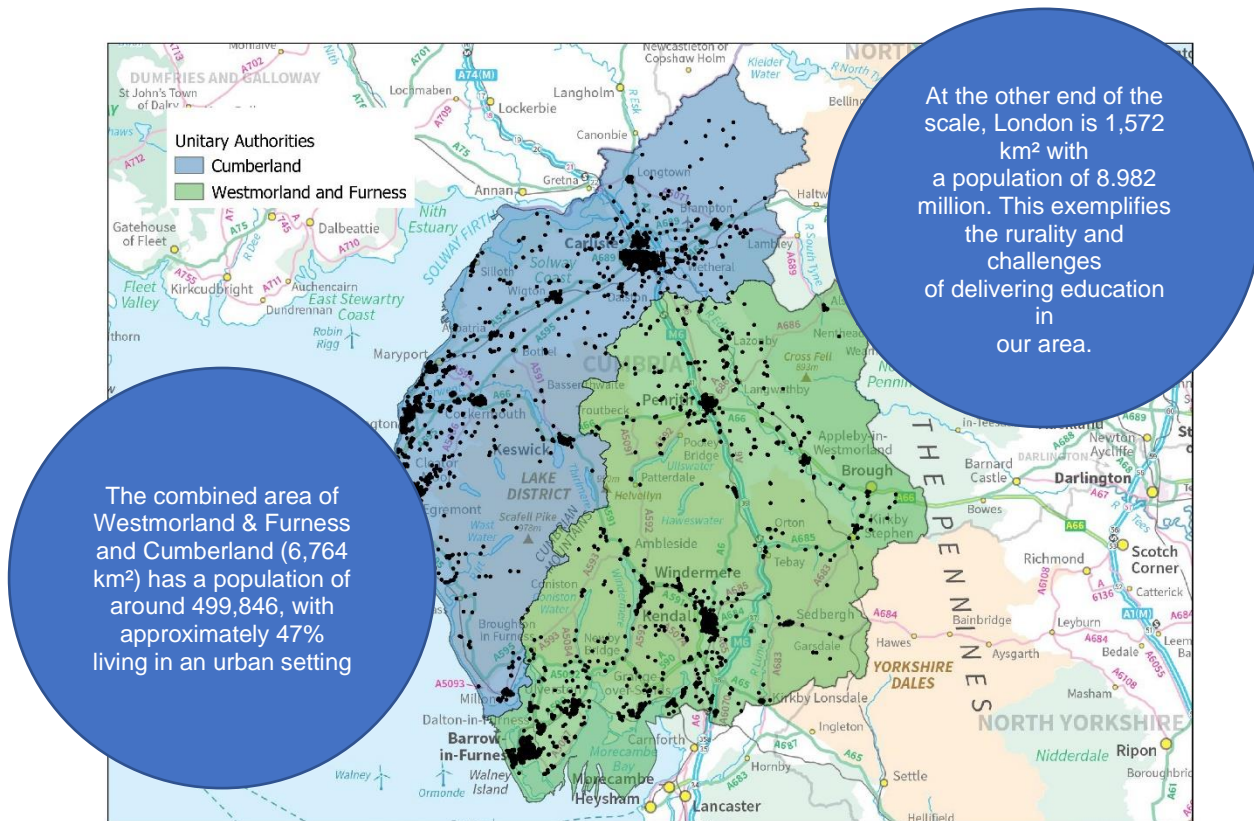
1. Seek a balanced population and healthy happy lives for young and old
2. Enable confident, empowered and resilient communities
3. Promote prevention, collaboration, and active lifestyles to improve health and wellbeing for everyone
4. Promote sustainable inclusive economic growth across boundaries
5. Support the transition to a strong, inclusive and green economy by focusing on our businesses, our people and our assets
6. Support vulnerable people and reducing inequality
7. Address worklessness and youth unemployment
8. Make provision more accessible and address barriers to progression

Our action plan at Appendix 1 sets out the actions we will take to deliver against these objectives and how we will measure our success.

