

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 14 December 2023

### Overview of Skills Provision at South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority

---

**Is the paper exempt from the press and public?** No

**Reason why exempt:** Choose an item.

**Purpose of this report:** Discussion

**Is this a Key Decision?** No

**Has it been included on the Forward Plan of Key Decisions?** No

---

**Director Approving Submission of the Report:**

Tom Bousfield Corporate Director of Economy, Growth and Skills  
Tom.Bousfield@southyorkshire-ca.gov.uk

**Report Author(s):**

Fliss Miller Director of Skills  
[Fliss.miller@southyorkshire-ca.gov.uk](mailto:Fliss.miller@southyorkshire-ca.gov.uk)

---

**Executive Summary**

The Combined Authority has an annual skills revenue budget of c£55 million. The majority of this budget is the devolved Adult Education Budget which is close to £40million. The rest of the funding is programme specific and either delegated or awarded to the Combined Authority through competitive bids. The majority of the funding is for residents who are 19+.

An overview is provided below for all of the skills funded programmes, identifying progress made, challenges and opportunities, and next steps for each programme.

**What does this mean for businesses, people and places in South Yorkshire?**

South Yorkshire is a post-industrial economy, with a cross-sectoral productivity challenge. Skills are a drag on productivity in much of the region, with skills profiles in Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham lower than the national average.

The Skills budget has been used to support residents into employment or better employment.

---

---

## Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the report.

### Consideration by any other Board, Committee, Assurance or Advisory Panel

None.

## 1. Background

- 1.1 The Combined Authority has an annual revenue skills budget of c£55m per annum. The majority of this funding is made up of the devolved Adult Education Budget (c £40m). The remaining funds are programme specific and time bound.
- 1.2 The regional Skills Strategy is currently in development and is expected to go to the MCA Board in February for approval. Significant engagement has taken place with stakeholders across the region to shape the emerging vision and mission areas.
- 1.3 This paper provides a high-level overview of all skills funded provision commissioned and delivered by the Combined Authority.
- 1.4 Sir Steve Houghton CBE and Kate Josephs are the cabinet leads and portfolio holders for skills at the Combined Authority.

## 2. Key Issues

### 2.1 **Adult Education Budget (AEB)**

#### **Overview**

In 2021 the AEB was devolved to the Combined Authority. The annual budget is c£40m. The AEB is for 19+ residents and primarily funds Legal Entitlements including Maths & English, Ofqual regulated and non-regulated training (without formal qualifications). The majority of provision is delivered by grant providers (FE Colleges and Local Authorities) with c£7m being delivered by procured providers (also known as Independent Training Providers). This budget allows the Combined Authority to introduce local flexibilities to ensure funds are spent aligning to local priorities and need.

In addition to the AEB, Free Courses for Jobs (FCFJ) is a delegated allocation from DfE with an annual budget of £3.4m. FCFJ funds residents who are 24+ to undertake a level 3 qualification outside of AEB Legal Entitlements. 50% of this allocation can be used to fund local priority courses. FCFJ's is regulated by DfE's national funding rules, which means we have less flexibility to manage and deliver this allocation.

#### **Progress**

- Since devolution, the underspend of AEB has been declining year on year. 23-24 academic year has seen a strong start;
- SYMCA has improved relationships with providers and wider stakeholders;
- SYMCA has implemented a performance management framework, driving up standards;
- Capacity and capability on skills has been built within the MCA;
- SYMCA has undertaken an evaluation on Residential Learning, and is undertaking two further evaluations on AEB wider and community learning, creating a nuanced understanding of programme delivery; and,

- In July 2023 a two year procurement for FCFJ was undertaken worth £4.4m, aimed at improving performance and spend.

### **Challenges/Opportunities**

- Ongoing changes to DfE funding rates are impacting subject areas e.g. engineering, preparation to work and life; and,
- The flat profile DfE funding envelope means we are required to deliver more with less in an inflationary environment.

### **Looking ahead**

- SYMCA plans to deliver robust performance management of our provider base to support our residents and our local economy;
- Implementation of wider flexibilities - using devolved powers; and,
- Increased use of evidence-based strategic commissioning

2.2

### **Multiply**

Multiply is the DfE adult numeracy programme funded as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Delivery is through grants to each local authority based on an agreed set of priorities for South Yorkshire derived from a DfE menu of interventions. The contract value is c£8m over a three year period.

### **Progress**

- Due to the time constraints for year 1, the decision was made to grant award the local colleges in each LA area to maximise delivery and aim to get best value for money for South Yorkshire;
- SYMCA commissioned additional, overarching capacity building provision to aid the standardisation of numeracy delivery as well as provide online resources and continuing professional development for the tutors;
- An evaluation has been procured for the SY programme; and,
- The delivery period 2023-24 allows for more robust performance information and data to identify activities.

### **Challenges/Opportunities**

- DfE notified SYMCA of our funding allocation only in March 2023 for 2023–24 financial year;
- Following confirmation of Multiply grant award in October, SYMCA was only in a position to commence activities from Q4 of Year 1;
- DfE changes to programme rules, eligibility, content and format of intervention plan have proved challenging; and,
- Despite this, SYMCA has developed an ability to test and learn from each year and change accordingly for subsequent years.

### **Looking ahead**

- A plan to deliver robust performance management of our provider base to support our residents of need and our local economy;
- The final investment plan 24/25 will be informed by the successful activities for 23/24, which may prompt some changes in volumes or funding allocation to intervention strands; and,
- SYMCA will use evaluation and lessons learned in aligning or informing current programmes such as AEB and Working Win.

