



ADULT
COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Mission Statement

2023 -25 v1.1

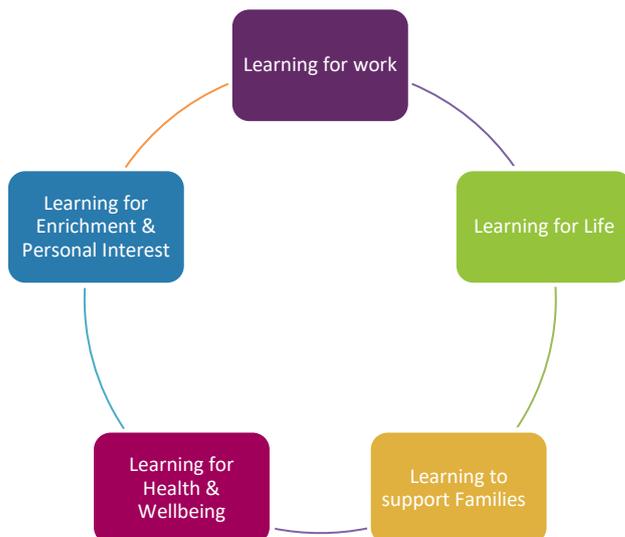
Adult Community Education Mission Statement

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1. What is the Mission Statement?

The overarching vision of West Sussex County Council’s Adult Community Education (WSSCC ACE) is to **maximise adult participation in education and training through an offer that supports five inter-related outcomes:**



1.1 Who are the target groups?

ACE in the county needs to be aimed at those whose individual circumstances places them most in need of learning and skills and may not otherwise have access to learning. This ties ACE into wider initiatives and agendas for the council.



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1.3 Strategic Fit

ACE can foster a local collaborative response and contribute to national, regional and local strategies and safeguarding the quality provision of adult education.

• **Levelling Up White Paper¹**

Lifelong Skills is a key contributor to the government's Levelling Up agenda and ACE encompasses and instils the 6 capitals that drive success in towns, cities and counties.

WSCC want to optimise the allocation of the Adult Education Budget and the Multiply Numeracy budget to enable the Levelling Up missions. Particularly to increase the number of people successfully completing high quality skills training and to contribute to great health and wellbeing.



• **Coast to Capital Strategic Economic Plan 2018-30²**

Priority 4 of the Coast to Capital Strategic Economic Plan is to "Create Skills for the Future". This priority has a particular focus on upskilling and re-skilling the adult workforce, to address the impact of an ageing working population. This places ACE as a central enabler. It highlights the need to the need to changes attitudes and approaches to skills development among employers, workers and parents. The Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) seeks to focus on areas with a shortage of relevant skills such as Crawley, Arun and Adur and where the skills of the existing workforce are out of date and focus on STEM, digital and basic skills.

• **Coast to Capital Skills Strategy and Action Plan 2020-2025³**

The Coast to Capital Skills Strategy and Action Plan provides a framework of targets, objectives and activities around two priorities of: People and Business. It focuses on what the region needs to do to recover, maintain its strengths and overcome the weaknesses that have come into focus after COVID 19. It acknowledges that the unemployed cohort now includes a higher number of people who have medium and high skills from sectors which may have shrunk significantly. Leading to a mis-match of skills and available jobs. Meaning adults across all age groups having to retrain for jobs in different sectors and occupations that are likely to thrive into the future. This is compounded for groups further from the labour market, now even less likely to find work easily and who now need to access professions requiring different skills.

ACE seeks to contribute to the C2C Skills Strategy and Action Plan through a:

- Local collaborative response, reducing competition and safeguarding the quality provision of education, at all stages
- Up-skilling residents to access local well-paid jobs
- Retaining and learning from the skilled older workforce
- Digital Skills essential for all
- Effective Information, Advice and Guidance

• **Sussex Trailblazer Local Skills Improvement Plan March 2022**

The Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) identifies shorthand long term priorities in response to Covid-19. There are some key threats for West Sussex, including a gap in the number of working

¹Levelling up Executive Summary February 2022:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1052046/Executive_Summary.pdf

² [Strategic Economic Plan, Gatwick 360° | Coast 2 Capital](#)

³ Coast to Capital Skills Strategy and Action Plan 2020-2025:

https://www.coast2capital.org.uk/storage/downloads/coast_to_capital_skills_strategy_and_action_plan_2020-25-1600180368.pdf

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age 20-40 year olds and the challenges for the coastal strip and Crawley which experience pockets of unemployment, lower skills levels and less participation in further and higher education. ACE makes a central contribution to up-skilling residents to access local well-paid jobs, retaining and learning from the skilled older workforce, Digital Skills and Effective Information, Advice and Guidance.