Context and Place

Adult Learning serves the communities of Cumbria, reaching around 5,000 adult residents (7,000 enrolments) in each academic year.

The map below highlights the distribution of our learners across the both local authority areas.



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The latest Index of Multiple Deprivation data (IMD 2019) evidences clear skills deprivation in specific geographic areas of Cumbria - including Carlisle, Penrith, West coast of Cumberland and Barrow in Furness. Wards in these areas are in the lowest 10% skills deprivation in England.

Around 80,000 (16%) of individuals live in areas which have been classified as being among the 20% most deprived in England. Cumbria has an ageing population, with 25% of people aged 65+ and 54% living in rural areas.

Across the area there are significant inequalities in health outcomes as people from poorer communities are more likely to die several years before those from least deprived areas (8.7 years less for men and 7.3 for women).

Cumbria has higher than average deprivation in Education, Skills, and Training with a rank of 63 out of 151 upper tier local authorities in England.

Around 166,300 (33%) residents from Cumbria live in areas which have been classified as being among the **30% most educationally deprived in England**.

34,150 (11.4%) of 16-64 year-olds self-reported that they have no qualifications

The most significant industry sector in Cumbria, in employment terms, is Manufacturing followed by Retail, Health and Accommodation & Food.

An average of 42,500 working age residents in Cumbria were economically inactive (not working or seeking work) across 2023. This represents an inactivity rate of 18.3% of working age residents compared to 21.5% for the UK as a whole. Over 19,500 of these inactive residents cited long term health issues as the primary reason for them being inactive, the second biggest group were early retirees (11,700) with the remainder either looking after family/home (9,900), students (8,000) or citing other reasons (3,400). The majority of inactive residents in Cumbria (87%) said they did not want a job which is a higher proportion than nationally (82%) and is reflective of a slightly different make-up of inactivity in Cumbria (fewer students and more early retired).

Unemployment tends to be lower than the national rate. However, the average weekly wage across Cumbria is 4% less than the national average. Around 15,724 children live in low-income families. These issues are particularly prevalent in Barrow, Carlisle and the West coast of Cumberland.

The Planning Approach

Adult Learning's annual planning cycle commences in January of each year and finishes in July in preparation for the new academic year. However, the service carries out additional termly planning in November to ensure we can adapt curriculum to respond to the impact of in-year challenges and short notice changes to policy, strategy, and local need. We also carry out continuous informal planning to ensure we remain dynamic with the ability to respond quickly to emerging needs.

The service conducts a detailed analysis of national, regional and local priorities, taking into account the direction of Government policy, regional analyses and information produced by the Cumbria Observatory, for example, the People & Skills element of the Cumbria Local Industrial Strategy and the Cumbria Chamber of Commerce Local Skills Improvement Plan.

Strong, multi-layered governance, together with local engagement with external stakeholders are two things that are intrinsically linked within Adult Learning. We know that the closer links with stakeholders, the better the insight into local wants and needs, which is crucial to ensuring we provide relevant and purposeful skills, knowledge, and experience to the residents of Cumbria. This consists of development work with a range of external partners including.

- DWP (and local job centres)
- Inspira (careers information, advice & guidance service)
- Cumbria Work-based Learning Partnership

- Enterprising Cumbria (former CLEP team)

