

# Cumbria Adult Learning

**Cumbria Adult Learning – UKPRN 10091806**  
**Subcontracting - Supply Chain Policy 2025/26**

## **Context**

Cumbria Adult Learning is an integral part of the Thriving Communities Directorate of Westmorland & Furness Council. It is a hosted service providing 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 a 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:

- Seek a balanced population and healthy happy lives for young and old
- Enable confident, empowered and resilient communities
- Promote prevention, collaboration, and active lifestyles to improve health and wellbeing for everyone
- 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
- Support vulnerable people and reducing inequality
- Address worklessness and youth unemployment
- Make provision more accessible and address barriers to progression



Westmorland  
& Furness  
Council

Working for Cumberland Council and  
Westmorland & Furness Council

The Service is externally funded by The Department of Education (DfE). In response to the DfE's expectation that lead providers reduce subcontracted provision it should be noted that Cumbria Adult Learning has always only used procured partners as a means to enhance the adult education offer in our local area. This has been carried out through engaging with partners offering additional niche curriculum and delivery methods outside the specialism of the direct delivery team. The level of procurement has always remained below 15%.

Cumbria Adult Learning has always subcontracted a small proportion of its Adult Skills Fund Budget to meet the needs of the community as outlined in the rationale. This has always remained below 25% of the budget.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to all supply chain activity supported with funding from the DfE.

### **Rationale for Sub-contracting**

Cumbria Adult Learning has developed a range of partnerships with subcontracted providers to help us to achieve our vision *to strengthen and sustain the people and communities of Cumbria through the power of learning*:

- Cumbria is an area of approximately 2,500 square miles. This presents considerable challenges for delivery of an area-wide service. Community-based subcontractors enable us to meet this challenge, especially in relation to our areas of highest disadvantage in geographically isolated communities. Partners help target learners in these areas through focussed blended learning programmes with high quality, responsive and agile delivery mechanisms.
- Subcontracting offers the opportunity to work in partnership with niche providers working with specific targeted groups of disadvantaged adults, such as adults who are unemployed.
- Subcontracting offers individuals additional access to flexible Adult Learning provision to widen participation of those who are disadvantaged in the community and so aid progression to further learning within Cumbria Adult Learning as well as other colleges, providers and/or higher education institutions.
- Subcontracting enables a greater offer of pre Level 2 pathway routes to higher qualifications. These include lower-level technical and engineering qualifications that Cumbria Adult Learning does not have the resource and specialism to deliver through its direct delivery teams.

- All of the points above allow Cumbria Adult Learning to continue to offer a high quality, responsive and flexible curriculum to support the needs, identified in the key research, highlighted further in this policy.

### **Multiple deprivation and targeting areas of need through partnership**

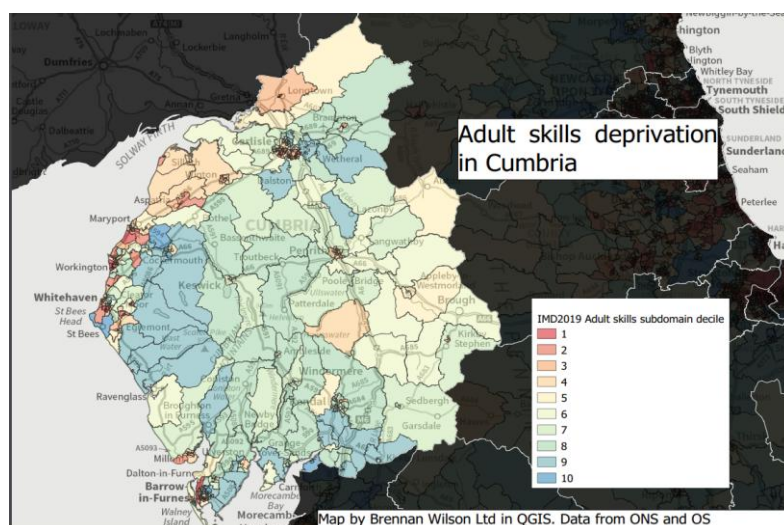
IMD 2019 data shows clear evidence of skills deprivation in specific areas of Cumbria, including Carlisle, Penrith, West Cumberland, and Barrow-in-Furness. Wards in these areas are in the lowest 10% skills deprivation in England. Subcontracting with niche partners supports Cumbria Adult Learning in targeting communities with high skills deprivation demonstrated as hot spots in the map below.

Cumbria Adult Learning direct delivery centres are located in the hotspot areas and have built strong partnerships in delivering skills in these areas. Subcontracted providers enhance provision allowing partnerships to develop which offer a wide and responsive curriculum supporting the points laid out in the rationale.

Our partners have experience of delivering skills provision and targeting hard to reach cohorts in these areas outside the specialism of our own direct delivery curriculum.

We deploy learner recruitment with partners through individual characteristics – including care leavers, unemployed, ex-offenders, employed and refugees.