### **Working Win (Individual Placement and Support in Primary Care)**

A 2-year (April 23-March 25) voluntary health and employment programme that is integrated within Primary Care services to support people with a common mental / physical health condition or disability to find, secure and sustain employment.

#### **Progress**

- SYMCA secured further government funding (post-trial phase) to continue provision within South Yorkshire, with the endorsement of public health colleagues;
- SYMCA has supported over 6,000 residents since 2017 in South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw into paid work or in sustaining employment which was at risk because of a health issue;
- SYMCA has strengthened relationships and deepened integration within Primary Care; and,
- SYMCA has demonstrated a model of successful delivery for the target population. This has been praised nationally in Ministerial visits.

#### **Challenges / Opportunities**

- There is a fragmented landscape, with multiple funding pots targeted the same population – UKSPF, WorkWell, Universal Support; and,
- The Government is expected to roll this programme into a universal offer, creating local delivery risks

#### **Looking ahead (SYMCA)**

- SYMCA plans to develop an employment and health strategy for South Yorkshire.

### **Careers Hub**

Brings together schools, colleges, employers, and apprenticeship providers to improve how young people are prepared for their next steps.

#### **Progress**

- SYMCA has developed the Careers Hub function (staff within SYMCA), which has progressed from the original Enterpriser Adviser model; and,
- There has been improved performance against all Gatsby benchmarks

#### **Challenges / Opportunities**

- Yearly funding cycle, limiting forward planning and flexibility.

#### **Looking Ahead**

- SYMCA plans to align Careers Hub activity into wider employment / skills activity; and,
- Review of current operating model

### **Primary Hub**

The programme is delivered in Education Investment Areas (Doncaster and Rotherham) and aims to increase awareness amongst primary school pupils of career pathways.

#### **Progress**

- SYMCA is now part of this pilot
- 98 school recruited / engaged

#### **Challenges / Opportunities**

- The large cohort of schools could be difficult to service with resource allocated; and,
- There is an opportunity to align into wider all-age careers work.

### **UKSPF**

UKSPF is a 3 year funding programme with 3 Investment priorities: communities and place; supporting local business; and people and skills. The people and skills priority funding is over two financial years 23/24 and 24/25 with regional wide delivery from 1 October 2023 until March 2025 focusing on three strands:

- Strand 1, Preparation for Employment - supporting those that are furthest from the labour market
- Strand 2, Accessing the Labour Market - supporting those that are nearer the labour market and ready to progress into employment
- Strand 3, Advance - supporting those that are ready to progress in work

### Progress

- Strand 1 and 2 were commissioned and contracted to Sheffield LA (lead SY Authority);
- Strand 3 application has been approved and delivery will commence 1 April 2024. Doncaster LA are the lead Authority.

### Challenges / Opportunities

- Uncertainty over future funding.

### **Apprenticeships and Technical Education**

The Apprenticeship Hub is a 2-year programme with aims to increase apprenticeship quality and uptake in South Yorkshire. It incorporates a levy matchmaking service enabling levy paying employers the opportunity to pledge any unspent Levy funds and allow SMEs to access these.

### Progress

- SYMCA has approved and contracted the Apprenticeship Hub;

### Challenges / Opportunities

- There is an opportunity to improve uptake by engaging with employers that aren't investing in apprentices to meet their workforce needs.

### Looking Ahead

- SYMCA plans to align provision and cross collaboration to other programmes to achieve more i.e. Careers Hub
- Plan to deliver an evaluation and development plan to secure further funding

### **Skills Bank**

A programme to upskill South Yorkshire's workforce by co-funding (up to 60%) training costs for businesses in the region.

### Progress

- SYMCA has established a reputable programme that is now core to South Yorkshire's provision of support.

### Challenges / Opportunities

- Ongoing opportunity to be innovative

### **Looking Ahead**

- Revision and further development of programme to ensure it continuously aligns to strategic priorities.

### **Skills Bootcamps**

Flexible short courses for those that are 19+ to gain skills that employers are looking for.

### **Progress**

- Continuous increased performance in pilot phase (wave 4)
- SYMCA submitted an ambitious bid for wave 5, notification of the outcome of the bid is expected mid December.

### **Challenges / Opportunities**

- There is a risk of duplication through DfE directly contracting local providers; and
- The programme does provide an opportunity to engage businesses and develop provision aligned to growth sectors.

### **Looking Ahead**

- SYMCA plans to implement robust performance management; and,
- SYMCA will evaluate wave 4 to ensure high-quality provision.

---

## **3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal**

### **3.1 Option 1**

To note the report.

### **3.2 Option 1 Risks and Mitigations**

This paper is an overview of provision to note and therefore no risks and mitigations have been identified.

## **4. Consultation on Proposal**

4.1 This paper is an overview of provision to note and therefore no consultation is required.

## **5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

5.1 This paper is an overview of provision to note and therefore decision required.

---

## **6. Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice**

6.1 This paper is an overview of provision to note and therefore no advice is required.

## **7. Legal Implications and Advice**

7.1 The MCA has devolved functions to provide/procure adult education

## **8. Human Resources Implications and Advice**

---

8.1 This paper is an overview of provision to note and therefore no advice is required.

**9. Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice**

9.1 This paper is an overview of provision to note and therefore no advice is required.

---

**10. Climate Change Implications and Advice**

10.1 This paper is an overview of provision to note and therefore no advice is required.

**11. Information and Communication Technology Implications and Advice**

11.1 This paper is an overview of provision to note and therefore no advice is required.

**12. Communications and Marketing Implications and Advice**

12.1 This paper is an overview of provision to note and therefore no advice is required.

**List of Appendices Included:**

A None.

**Background Papers**

n/a