

REPORT TO:	Employment Learning and Skills and Community Policy Performance Board
DATE:	21 st November 2022
REPORTING OFFICER:	Operational Director Economy, Enterprise and Property
PORTFOLIO:	Employment, Learning and Skills, Leisure, Community and Culture
SUBJECT:	UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Update
WARD(S)	Borough-wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members on the next stages in the implementation of the Liverpool City Region UKSPF Investment Plan. The report provides information on proposals for how the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) programme might be managed in Halton. The report also refers to the Multiply Programme, which is aimed at improving numeracy skills amongst adults.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That:**

- i) Members note progress being made to prepare for the delivery of the UKSPF in Halton.

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 Members received a report in June 2022 which outlined proposals for the development of a UKSPF Investment Plan for the Liverpool City Region. The Investment Plan was submitted in July 2022. The Investment Plan set out how funding would be used and would demonstrate that the funding allocations would reflect local need and would be developed in conjunction with local stakeholders.

The Investment Plan included a narrative on the local context, outcomes and interventions and delivery methods, including governance, spend profiles, capacity and resource and compliance.

It is anticipated that the Investment Plan will be approved by Government in October/November 2022. £44m has been allocated to the Liverpool City Region over three years.

The vast majority of funding will be directed through to Local Authorities, with a small minority of funding deployed for City Region Level activities via open calls.

The funding will be allocated to three themes:
Communities and Place
Supporting Local Business
People and Skills

Further details on each theme, and the proposed allocation of funding for each theme is contained in Appendix I.

As reported in June, a separate Investment Plan and delivery approach will be in place for Multiply (a programme focused on increasing numeracy skills for adults). Further information on Multiply is provided later in this report.

Details on how applications will be made and assessed are not fully finalised. However, routes to delivery are likely to focus on:

Commissioning – working with Local Authorities and local stakeholders, the Combined Authority will identify a lead body to deliver on projects with activity, expenditure and deliverables monitored at a Local Authority level: this will be underpinned by a contract and effectively managed; and

Calls – working with Local Authorities and Local Partnership Group, the Combined Authority will agree a specification for the required projects and operate a competitive process to identify the most suitable provider(s), with input on strategic fit on plans: they will be required to report activity, expenditure and deliverables at a Local Authority level as well as City Region level.

Funding for an additional post within each Local Authority area is provided to act as the focal point for UKSPF activity. It is proposed that this post will be hosted by the Council's Economy, Enterprise and Property Department.

MULTIPLY PROGRAMME

Multiply is the Government's £559 million three-year National Programme to improve Adult Numeracy Skills. The programme uses UKSPF resource to engage and support more adults into further learning and/or employment, increasing the number of adults participating in and achieving adult numeracy qualifications up to and including Level 2 (i.e. GCSE Grade C/4 and functional skills).

Potential Multiply funding for the Liverpool City Region is £8.375m over 3 financial years: £2.532m in 2022/23; £2.922m in 2023/24;

and £2.922m in 2024/25. 2022/23 funding is for the remainder of this financial year, leaving circa 4-5 months of delivery.

Multiply is not the only funding that supports adults with numeracy skills and maths qualifications in Liverpool City Region. The devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB) supports a national entitlement to functional skills including maths, whilst Apprenticeships and 19-23 Traineeships (not devolved) also have integrated maths learning aims. Multiply must not displace existing delivery.

Multiply delivery through Local Authorities and Colleges: The majority of funding will be granted to Local Authority and FE College providers of numeracy training with 52% or £4.36m allocated over the 3 financial years (£1.32m in year 1). Part of this delivery will include flexible and innovative approaches to delivery of numeracy skills.

Multiply delivery contracted with the VCS: Further funding will be routed through Local Authorities to support voluntary and community sector organisations on a small grants basis for grass roots learning in maths. Alongside this, the intention is to build upon the successful Workers' Education Association Community Grants programme to allow smaller organisations to access Multiply funding to support financial literacy, money management advice and other support and referral activities for maths skills needs (NB. The first round of this launched on 31st October). In total, funding routed to the voluntary and community sector over the 3 financial year period will be in the region of £2.5m of circa 30% of the overall Multiply investment.

Multiply Engagement and Referral activities: Stakeholder feedback highlighted the importance of engagement and referrals in the workplace and wider contexts. Part of the focus of Multiply and the Liverpool City Region Investment Plan is to engage latent demand for numeracy skills and refer those in need of maths skills to providers. The Combined Authority is proposing to do this, following consultation with legal and procurement colleagues, through grant funding:

- a contract to further train and support TUC Union Learner Representatives in the workplace as numeracy champions and support referrals from employers; and
- engaging National Numeracy - a national charity to:
 - o inform and train local provider staff, employers and VCS organisations as 'numeracy champions' resulting in greater day to day volumes of referrals to maths training;
 - o provide statistical analysis and comparisons through the National Numeracy Index; and
 - o ensure a greater local impact on National Numeracy Day through the co-ordination of local numeracy learning campaigns and events.

Investment in Engagement and Referral activities across the three financial years for Multiply will total circa 11.2% of available funds or £0.94m over the project lifetime.

College and Local Authority delivery plans setting out their capacity and capability to deliver the programme have been received and are being finalised with each organisation to ensure alignment with the Multiply Investment Plan.

A late September 2022 start date for the programme is still anticipated, although further delays from DfE will put this timescale at risk.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Consideration is being given as to how the funding would be managed and delivered in Halton. Given the limited funding available it is important that the funding will be used to fund initiatives that have a proven track record of delivery. Expectations will need to be managed and overlap and duplication between projects will not be possible.

Lead Officers are developing specs for their relevant strand/theme areas as outlined in Appendix I. A Halton Investment Plan will need to be submitted by the end of November.

5.0 OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Whilst the potential funding available under the UKSPF is considerably less than funding that had been available through the European Structural Funds, it is an important source of match funding.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 The UKSPF provides complementary funding which will support a wide range of projects across the borough, particularly in the areas of business support, employment and skills, environment and urban renewal.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There are no risks identified.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act.