Cumbria Adult Learning and subcontracted providers have strong partnerships in place with DWP, CVS, Libraries, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, Enterprising Cumbria, Inspira, volunteer groups, care providers, HMP Haverigg and refugee support groups.



## **Skills Deprivation**

- Low qualifications:
  - Around 18,800 working-age adults (6.7%) in Cumbria have no qualifications
  - Some areas (e.g. Barrow, parts of West Cumbria) have much higher rates.
- Skills gaps
  - Lower proportions of people with higher-level (Level 4+) qualifications compared with the national average.
  - Certain sectors struggle to recruit due to lack of skills (engineering, health & social care, digital).
- Inequality by area
  - Furness and parts of West Cumbria show concentrations of low skills and fewer adults progressing into higher/further education.
  - Rural areas face additional barriers (transport, access to FE/HE institutions, broadband).
- Lifelong learning
  - Participation in adult learning is relatively low, with cost, travel, and limited course availability cited as barriers.

Skills deprivation for adults in Cumbria centres on low qualification levels, limited access to higher skills training, and stark differences between areas, leaving some communities at a disadvantage in employment and progression.

## **Employment/Unemployment**

- Low unemployment: The unemployment rate in Cumbria is around 1.6% (approx. 3,900 people), well below the North West (~3.7%) and national (~3.9%) averages.
- High employment: About 78.4% of working-age residents are in employment, higher than regional and national averages.
- Claimant count: Around 6,800 people (2.3% of the working-age population) are claiming unemployment-related benefits, again lower than the national rate (~4.1%).
- Economic inactivity: Despite low unemployment, around 21% of working-age adults are economically inactive (not working and not seeking work), reflecting issues such as health conditions, caring responsibilities, or skills barriers.
- District variation: Some areas, such as Copeland and Allerdale, have slightly higher claimant rates (~2.4–2.6%), while others are lower.
- Pay and jobs: Pay levels in Cumbria are about 95% of the UK average, though major employers in West Cumbria help lift wages in some districts.

Overall: Cumbria has a stronger labour market than much of the UK, with low unemployment and high employment rates. However, challenges remain around economic inactivity, pay levels, and area inequalities.

### **Equality and Diversity**

All subcontracted partners will perform its obligations under agreement in accordance with:

- all applicable equality law (whether in relation to race, sex, gender reassignment, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy, maternity or otherwise)
- the Council's equality and diversity policy as provided to the Provider
- any other requirements and instructions which the Council reasonably imposes in connection with any equality obligations imposed on the Council at any time under applicable equality law

Initial assessment will be carried out for all learners and additional learner support will be available and allocated as appropriate.

### **Improving the Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment**

Subcontractors will be expected to meet Service quality assurance standards. The quality of provision will be monitored and managed through the Service's existing quality assurance processes and procedures.

The Service is committed to continuous improvement of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This will be achieved through the sharing of effective practice across the supply chain, for example through the Self-Assessment Report, regular lesson observations with constructive feedback and the shared resources of professionals to support the subcontractor with any teaching and learning issues.

### **Contingency Plan in the Case of Non-delivery**

In compliance with DfE and other Department funding rules that apply, if a subcontractor withdraws from the arrangement, or if a subcontractor goes into liquidation or administration, Cumbria Adult Learning undertakes to directly manage and deliver the remainder of the agreed provision already being delivered. This delivery will be either through existing structure, additional subcontracting or by retaining Tutor expertise and/or specialist equipment, whichever is more cost-effective. Any provision planned but not started will be cancelled and the project closed. If Cumbria Adult Learning needs to withdraw from a subcontracting arrangement, sufficient notice will be provided to allow subcontractors to complete delivery of immediate provision. Cumbria Adult Learning will provide support to enable subcontractors to identify other sources of funding if possible, or take appropriate action to complete the project, or close the project at the earliest opportunity, without prejudice to currently enrolled learners or staff.

## **Fees and charges**

Cumbria Adult Learning retains 20% of the Government Funded value of the provision delivered by the subcontractor. This is referred to as the management fee. The level of the management fee has been arrived at by a detailed assessment of the costs involved in managing an external delivery partner. It represents the cost of effectively identifying, selecting and managing subcontracted provision and covers the cost of the standard support that the Service deems necessary to maintain the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and high success rates of partners. This amount ensures that our subcontracting arrangement is a viable delivery option whilst remaining fair to the subcontracted partner.