• West Sussex County Council's Corporate Plan for 2021-25⁴

ACE links to all four priorities of the West Sussex Plan. With a particular focus under the 3rd priority, to work with education providers to support them to run accessible learning and development opportunities as a focus on Lifelong Learning.



The economy and skills have never been more important as the county recovers from the COVID 19 pandemic. The council has developed an Economy Reset plan with a clear focus *to re-focusing the Adult Learning Curriculum to support employability and provide opportunities.*

1.2 How will we know if we are successful?

There are 4 key benefits that will emerge if the ACE mission is successful which can be measured.

Benefit	Evidence
Sustainable and Productive Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No. of learners that move into work, apprenticeships, volunteering, further learning on completing their learning ➤ Feedback from DWP and LSIP on the 'health' of the workforce's skills needs in relevant sectors and job roles.
Skills for life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No. of learners improving their skills and confidence with English and communication; Maths; Digital
Social Inclusion & Community Cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No. of learners who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ feel a heightened sense of belonging in their community. ▪ want to improve their local area after participating in ACE. ▪ take a more active role or volunteer in the community (e.g., schools).
Health and Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Learner's report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ fewer visits to their GP / health service. ▪ improved mental wellbeing and increased self-confidence.

1.4 What will enable this mission to be delivered?

The council will allocate funding based on the following principles:

- Responsive, accessible, and high-quality learning opportunities
- Maximising the reach to adults eligible for means tested benefit
- Targeting areas of social and economic deprivation – levelling up
- Being inclusive and open to all learners
- Partnerships complementary and coherent with other learning opportunities available to residents
- understanding the impact of their actions on the climate and the environment.

WSCC receive:

- **£3.1m** annual Adult Education Budget (AEB) from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)⁵. This is approximately split 40% for Adult Skills and 60% for Community Learning.

⁴ WSCC Council Plan 2021-2025 https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/media/15919/our_council_plan.pdf

⁵ ESFA Funding Rules can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/sfa-funding-rates>

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- There is an additional **£35k** for 16–19 year olds not in employment, education or training (NEET).
- **£1.2m annual** funding to deliver Multiply, as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), until to March 2025. This is to support the Levelling Up mission and help improve people's ability to understand and use maths in daily life, home, and work.

2. Needs Analysis

2.1 National picture⁶

There is a skills deficit that has now been recognised, arising from Covid-19 and the challenges the labour market faced. It is estimated that nationally 66% of the workforce face some level of under-skilling. The challenging climate for many adults is a result of some long running themes;

- **Poor basic skills** with almost half of adults from lowest socioeconomic groups not taking part in any training since leaving school
- **Rising and continuing automation** in the workplace meaning that skills of the workforce are not aligned to the skills needed in the available jobs
- **Wellbeing has greater prominence** as adults live longer and often alone – the lockdowns evidence how continued education contributes to healthier lives
- **Longer working lives** and the need for many older adults to continue to work and save for retirement, however this will require retraining as what they did in their younger lives may not be possible
- **Developing the Post Brexit labour market** to ensure our jobs are attractive and filled by British residents
- **Progressing from benefit to sustainable jobs** remains a challenge – low qualifications which increase the likelihood of unemployment and depresses earning power
- **Atypical working** and the rise of zero hours and self-employment where employer funded training is less prevalent

ACE is recognised as an important piece of the jigsaw, however despite the vast amount of data on learners there is little analysis or interpretation to create a coherent framework for LAs or providers to work to. Rather than a guiding narrative there is a patchwork of ad hoc projects across the country. Part of the Levelling Up⁶ task is for the DfE to developing a better understanding of ACE.

The data pulled from different sources from 2019 and 2020 shows a clear skills deficit and the breakdown;

- 17 million adults without a Level 2 qualification
- 9 million adults with poor basic skills
- 11.9 million adults do not have the essential digital skills they need for life
- 17.3 million adults do not have the essential digital skills they need for work
- An additional 7 million workers (20% of the current labour market) could be under-skilled for their job
- A further 0.9 million people could be over-skilled for their current role

Funding for ACE has decreased in real terms over the past 10 years, with fewer local sources for providers to draw on. Naturally this has led to participation rates decreasing with over 1 million learners being lost nationally.