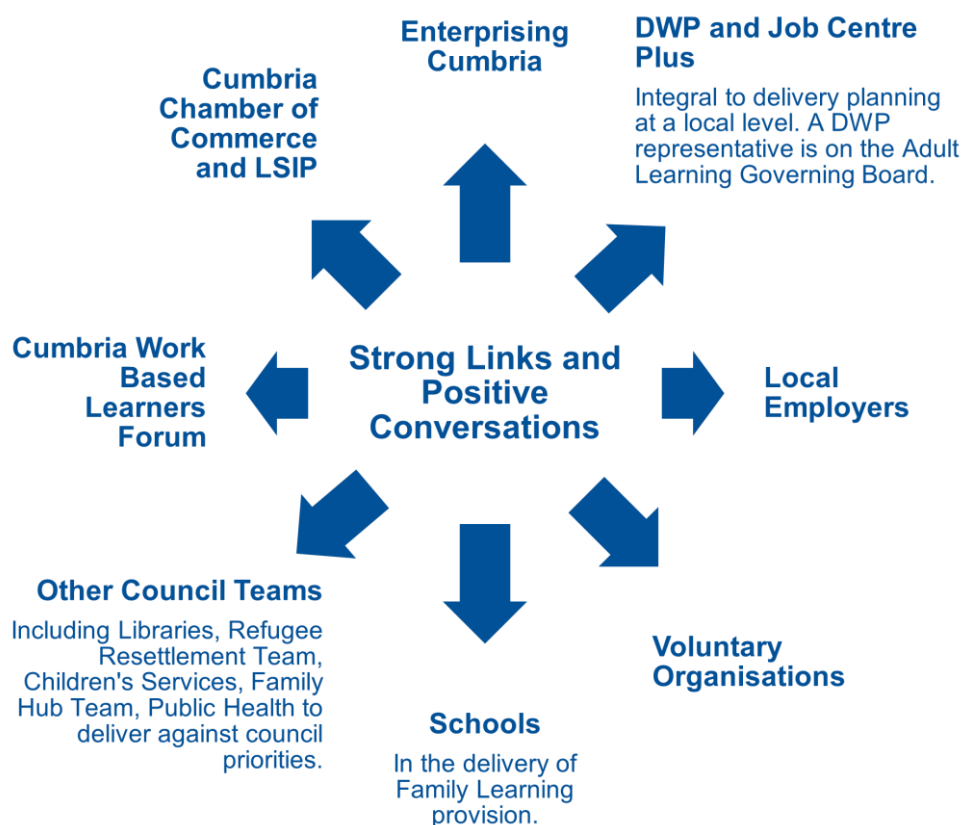
The service has also established strong internal partnerships, working closely with a range of teams across both councils including:

- Health & Wellbeing Coaches (HAWCs)
- Public Health
- Active Cumbria
- Libraries
- Communities Teams

Planning for success

Planning and strong relationships are key to delivering a service that meets local needs. To build a picture of what we need to deliver to support communities, research is paramount. Local engagement with key stakeholders is crucial to ensuring we provide a broad and relevant curriculum offer.

All conversations are underpinned by analysis of national, regional and local priorities including council plans and the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). This ensures we clearly align the curriculum offer to meet local need.



Learning and Achievement 2023/24

Cumbria Adult Learning has delivered a successful year of provision across the 2023/24 academic year and is on target to meet the contracts held with the Department of Education. We have consistently performed above national benchmarks and our headline achievements are as follows:

- Our predicted Qualification Achievement Rate (QAR) for skills provision is 85%. This is four percentage points higher than the previous year and one point above the National Benchmark.
- Our non-qualification Tailored Learning QAR continues to perform at the significantly high rate of 96%. This is four percentage points above the National Average.
- Our overall attendance rate is 93%. This is a three percentage point improvement and five points above the National Benchmark.
- We have a significantly high satisfaction rate with 98% of learners rating our provision Good or excellent.

This year we have introduced a new progression framework. We now measure positive progression at the end of each course and a sustained rate 3 months later. Positive progression is measured by asking individuals if they have progressed to employment, further education or a series of positive impact outcomes such as improvement to health and wellbeing. We use the same cohort for each stage. Our direct positive progression rate is currently 99% and our sustained rate is 96%.

We also measure internal progression where we look at individuals who progress to higher level provision or qualifications within Cumbria Adult Learning. This is currently 30% and identifies that nearly 2000 learners have progressed to further learning with us over a three-year period and achieved at a higher rate.

For 2024/25 we will learn from this success and aim to perform at similar or higher levels. We are introducing a new framework for the delivery of non-qualification Tailored Learning with an emphasis on progression pathways. We have used learning from the Multiply Numeracy programme to create a new curriculum structure and internal funding model based on viability and individual learning goals.

The Action Plan detailed below links directly to our Learning and Achievement from 2023/24.

