

Decision Report - Lead Member Decision

Forward Plan Reference: FP/24/01/05

Decision Date - 26/3/2024

Key Decision - Yes

Confidential Information - No/main report/appendix



Multiply Programme (Year 3) – Acceptance of Funding from DfE

Executive Member(s): Lead Member for Economic Development, Planning & Assets

Local Member(s) and Division: All

Lead Officer: Jason Vaughan – Executive Director of Resources and Corporate Services (Section 151)

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Summary / Background

1. The Government committed an initial £559m allocation from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to improve adult numeracy skills.
2. The Multiply Programme will provide adults (19+) who do not possess a level 2 maths qualification (GCSE or equivalent) with the opportunity to learn and develop essential numerical skills they need to succeed at any age to support improved life chances. Funding will boost people's ability to use maths in their daily life, at home and work and will enable adults to progress and achieve a formal qualification in the subject.

Somerset Council is the lead Authority and has been allocated a total of £2,130,674 over a 3-year period (April 2022 – March 2025).

Funding of £1,263,759 for years 1 and 2 has been received and the programme has been delivered in accordance with the approved Investment Plan. A further £866,915 for Year 3 (2024/25) has been awarded. This will be the final year of this pilot project.

A Grant determination Letter is attached (Appendix 1) which details the funding allocation to Somerset Council and a revised Plan for Year 3.

Recommendations

3. Lead Member for Economic Development, Planning & Assets and the Executive Director of Resources and Corporate Services agree:
 - a) the acceptance of £866,914.85 of DfE funding and approves the signing of the Grant Determination Letter
 - b) Approves the extension of the existing Grant Funding Agreement with Somerset Skills & learning CIC for a further year as defined in the Grant Agreement between Somerset Council and Somerset Skills & learning CIC. (Appendix 2)

Reasons for recommendations

4. To enable Somerset Council to receive Year 3 funding, the Grant Determination Letter needs to be accepted and signed. DfE have set a deadline of 3rd April 2024.
5. To continue with the delivery of the Multiply Programme by Somerset Skills & Learning CIC, the current grant funding agreement needs to be extended under the agreed terms and conditions. (Original Grant Funding Agreement attached at Appendix 2.)
6. Not used

Other options considered

7. No other options have been considered as this is for the final year (Year 3) of a three-year programme.

Links to Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan

8. The delivery of the Investment Plan will support the County objectives to improve the life chances for those in greatest need, reduce inequality and improve social mobility; better outcomes for all children and adults so that they are safe, healthy and have a good physical and emotional well-being; and improve access and opportunities for all to high quality local education, skills and employment, and health and care provision.

Financial and Risk Implications

9. DfE has awarded Somerset Council £866,915 for Year 3 (2024/25) for spend by 31 March 2025. Funding will be transferred under a Section 31 ring fenced transfer (Grant determination). If there is any reported underspend at the end of the year (March 2025) this will have to be re-paid to DfE as detailed in the Grant Determination Agreement.

A breakdown of the funding is set out in the table below:

DfE Grant Funding	£866,915
10% top slice for M&A: Management & Admin funding retained by SC to include ILR data management	£86,691
Funding allocated for delivery via Grant Agreement to SS&L	£780,224

Once Somerset Council has signed the Grant Determination Letter the first payment will be released in April 2024 and three further payments received throughout the year 2024/25.

It is intended that Somerset Council continues to work with Somerset Skills & Learning CIC to deliver the interventions. Subject to approval of this decision, we will issue the funding via a back-to-back grant funding agreement.

A 10% top slice will be retained by SC to manage and administer the programme. The balance (£780,224) will be used for delivery of the interventions as set out in the Investment Plan approved by DfE and within the Grant Determination Letter at Appendix 1.

10. With reference to 3(a) above, there is no risk to SC in accepting the funding. With reference to 3(B) above, there is some risk as expanded upon below:
- DfE specify that if the delivery partner (SS&L) fails to deliver in accordance with the Investment Plan, or otherwise put SC in breach of the terms set out in the Grant Determination Letter, then SC may be requested to return some or all of the money to DfE without SC being certain it will be able to claw back in turn from the delivery partner.
 - The Grant Determination letter does not set out any requirements in respect of clawback of funding if targets are not achieved. However, if there is an overall underspend of the funding at the end of Year 3, this will be required to be paid back to the DfE.

- We have incorporated a payment mechanism within the Grant Funding Agreement with SS&L which ensures we are only paying for achievement of outcomes against predefined KPI's. This reduces the risk to SC in respect of clawback.

Please enter risk description					
Failure of the delivery partner to deliver in accordance with the Investment Plan					
Likelihood	1	Impact	3	Risk Score	3
Please enter mitigation here					
Closely monitored payment mechanism which will ensure that payments are only made on achieving predefined outcomes.					

