



Skills & Employment Committee		Agenda Item
4 September 2023		5
Title:	Adult Education Budget (AEB) Impact Evaluation	
Report of:	Parminder Singh Garcha, Senior Responsible Officer – Adult Education	
Lead Member:	Cllr Lucy Nethsingha, Lead Member - Skills	
Public Report:	Yes	
Key Decision:	No	
Voting Arrangements:	No vote required	

Recommendations:

A	To note the progress made in completing an Impact Evaluation of the Adult Education Budget since devolution.
B	To participate in the Focus Group for members on 4 September 2023.

Strategic Objective(s):

The proposals within this report fit under the following strategic objective(s):

✓	Achieving ambitious skills and employment opportunities
✓	Achieving good growth
	Increased connectivity
✓	Enabling resilient communities
✓	Achieving best value and high performance

The Combined Authority’s devolution agreement and commissioning of skills programmes contribute to the above strategic objectives, aligned to the pillars within the Employment and Skills Strategy (2022):

- **Pre-work learning and formal education:** improving learning and experiences of work, including quality careers information, advice, and guidance, during formal education; providing a strong foundation for labour market entry and future working lives.
- **Employer access to talent:** developing priority skills that support sustainable growth, improving employers’ engagement with education and improving job quality
- **Life-wide and lifelong learning:** improving access to life wide careers guidance and a rich learning and skills offer to upskill and reskill residents through their life-course
- **Support into and between work:** Supporting the unemployed residents to transition into training and then employment and support to disadvantaged groups to access the labour market.

1. Purpose

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| 1.1 | This report provides members of the Skills and Employment Committee with an update of the Impact Evaluation of the Adult Education Budget (AEB), which has been commissioned by the Combined Authority. The evaluation supports members in their role in assessing the impact of devolved programmes to citizens, businesses and communities and steering decisions on future improvements to the programme. |
| 1.2 | Members are also requested to note the Combined Authority's approach to evaluation and the expectation that the final report will demonstrate the positive impact of devolved AEB since devolution in 2019. It will also provide insights into the benefits of a devolved adult skills system, lessons learnt and successes. Members are invited to participate in qualitative research through a focus group planned on 4 September 2023. |

2. Proposal

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| 2.1 | <p>This report provides an update on the progress to date in completing the AEB Impact Evaluation. There has been slippage in the original timeline for completing the Impact Evaluation, due to capacity within the Combined Authority to complete the procurement and appoint a suitable independent evaluator. The evaluator was originally due to report findings at the September Committee.</p> <p>Eunoia Associates have been commissioned to undertake this piece of work, who have allocated Paul Blott as the Lead Consultant and our single point of contact for this project. Paul has an extensive background in education and skills funding, including provider and programme management experience.</p> |
| 2.2 | <p>The evaluation is now fully underway, and a draft report will be produced in mid-October which will consider AEB impact post devolution (2019/20) to the end of the 2022/23 academic year. (Essentially, the first three years of funding devolution).</p> |

The evaluation will be undertaken using a range of methods, as shown in Figure 1 below:

Evaluation Methodology



Desk Based Research

Analysis of:

- Documents, strategies and relevant policies.
- Management information.
- ILR performance and financial data.

Semi Structured Interviews

- All colleges and providers.
- CPCA Directors and AEB team.
- Employers.
- Stakeholders (Such as Jobcentre Plus).

Online Survey

- AEB learners (Distributed by colleges and providers).