- Further education and skills participation 1,745,800, down 15.6% from 2018/19
- Adult education budget participation 1,042,000, down 20.0% from 2018/19
- Education and training participation 875,100, down 19.3% from 2018/19
- Community learning participation 358,500, down 26.9% from 2018/19

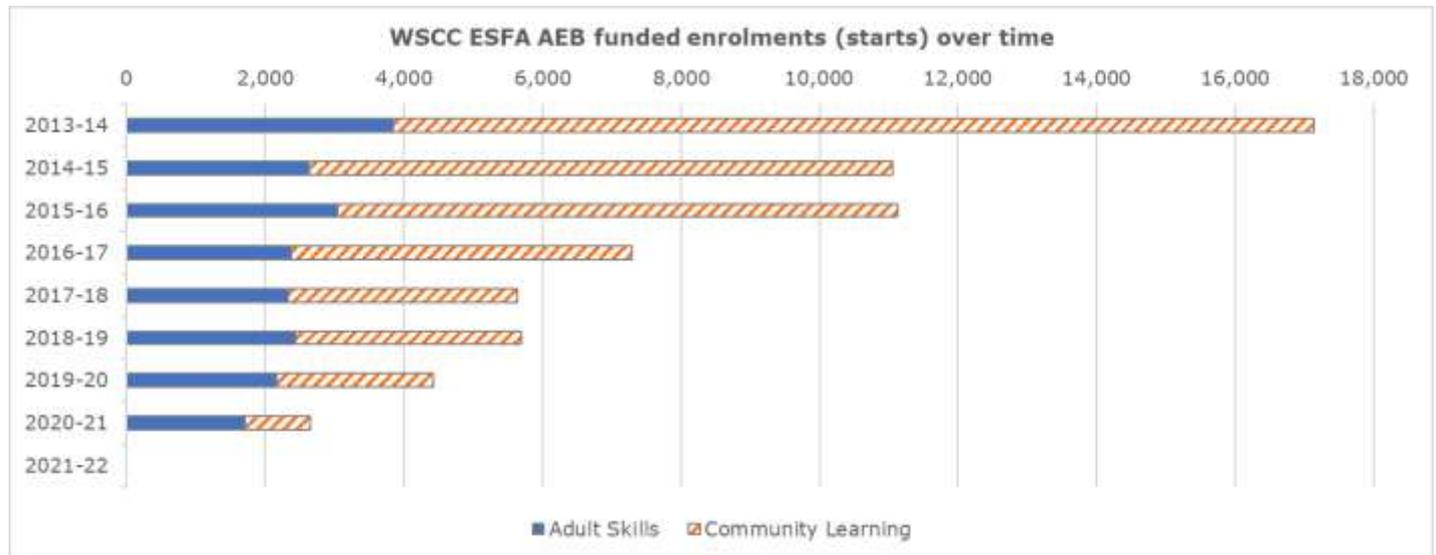
⁶ Levelling Up Adult Community Education <https://fetl.org.uk/publications/3252/>

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- During the period since the start of lockdown (23 March to 31 July 2020) enrolment starts on adult education and training were 208,790, a 50.4% drop compared to the same period in 2018/19 (420,910)