Legal Implications

11. With reference to 3(a) above Legal Services have confirmed that we are able to sign the Grant Determination given there is no risk associated with doing so.
12. with reference to 3(b) above, Legal Services have advised that there is some risk. The team are currently reviewing the back-to-back grant Agreement with SS&L in respect of changes in the year 3 Grant Determination Letter.

The funding has been offered as a grant, and as such would fall outside the scope of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, though there is still a risk the arrangement could be construed as a contract for the purposes of those Regulations. Under a grant agreement there will be no contractual obligation on a supplier to comply with its terms. The remedy to SC under the grant agreement would generally be a right to claw back money up to the amount granted.

The 10% management and administration top slice is ring fenced for use on Eligible Expenditure (as defined in Annex C of the DfE's Grant Determination Letter) in relation to the delivery of this programme.

The Multiply scheme was instigated in April 2022 prior to the Subsidy Control Act 2022 (the Act) coming into force. This third instalment is being distributed on terms that are within the permitted modifications specified by the Act 2022/2023 instalment, and as a legacy scheme would thereby be exempt from the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

HR Implications

13. There are no HR implications associated with this decision.

Other Implications:

Equalities Implications

14. The Equalities Impact Assessment (attached at Appendix C) identifies a number of potential barriers to someone successfully taking part in the adult numeracy courses. To address these the EIA also identifies a number of actions to minimise these.

Community Safety Implications

15. There are no direct community safety implications associated with this decision.
16. This decision will not have an effect on the public's perception of crime and disorder and anti-social behaviour rates in Somerset.
17. This decision will not have any implications on other projects or services that other community safety partners may have.

Climate Change and Sustainability Implications

18. This decision will not have any implications relating to Climate Change and sustainability in Somerset.

Health and Safety Implications

19. There are no direct health and safety implications associated with this decision

Health and Wellbeing Implications

20. The interventions will support those who may struggle with finances in respect of supporting individuals to better understand their money and enable them to make

appropriate decisions. The interventions are also aimed to support individuals to enter employment or progress within current roles. This will have a positive impact on mental health and well-being which will lead to reduced social inequalities.

21. There are no implications affecting specific population groups. The programme is accessible to all adults aged 19+ with no upper age limit.

22. Not used

Social Value

23. The Multiply programme will provide skills development for hard-to-reach individuals supporting them to become more independent in numerical matters (such as financial management) as well as enabling them to gain access to employment. Some of the proposed activity will be delivered by those working in the voluntary and community sector to ensure it targets those in need.

24. The interventions will be working towards the following SC's social value priority areas: ·

- Developing employment, numeracy skills, and opportunities, particularly for hard-to-reach/disabled/target groups
- Improving health and wellbeing, maintaining independence, and reducing inequalities of local residents and employees
- Helping build community capacity and playing an active role in the local community, especially in those areas and communities with the greatest need

Scrutiny comments / recommendations:

25. The proposed decision has not been considered by Scrutiny Committee.

Background

26. The Government launched its UK Share Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) in February 2022 setting out a bold new approach to improve livelihoods and opportunities in all parts of the UK. The fund is a central pillar for the levelling up agenda and will provide £2.6bn of new funding for local investment by March 2025. The Government has committed an initial £559m allocation from the funding to improve adult numeracy skills through the Department of Education's Multiply Programme.

27. Multiply will provide adults aged 19+ who do not possess a Level 2 maths qualification (GCSE or equivalent) with the opportunity to learn and develop essential numeracy skills they need to succeed at any age to support improved life

chances. Funding will boost people's ability to use maths in their daily life at home and work and will enable adults to progress and achieve a formal qualification in the subject. The 3-year funding programme will enable delivery of bespoke adult numeracy interventions; development of a new national online platform offering personal tutoring and digital training; and build an evidence base of 'what works' in improving functional adult numeracy.

28. The overarching objectives of the Multiply programme are:

- More adults achieving maths qualifications
- Improved labour market outcomes
- Increase in adult numeracy across the population
- Interventions have been planned for year 3 to develop a legacy of this programme for the residents of Somerset

29. Somerset Council is the Lead Authority and has been allocated a total of £2,130,674 over the 3-year period.

- Funding for years 1 & 2 a total of £1,263,759 has been received with a further £866,914 due to be paid for year 3.
- At the time of writing the full allocation for year 2 is planned to be spent, any underspend declared at the end of the year will reduce the year 3 funding by that amount.
- Any further underspend at the end of year 3 will be required to be paid back to DfE.