In order to maintain the high quality of provision expected by Cumbria Adult Learning and OFSTED each subcontractor will receive the following support:

- **Contract Management** – Each subcontracted partner will be allocated a contract manager and receive a full programme of support throughout the period of the contract. This will involve a contract initiation meeting followed by bi-monthly support meetings. Contract support will consist of:
  - Confirmation of Allocation and payment process
  - Financial support through Adult Learning Finance Officer (detailed further below)
  - Policies and Procedures guidance including Health and Safety Support.
  - Advice on Government policy.
  - Full suite of course management paperwork and support for tutors and managers in ensuring accurate completion.
  - Learner support – including access to specialist advice and specific support service for individuals with learning difficulties and disabilities.
  - Access to Management Information System including electronic registers.
  - Performance management support - including access to regular bi-monthly monitoring meetings.
  - Training and support on all Cumbria Adult Learning Software – ProSolution, and Strata
- **Financial Support** – Each partner will receive a financial support and payment service consisting of the following:
  - Payments issued on a bi-monthly basis as set out in the payment schedule detailed in this contract. Payment will be issued by BACS.
  - A remittance advice will be sent via e-mail 3 to 5 days prior to the BACS payment being made.
  - Any queries relating to payments will be acknowledged within 3 working days and resolution will be sought within 7 working days. Please note this

timeframe may be extended if the action required to resolve the query, requires a response from both the Subcontractor and Cumbria Adult Learning.

- Partners will receive a summary every two months showing payments made to date, with supporting details and reconciliation.
- **Support for Quality of Teaching & Learning** – Partners will receive full extensive quality support through the Cumbria Adult Learning OTLA process as follows:
  - Subcontractors are encouraged to use their own established quality assurance and observation processes, ensuring ongoing alignment with their organisational practices. Cumbria Adult Learning request access to relevant internal records and seek opportunities to undertake joint observations.
  - Opportunities to undertake peer observation, fostering shared understanding and consistency in teaching standards and promoting the exchange of effective teaching strategies and continuous improvement.
  - The option to engage with Cumbria Adult Learning’s coaching-led OTLA model, designed to support reflective practice and professional growth.
- **Publicity and Marketing Support** – Partners will receive a full range of marketing and communications support consisting of the following:
  - Advertisement of courses and contact details in the annual Autumn Cumbria Adult Learning Brochure (printed and delivered to all households in Westmorland & Furness and Cumberland).
  - Courses advertised online via the Cumbria Adult Learning website.
  - Advertising on the Council’s social media sites (Facebook; Twitter and Instagram).
  - Occasional advertising in local press at the time of the Autumn brochure delivery.
- **Curriculum Development and CPD** – Partners will receive access to a programme of CPD and support on curriculum development as follows:
  - Curriculum CPD events throughout the academic year.
  - Annual service day with a programme of development modules.
  - Sharing good practice and innovation

### **Payment arrangements**

The standard payment arrangements are that the Maximum Contract Value (MCV) specified in the provider’s subcontract is paid in six equal bi-monthly payments in September, November, January, March, May and July. The MCV is a net value, reduced by a 20% management fee applied to the gross funding earned.

However, following payment 1 in September, provider target profiles specified in the contract are regularly compared with actual delivery as recorded on the ILR and payments 2 – 6 are reduced or suspended where necessary. In this case payments are as follows:

- **Payment 1 (September)** – one sixth (16.67%) of total MCV.
- **Payment 2 (November)** – data returns used to calculate actual earnings to date. If this is less than 80% of expected profiled delivery, payment made is actual earnings to date less payment 1. Provider is required to submit detailed action plan of how they will make up the shortfall.
- **Payment 3 (January)** - data returns used to calculate actual earnings to date. If this is less than 85% of expected profiled delivery, payment made is actual earnings to date less payments 1 & 2. Provider is required to submit detailed action plan of how they will make up the shortfall.
- **Payment 4 (March)** - data returns used to calculate actual earnings to date. If this is less than 90% of expected profiled delivery, payment made is actual earnings to date less payments 1, 2 & 3.
- **Payment 5 (May)** - data returns used to calculate actual earnings to date. If this is less than 95% of expected profiled delivery, payment made is actual earnings to date less payments 1, 2, 3 and 4.
- **Payment 6 (July)** - data returns used to calculate actual earnings to date and projected additional earnings from outstanding achievements. If this is less than expected profiled delivery, payment made is actual earnings to date less payments 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5.
- **Final reconciliation (November)** – following submission of the final ILR return (R14) at the end of October, a final reckoning of actual earnings against MCV is made. Any outstanding monies due are paid, or an invoice is raised for any clawback in situations where payments 1 – 6 amounts to more than final earnings.

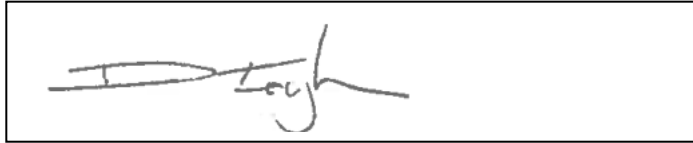
Invoices are not required to trigger payments.

Providers cannot claim more than the MCV specified in their contract.

### **Communication of the policy**

The Service will ensure that all actual and potential subcontractors have sight of this policy. The policy will be reviewed annually in July and updated or amended as required. It will be published on the Cumbria Adult Learning area of the council's website at the start of each academic year and will be discussed at contract negotiation and set-up meetings with all subcontractors.

**Signed:**



**Name:**

Tracey Ingham

**Job Title:**

Assistant Director Safe and Strong  
Communities

**Dated:**

15<sup>th</sup> October 2025

**Date for review: July 2026**