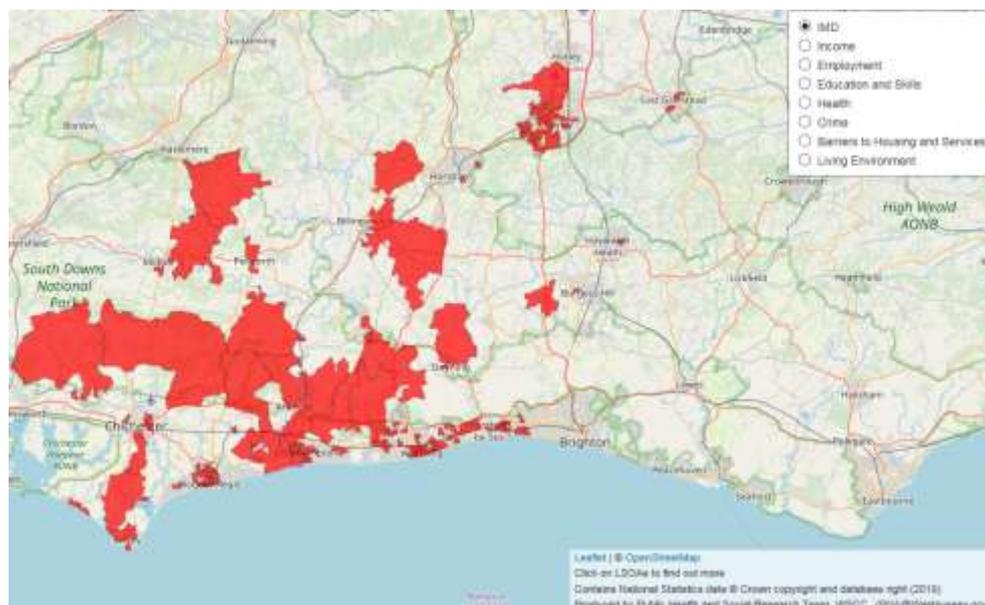
2.2 Local Picture

The current climate requires WSCC to look again at ACE and find ways to expand its approach to adult learning and skills for life needs. The local data is patchy, but we can see through Individualised Learner Record (ILR) returns that the number of learners engaging on subcontracted ACE provision has been falling in West Sussex.



2.3 Geographical Priorities

Learning opportunities need to be targeted where the need is most prevalent, can best be met and be highly accessible. The areas of greatest need, based on Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019, show a prevalence of need in and around Crawley and the 'Coastal Strip' of Adur, Arun and Worthing. However, these areas have a low number of learners and participation rates mirror the downward trend in line with the rest of the county. Despite small increases from learning interventions following the COVID 19 lockdowns.



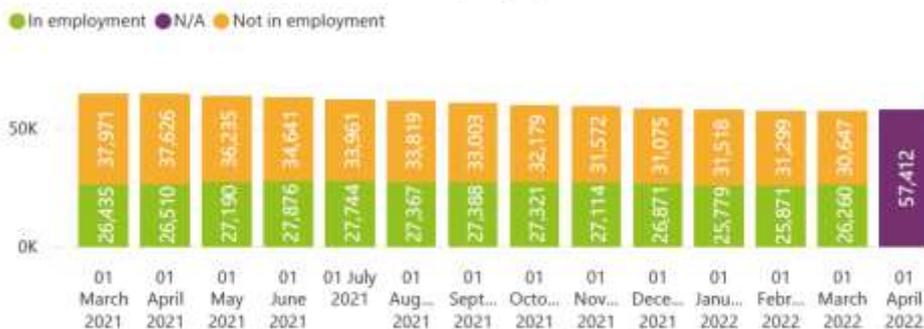
The 30% most deprived LSOAs in West Sussex using IMD 2019 data

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2.4 People out of work⁷

The number of people claiming Universal Credit in West Sussex has seen an unprecedented increase through Covid 19 almost doubling from 27k in March 2020 before lockdown to 57k in April 2022. This has been a national trend but the effect was more pronounced in West Sussex than other parts of the South East. Although the numbers are starting to ease it highlights the need for appropriate and accessible Adult Education to help match skills to meet the vacancies and open opportunities for adults that have suffered during the pandemic.

Universal Credit claimants in West Sussex by employment status



Percentage of people aged 16-64 years claiming Universal Credit



Source: [Department for Work and Pensions](#)

Released: 17 May 2022 (April 2022 figures are provisional)

2.5 Skills Priorities in West Sussex⁸

The following sectors are identified as those with the highest employment rates and most significant skills gaps:

- Engineering and Manufacturing
- Construction
- Digital, IT & Technology
- Visitor, Hospitality, Creative & Cultural
- Land-based, Agriculture & Viticulture
- Health & Care, Bio Life Sciences & Pharmaceutical.

Emerging growth clusters in the region requiring specialist skills are: Digital Technology, Artificial Intelligence, Green Technology and Sustainability.



⁷ : [Department for Work and Pensions](#) Released: 17 May 2022 (April 2022 figures are provisional)

⁸ Sussex Trailblazer Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) March 2022 <https://www.sussexchamberofcommerce.co.uk/storage/resources/lcip-2-1649415024.pdf>

3. Curriculum Framework

WSSC will use ESFA AEB funding to provide a curriculum which is categorised into five broad outcomes:

- Learning for Work
- Learning for Life
- Learning to support Families
- Learning for Health and Wellbeing
- Learning for Enrichment and Personal Interest

The curriculum will include regulated qualifications and non-regulated provision. Non-regulated provision, particularly English, Maths and ESOL, will be provided for individuals who:

- are assessed as requiring additional support and development in order to be ready to progress to a qualification or engage with employment
- require independent living skills or engagement in learning which supports them to operate confidently and effectively in life and work.