Background Papers

30. The following paper is referenced in this document:

- Grant Determination (Ring-fenced) Letter for Multiply Funding – dated February 2024.
- Grant Agreement between Somerset Council and Somerset Skills & Learning CIC

Appendices




- 1) Grant Determination Letter including Memorandum of Understanding for Year 3 (2024/25)
- 2) Grant Funding Agreement between Somerset Council and Somerset Skills & Learning
- 3) Equality Impact Assessment for Multiply (attached to the end of this document)

Assurance checklist

	Officer Name	Date Completed
Legal & Governance Implications	David Clark	7 th March
Communications	Peter Elliott	4 th March
Finance & Procurement	Nicola Hix	24 th February
Workforce	Alyn Jones	4 th March
Asset Management	Oliver Woodhams	Not Applicable
Executive Director / Senior Manager	Mickey Green	24 th February
Strategy & Performance	Alyn Jones	4 th March
Executive Lead Member	Councillor Ros Wyke	29 th February
Executive Lead Member	Councillor Liz Leyshon	25 th February
Consulted:		
Local Division Members	N/A	
Opposition Spokesperson	Councillor Mandy Chilcott	13 th March 2024
Scrutiny Chair	Councillor Martin Dimery	15 th March 2024

Somerset Equality Impact Assessment

Before completing this EIA please ensure you have read the EIA guidance notes – available from your Equality Officer or www.somerset.gov.uk/impactassessment

Organisation prepared for (mark as appropriate)	 Somerset Council	✓	 NHS Somerset	 NHS Somerset NHS Foundation Trust	
Version	1.0		Date Completed	20/02/2024	
Description of what is being impact assessed					
<p>Impact of the Multiply Programme to be delivered across Somerset.</p> <p>The overall objective of Multiply is to increase the levels of functional numeracy in the adult (19+) population across the UK with the following key aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More adults achieving maths qualifications courses (up to, and including, Level 2 – with GCSEs and FSQs as the qualifications of choice in England – or equivalent) and an increase in participation in numeracy courses. • Improved labour market outcomes e.g., fewer numeracy skills gaps reported by employers, and an increase in the proportion of adults that progress into sustained employment and / or education. • Increased adult numeracy across the population – this overall impact, which goes beyond achieving certificates or qualifications, will track both the perceived and actual difference taking part in the programme makes in supporting learners to improve their understanding and use of maths in their daily lives, at home and at work - and to feel more confident when doing so. 					

Evidence

What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service might impact on protected groups? Sources such as the [Office of National Statistics](#), [Somerset Intelligence Partnership](#), [Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis \(JSNA\)](#), [Somerset Trends](#) www.somersettrends.org.uk

Office of National Statistics for data and information such as unemployment based on age, ethnicity, and geographical area.

Somerset Trends for information on qualification status based on geographical area.

[How your area has changed in 10 years: Census 2021 - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

Somerset Intelligence for data/information on ward profiles, travel and access, age, etc.

National Numeracy Charity – providing access to areas of support including ways of targeting hard to reach cohorts and marketing plans. National Numeracy encourage Numeracy Champions who work with communities, workplace employees and family learning.

[National Numeracy - Charity Empowering the UK with Numbers](#)

Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 for data on area profiles

[Deprivation - Somerset Trends](#)

Census 2021 for data on demographics

[Census 2021](#)

Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis for data/information on people and groups

[Joint Strategic Needs Assessment \(JSNA\) - Somerset Intelligence - The home of information and insight on and for Somerset - Run by a partnership of public sector organisations](#)

The information gathered from the sources above will inform the intent of SC's Multiply provision and identify approaches to target groups to enable the programme to meet the needs of both local residents, employers, and local community groups. It also informs how the provision will be marketed, ensuring that all learning is accessible, particularly those with multiple needs, rural areas, and social deprivation.

Somerset Council want to ensure that its learner demographic is a true representation of the numeracy skills and the requirements of Somerset's citizens.

Regular reviews and learner activity will be observed to ensure that the provision constantly meets all target groups, and if required additional actions will be put in place to ensure the Multiply programme is accessible to all.

Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups and what have they told you? If you have not consulted other people, please explain why?