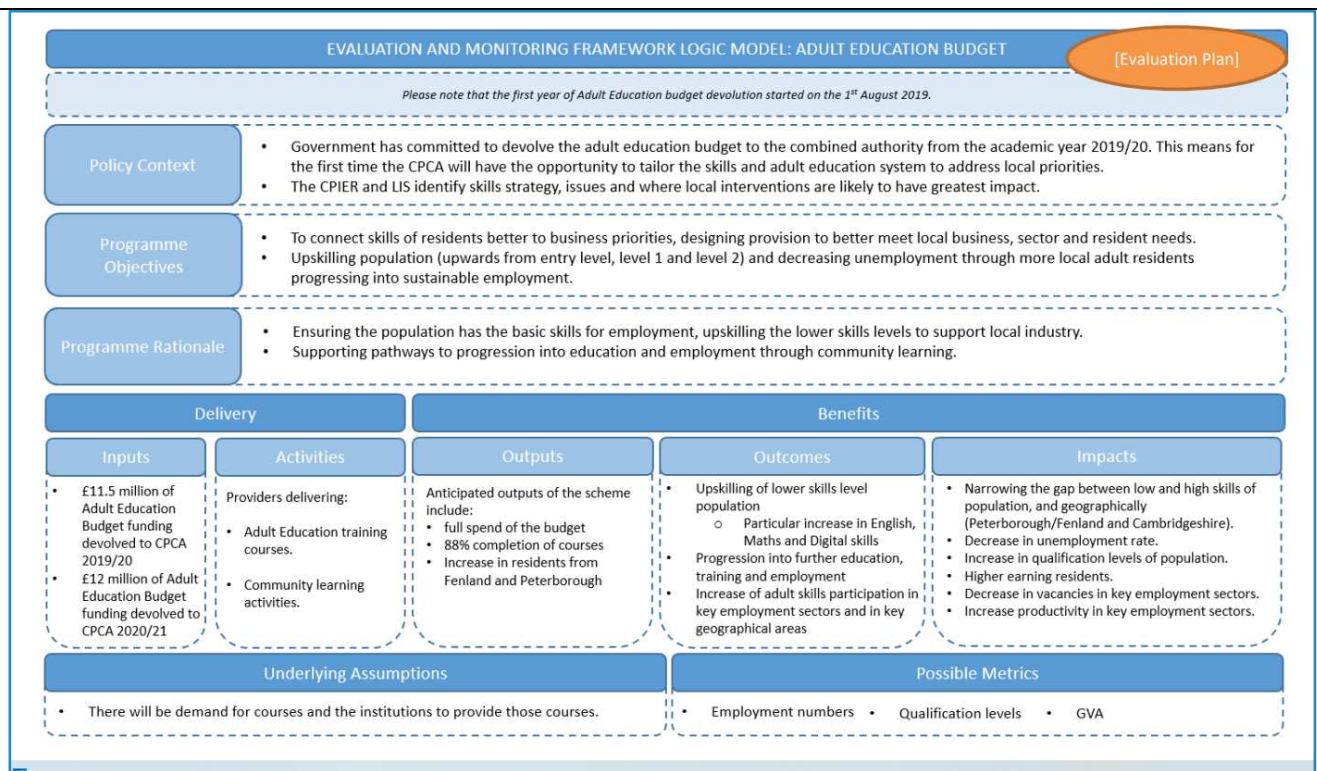
Focus Groups

- Skills and Employment Committee.
- Local Authorities.
- Other stakeholders

	It is expected that a final report will be released at the November Skills Committee and will be shared with key stakeholders and published on the Combined Authority website.
2.3	<p>The Combined Authority is maturing in its institutional formation, and this report reiterates the commitment to implementing effective Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) so that it can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide local accountability to citizens by demonstrating the impact of locally devolved funding and the associated benefits being achieved through our flexibilities and local commissioning. • Comply with external scrutiny requirements and to satisfy conditions of the Devolution Deal, to demonstrate local progress and delivery to local leaders, senior government officials and Ministers who are ultimately accountable to parliament for devolved funds. • Understand the effectiveness of policies or investments and to justify reinvestment or modify or seek alternative policy approaches. M&E provides a feedback loop for the Combined Authority and our stakeholders as well as public policy discourse. • Develop an evidence base for input into future Business Cases for developing funding submissions or an offer to government to deliver 'Deeper Devolution'. <p>M&E collects, collates, and analyse data which can be utilised for a robust evidence-base.</p>

3. Background

3.1	<p>The Combined Authority's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework (2021) sets out the commitment and approach to robust performance management across all programmes and projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring supports the effective tracking of a scheme or series of policy interventions ensuring that intended outputs are being achieved. • Evaluation quantifies and assesses outcomes, including how schemes were delivered and whether the investment had the intended impact and delivered value for money. <p>M&E forms a significant part of the feedback loop to inform future policy development, investment priorities and budgets. In addition, given that Combined Authorities are new institutions, effective evaluation contributes to demonstrating the impact and difference that is being made to lever and influence future investment.</p>
3.2	<p>In line with the Local Growth Assurance Framework, the Combined Authority has developed a logic model for evaluating AEB and commissioned two independent process evaluations from Cambridgeshire Insights. The process evaluations were designed to capture lessons from the setting up and first two years for the Combined Authority, wider partners, stakeholders, and providers. Looking at how well the programme is working and the extent to which it is being implemented as designed. The results of a process evaluation will strengthen the Combined Authority's ability to report on future budget use and provide information and recommendations for future activities and any potential future devolved funds.</p> <p>The process evaluations have included provider surveys and interviews, learner survey and stakeholder focus groups. In addition, a quantitative analysis of the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data. These have been shared with the Skills Committee and published on the Combined Authority website.</p>
3.3	The Logic Model for Evaluation of AEB has been developed as shown below:



- 3.4 The tender for the AEB Impact Evaluation set out the following outputs:
- i. To produce a high-quality, robust evaluation report setting-out the findings of the research, methodology and conclusions. The report must include an analysis of first three years data, provided by Cambridgeshire Insights. Benchmarking, where comparable data is available. Primary research with providers, learners, employers and stakeholders.
 - ii. The evaluation report must be presented in a printable 'glossy' format, ready for publication on the combined authority website and shared with the public and key stakeholders. It must include case studies as well as data and primary research findings, conclusions and recommendations.
 - iii. The evaluation must look at the impact on learners - both quantitative and qualitative outputs and outcomes. For example, distance travelled, learner destinations and changes reported to the quality of life. This could include:
 - Securing employment and career progression
 - Higher education or further study
 - Personal development: self-confidence, financial literacy and improvements to health and wellbeing
 - Impact on local businesses
 - Wider social and community benefits such as volunteering, parenting integration, social action etc.
 - iv. Improvements to local infrastructure as a direct impact of devolved investments, such as teaching and specialist facilities, staffing and curriculum development.
 - v. Improvements to the education and skills provider landscape: Partnership and collaborative working; Local accountability and transparency; Citizen engagement and co-production.

4. Appendices

4.1 None

5. Implications

Financial Implications

5.1	A budget of £35,000 was allocated from the AEB Programme Management Budget ('top slice') for the delivery of the Impact Evaluation. This is budgeted as part of the MTFP for the 2023/24 financial year. Two tenders were received as part of the procurement process and Eunoia Associates provided the best value for money and highest scoring bid.
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Legal Implications

6.1	The recommendations and activities outlined in this paper are to discharge the Combined Authorities' statutory duties under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. Under the devolution agreement of 2016, specified adult education functions from the Secretary of State were transferred to the Combined Authority.
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Public Health Implications

7.1	No public health implications
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Environmental & Climate Change Implications

8.1	No environmental or climate change implications
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Other Significant Implications

9.1	No other implications
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Background Papers

10.1	AEB Year 1 Evaluation Report – 2019/20 (Nov 2020) AEB Year 2 Evaluation Report – 2020/21 (Dec 2021) Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (2021) Local Growth Assurance Framework (2022)
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