'Fusion Skills' – the skills needed for the future world of work and society more generally such as the ability to work effectively in teams, communicate with others and solve problems - will be developed to feature throughout our ACE curriculum and particularly Learning for Work. Fusion Skills will be delivered both explicitly and embedded alongside other technical and digital skills.

Intentionally, there is considerable flexibility with the range of subjects which can be delivered and the delivery method (classroom, online – whether live, pre-recorded or learning materials on a VLE, blended, distance).

3.1 Learning for Work

Provision within this theme will contribute directly to a learner's potential to be employed or progress in their work, including securing more substantive and sustainable employment.

Outcomes from this provision will be progression into employment, further work related training / learning, volunteering or self-employment.

The content of this theme is largely accredited, free to those who are unemployed and targeted at those with low skills in line with the ESFA Funding Rule eligibility. This includes Functional Skills and GCSE provision in both English and Maths for adults, the first full level 2 and level 3 qualification for those aged 19-23, Functional Skills ICT and some specific digital and computer skills provision. Fusion Skills, which represent the qualities most highly valued by employers for an employee's effectiveness in the workplace, will be developed to feature in this theme.

Learners entering this theme will be offered an opportunity to plan their learning journey across several courses both within a provider and across other providers where applicable. Through partnership with the National Career Service, learners will be able to benefit from impartial Information, Advice and Guidance to support them in making decisions on their next steps in learning, training and work.

Study Programmes for learners aged 16-19 is included in this theme and provides participants with challenging, individualised programmes that support their personal development, future learning and career plans as key requirements.

3.2 Learning for Life

Provision in this theme will contribute to a learner's sense of being, support greater independence, reduce the digital divide, develop skills that support families learning together and contribute to community cohesion.

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The provision is largely non-accredited and heavily subsidised by the Education and Skills Funding Agency's Adult Education Budget contribution. Within this theme are programmes specifically supporting Adults with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities in improving their life and independent-living skills.

In this theme, some of the courses are of short duration to engage reluctant learners and support them into longer iterations of learning within the theme or across into other themes as their learning journeys develop. For some, learning in this theme will contribute to an improved opportunity for employment although learning may not originally be undertaken for that reason.

Particular outcomes from this theme will be further learning, increased social involvement, increased independence, improved wellbeing, increased involvement in children's learning (particularly through Family Learning and Parenting provision), increased use of technology to support everyday living and improved work-readiness with participants encouraged to progress on to Learning for Work provision.

Community engagement activity will be undertaken within this theme as well as the Learning for Personal Interest theme to re-engage adults in learning.

3.3 Learning to support Families

Family Learning and Parenting provision supports families (in the widest sense: children, parents, carers, grandparents) through programmes which:

- increase parents' involvement in their children's learning,
- improve family health and wellbeing,
- increase social and community engagement,
- raise aspirations and create positive attitudes to learning,
- support transitions (e.g. school phases),
- improve confidence and employability skills for adults,
- improve young people's development and attainment.

There is considerable flexibility with the range of subjects which can be delivered with a strong focus on developing 'skills for life' (English, Maths, ESOL and Digital / IT skills). Family Learning provides a unique range of opportunities for families, to learn together to raise skills across generations. The learning environment is relaxed and 'non-threatening', yet purposeful. Provision is usually delivered in partnership, for example with schools, children and family centres and libraries.

Community engagement activity will be undertaken within this theme to re-engage adults in learning, particularly those who have been away from education or have been economically inactive, for example, looking to return to learning / work after having a family.

3.4 Learning for Health and Wellbeing

Provision in this theme will develop the knowledge and understanding, skills, capabilities and attributes which individuals need for mental, emotional and physical wellbeing now and in the future. Provision will target those most in need of support to access as a result of their personal circumstances, for example (but not exclusively); having an identified health need, limited mobility, experiencing financial hardship, mental ill health through job insecurity / redundancy or other 'life-pressures' causing stress and anxiety.

Mental Health programmes (including those developed and successfully trialled through the national Community Learning and Mental Health Pilot and Aspire's "Aspire 2B Me") which support adults aged 19+ who are recovering from mild to moderate mental health illness, are included in this theme.

Particular outcomes from this theme will be include increased social involvement, improved health, fitness and wellbeing, increased independence, reduced reliance on public services and health services.