Action Plan

We have developed an annual reporting framework to support the purpose set out in the Accountability Statement and to ensure we measure impact on meeting local need. This is included in the attached Action Plan. The priorities included in the plan link directly to our aims and objectives and are informed by our learning and achievement from previous years and the research carried out in relation to context and place.

We have also ensured that the priorities included match the strategic objectives outlined in both Council Plans and the Local Skills Improvement Plan.

Governing Body Sign Off

This Accountability Statement and business plan was approved in consultation with the Joint Executive Committee of Westmorland & Furness Council and Cumberland Council.

It is agreed by the Adult Learning Management Committee (Governing Body) that the learning provision carried out by the Service and outlined in this document meets Local Needs Duty.

Signed: A Hatcher

Name: ALISON HATCHER
(Management Committee Chair - Westmorland & Furness Council)

Date: 12th August 2024

Signed: Nik Hardy

Name: Nik Hardy
(Deputy Management Committee Chair – Cumberland Council)

Date: 23/8/24

Appendix 1 – Delivering our Objectives – Action Plan Academic Year

No.	Objective(s)	Action by Adult Learning	Westmorland & Furness		Cumberland		Overall	
			Target 2024/25	Progress RAG	Target 2024/25	Progress RAG	Target 2024/25	Progress RAG
1	Seek a balanced population and healthy happy lives for young and old.	We will develop our new Tailored Learning programme using the social and therapeutic aspects of learning to promote happy, healthy, and fulfilling lives. We will continue to build our social prescribing offer which will target individuals referred by over 30 partners - including health support organisations, GPs, and public health. Access to our arts and mindfulness programmes will support long term development and recovery and act as a springboard onto courses that develop skills for the workplace and/or increased involvement in the local community. To do this we will increase enrolments on this curriculum to the Target in 2024/25	440		620		1060	
	Promote prevention, collaboration, and active lifestyles to improve health and wellbeing for everyone.	We will enhance the impact of our High Needs and Learning Difficulty and Disability programme for adults (LDD). This will focus on improving the skills of learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties to support their personal development, live independent lives, and gain meaningful employment. We will increase the number of learners enrolling on this provision.	90		250		340	
	Support vulnerable people and reducing inequality.							

2	Support vulnerable people and reducing inequality.	We will continue to reduce the digital divide for vulnerable and older adult residents in isolated areas who lack the skills for effective communication in the 21st century. The digitalisation of this cohort will continue to form a key part of our service delivery plan. Alongside this we will work with partners, including local businesses, to address the lack of 'enough and appropriate' IT skills for the Cumbrian economy. We will offer meaningful and incremental digital courses that lead to basic skills as well as higher level accredited courses. We will take every opportunity to embed digital skills into our other provisions – e.g. using the Office suite to present information or running classes and exams online. To do this we will increase enrolments on the digital curriculum from Baseline in 22/23 to the Target in 23/24.	280		350		630	
	Promote sustainable inclusive economic growth across boundaries.							
	Support the transition to a strong, inclusive, and green economy by focusing on our businesses, our people and our assets.	In our commitment to Net-zero we will further develop our Greener Curriculum which provides practical methods to waste less, manage energy consumption, grow seasonal produce and reduce the use of chemicals in day-to-day life. We will provide specific qualifications at Level 1 and Level 2, to begin a journey into a new environmentally friendly career. To do this we will increase enrolments on these qualifications from the baseline.	40		15		55	
3	Support vulnerable people and reducing inequality.	We will support the integration of ethnic minority communities, refugees, and asylum seekers (including those from Afghanistan, Hong Kong, Syria, and the Ukraine), through the delivery of a comprehensive and targeted programme of skills, including English as a second language, employability, and life skills. We will increase the number of learners who progress to further learning.	40.0%		26.0%		33.0%	
4	Promote sustainable inclusive economic growth across boundaries.	We will engage with additional, local delivery partners to enhance the Adult Learning curriculum to provide alternative options to the way (and what) people learn. This is in response to the rationale laid out in the subcontracting policy where we will procure provision outside the specialism of our own direct delivery teams. This will provide additional flexibility and inclusiveness to support individuals in gaining employability and vocational qualifications up to and including Level 3. To do this we will use external audit to carry out assessment against the Subcontracting Standard with the aim to achieve the Standard.	Achieved	Achieved	Achieved	Achieved	Achieved	Achieved
	Support vulnerable people and reducing inequality.							
	Address worklessness and youth unemployment.							