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3.5 Learning for Enrichment and Personal Interest

Provision within this theme will contribute to a learner's quality of life, cultural enrichment, creative stimulation and personal fulfilment with enhanced skills and knowledge of how to use leisure time.

The provision is largely non accredited, although specialist accredited opportunities may be offered, designed to be accessible for those who work and / or are financially stable, minimally subsidised by the Education and Skills Funding Agency contribution (Former Community Learning Grant element of the AEB) and is the route for delivering the highest '£+' contribution from ESFA funded provision.

Provision will be up to and including notional level 2, enabling participants to progress to further learning, learning 'clubs' / social groups, private opportunities and / or a provider's own full cost recovery provision. Outcomes from these courses will have a greater weighting to personal development goals and progression to further learning.

Engagement activity will be offered in this theme, when appropriate.

As many learners engage with this theme as a social activity as well as a learning opportunity, commissioned providers are encouraged to develop further progression routes comprising full cost recovery programmes, 'Learning Clubs' and lectures / talks outside of the WSCC contract.

Provision in this theme will be restricted to ensure that resource is prioritised to the delivery of Learning for Work, Life, Health and Wellbeing and engaging those whose individual circumstances place them most in need of learning and skills.

Appendix A – National Thinking

WSSC ACE's curriculum takes account of the increasing range of commissions, national policy and strategy, such as:

- State of the Nation 2017: Social Mobility in Great Britain, Social Mobility Commission, November 2017.
- New Challenges New Chances: Further Education and Skills System Reform Plan 2011; Department of Business Innovation and Skills.
- Skills for Sustainable Growth 2010; Department of Business Innovation and Skills.
- Post-18 review of education and funding: independent panel report, Augar, May 2019.
- Select Committee Inquiry of Lifelong Learning, 2019.
- Government's ongoing review of qualifications at Level 3 and below.
- ESFA reforms to subcontracting for learners over 16, 2020.
- FE White Paper: "Skills for jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth".
- DfE's Lifetime Skills Guarantee, March 2021.
- DfE's 'Skills Accelerator' programme and the development of Local Skills Improvement Plan trailblazers and Strategic Development Fund pilots, April 2021.

Appendix B - ESFA Adult Education Budget (AEB) Terms

The AEB aims to engage adults and provide the skills and learning they need to equip them for work, an apprenticeship or other learning. It enables more flexible tailored programmes of learning to be made available, which may or may not require a qualification, to help eligible learners engage in learning, build confidence, and/or enhance their wellbeing.

The DfE defines the AEB provision and individuals which they fund:

- a. Four legal entitlements which enable eligible learners to be fully funded for the following qualifications (note the qualification must be on the ESFA list of qualifications approved for funding⁹):
 - English and maths GCSE and Functional Skills up to level 2 for those aged 19 and over and who have not achieved a GCSE grade 4-9 (prev. A*-C)
 - Provision to support progression up to and including a first full level 2 (equivalent to 5 GCSEs A*-C or grade 4-9) for individuals aged 19-23
 - Provision to support progression up to a first full level 3 for individuals aged 19-23
 - Essential digital skills, up to and including level 1, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have digital skills assessed at below level 1.
- b. Skills provision for the unemployed (incorporating 'local flexibility': tailored provision for adults, including qualifications and components of these and / or non-regulated learning, up to level 2. Either is fully or co-funded, depending on the learner's age, prior attainment and circumstances).
- c. National Skills Fund - level 3 courses for jobs: targeted level 3 adult offer has been developed to support adults without an existing full level 3 qualification.
- d. Sector-based Work Academy Programme (SWAP), pre-employment elements: designed to help Jobcentre Plus claimants build confidence to improve their job prospects and enhance their CV, whilst helping employers in sectors with current local vacancies to fill them.
- e. Traineeships
- f. Community Learning for learners furthest from learning or employment.

"Legal entitlements" and "Skills Provision for the unemployed" are commonly simplified to "**Adult Skills**". Adult Skills enables adults to achieve qualifications as well as tailored programmes of learning, which do not need to include a qualification but should prepare an individual for a qualification, to help those furthest from learning or employment.

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

- a. progress towards formal learning or employment and / or
- b. improve their health and well-being, including mental health and / or
- c. develop stronger communities
- d. progress to new and more stretching provision.

⁹ ESFA List of Qualifications approved for funding: <https://www.qualifications.education.gov.uk/>

Appendix C – Monitoring and Review