5	<p>Enable confident, empowered, and resilient communities.</p> <p>Make provision more accessible and address barriers to progression.</p>	<p>Through outreach we will grow our new Tailored Learning Pathways offer to provide a wide range of courses to respond to issues which impact wellbeing such as loneliness and depression. We will promote the need to look after our mental health and so improve access to employment opportunities and/or involvement in the local community. This will cover specific topics including English, ESOL, Maths, Arts and Craft, Languages, Family Learning, Health, Employability and Digital. We will increase the number of learners enrolling on this this provision.</p>	1250		2200		3450	
6	<p>Address worklessness and youth unemployment.</p> <p>Support vulnerable people and reducing inequality.</p>	<p>We will further develop the Employability provision to support the people of Westmorland & Furness and Cumberland with the hard skills needed to gain and be successful in employment including writing CVs, job seeking and interviews. For more vulnerable cohorts including the long term unemployed in Carlisle/Barrow we will focus on learners' personal development, building their soft skills in terms of teamwork, confidence, communication, and motivation. We will grow our specific vocational training in CSCS, Health and Social Care, Food Safety etc to meet sectoral/employer priorities as identified in the LSIP. We will continue to embed digital skills into this provision as we recognise the crucial part digital skills play in the workplace. We will continue to build our partnerships with DWP and Inspira to build courses that respond to local and national initiatives. We will work with local groups including employers to increase enrolments and attendance on these courses and so improve achievement of qualifications. To do this we will improve the achievement rate of learners participating on employability provision.</p>	92.0%		95.0%		93.0%	
7	<p>Make provision more accessible and address barriers to progression.</p>	<p>We will build responsive curriculum plans, covering specific sectors, to provide opportunities for individuals to develop their skills from basic level up to Level 1 and 2. We are Matrix accredited and will continue to use Information, Advice and Guidance to ensure all our learners are offered relevant progression opportunities either within our service, with other partners/providers and/or to employment. To do this we will derive a baseline of learners who have enrolled on EL, L1 and L2 provision in 22/23 and calculate the percentage of those who progressed from lower-level qualifications or Non-regulated community learning in year and from the previous 5 years. We will then improve this rate.</p>	49.0%		49.0%		49.0%	

8	Promote sustainable inclusive economic growth across boundaries.	We will improve the outcomes of learners on accredited basic Maths, English and Digital courses, through achievement of functional skills and digital qualifications from entry to level 2. To do this we will improve the achievement rate of learners participating on basic skills and digital provision.	72.0%(Maths)		60.0% (Maths)		64.0% (Maths)	
			49.0% (English)		77.0% (English)		72.0% (English)	
			64.0%(Digital)		72.0% (Digital)		75.0% (Digital)	
	Make provision more accessible and address barriers to progression	We will improve the outcomes of learners on GCSE English and Maths. To do this we will improve the achievement rate of learners participating on GCSE provision.	80.0%		80.0%		80.0%	
		Through Multiply we will engage with additional learners on non-accredited numeracy provision. To do this we will increase enrolments on Multiply interventions.	75		130		205	
9	Promote sustainable inclusive economic growth across boundaries.	We will work with local employers to ensure their workforce has the appropriate skills to progress within their roles and the organisation. To do this we will develop the employer focussed skills offer and increase the numbers of employers we are working with over the 24/25 academic year.	4		6		10	
	Support the transition to a strong, inclusive, and green economy by focusing on our businesses, our people and our assets.	We will ensure that employed learners attending adult learning provision, with vocational intent, positively progress within employment as a result of their attendance on the course or qualification.	25		25		50	