- National Numeracy which is a charitable organisation who played an active part in working with the DfE to develop the Multiply programme. They are informative on ways of approaching all areas of the community and working with disadvantaged people.
- We have consulted with Somerset's community-based organisations embedded within communities across the county. Through their work with specific target groups, these organisations highlight the range of need and identify areas requiring improved numeracy skills. This helps us to understand the impact of inequality of access to Multiply, which groups of people are most marginalised (considering age, black and minority ethnic groups, those experiencing poor mental health, those with physical and or learning disability, low levels of numeracy, carers, low income, living in rural areas/isolation, refugees etc).
- Somerset Council are members of the [Holex](#) group who disseminate information regularly on the impact of providing learning to local communities. The group is a national resource of innovative ideas, research and data on inclusion and widening participation information from providers throughout the country. Being a member of the Holex Group provides access to all other areas of the country providing Multiply enabling discussion on changes and issues.
- The DWP: The effect on individuals poor mental health and people with learning difficulties/disabilities preventing access to learning if significant travelling is involved to larger centralised locations. The need for numeracy skills improvement and re-engagement with learning to help some people move away from economic inactivity and progress towards employment and economic independence.
- Citizens Advice: Increasing issues connected to the rise in cost of living including debt, housing and mental health has seen a sharp increase in people referred to and accessing Citizens Advice service especially those on low incomes and/or living in

rural locations. The necessity for referrals to initial engagement in increasing numeracy skills to support their progression towards better mental health, literacy, numeracy, and digital inclusion is becoming increasingly important as demand rises.

Analysis of impact on protected groups

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service will achieve these aims. In the table below, using the evidence outlined above and your own understanding, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Based on this information, assess the likely outcome, before you have implemented any mitigation.

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing an accessible range of learning to people aged 19+ (no limit) via virtual and face to face interactions. Research has shown the value of learning and increasing numeracy skills in keeping minds active, reducing isolation, improving mental health and social cohesion of our communities. In turn this will empower the personal responsibility of individuals to become financially independent, healthy and maintain their own social well-being. • The programme will be promoted in such a way that it encourages people from all age groups. Visual media will include people of varying ages. • People under 19 are not eligible for Multiply learning. 	□	□	☒
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk and health and safety assessments to identify and mitigate disability access barriers will increase engagement of learners 	□	□	☒

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced positive learning experience and potential lower retention and achievement of individuals if individual curriculum and resource adjustments requirements are not identified. • Lack of information points, enrolment opportunities and customer support for a learning provision. • Reduced engagement if marketing/publicity materials do not consider communication disability barriers. 			
Gender reassignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of respect, expression of negative views on gender reassignment and inappropriate behaviour from other learners impacting on learner experience, low attendance, retention, and achievement of intended outcomes. • Reduced attendance and retention if gender reassignments requirements are not considered during initial assessment or at any time during the programme. 	□	□	⊗
Marriage and civil partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of respect, expression of negative views on same sex marriage and inappropriate behaviour from other learners impacting on learner experience, low attendance, retention, and achievement of intended outcomes. 	□	□	⊗
Pregnancy and maternity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locally based provision will support pregnant women or parents with young children to access services without having to travel too far. • Some provision will be aimed specifically at parents to support them with issues around finance, debt management and understanding numbers. • Reduced attendance and retention if pregnancy and maternity requirements (breast feeding/baby changing) are not considered during initial assessment or at any time during the programme. 	□	□	⊗

Race and ethnicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who are non-native English speakers may experience a language barrier in some classes. • Classes are designed to support integration, financial awareness and possible job opportunities through support and cultural awareness. • Lack of respect, expression of negative views on race and ethnicity and inappropriate behaviour from other learners impacting on learner experience, low attendance, retention, and achievement of intended outcomes. 	□	□	⊗
Religion or belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of respect, expression of negative views on religion or belief and inappropriate behaviour from other learners impacting on learner experience, low attendance, retention, and achievement of intended outcomes. 	□	□	⊗
Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower percentage rates of men accessing learning generally, within the Multiplier programme so far (after 2 years) 64% of all enrolments have been female. • Outreach projects designed in partnership with experienced partners will focus to address this as currently 88% of all engagements at outreach are female. 	□	□	⊗
Sexual orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of respect, expression of negative views on sexual orientation and inappropriate behaviour from other learners impacting on learner experience, low attendance, retention, and achievement of intended outcomes. • Sexual orientation requirements identified during initial assessment and considered where practicable when planning sessions 	□	□	⊗

Armed Forces (including serving personnel, families, and veterans)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues of accessibility due to timing of courses conflicting with other commitments within the armed forces will have an impact on attendance and retention. • Tutors will make reasonable adjustments to support learners in completion of their course due to armed forces movements. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other - e.g. carers, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater access to Multiply for people living in rural isolated areas, those who are digitally excluded, those with caring responsibilities, on low income. • Specific courses are being marketed through various mediums. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Negative outcomes action plan

Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.

Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
This EIA will be reviewed following commencement of delivery during April / May 2024. This review will ensure that delivery is tailored to meet all participant requirements.	31/05/2024	Sue Taylor	Performance review meetings with delivery provider.	<input type="checkbox"/>
A review of the providers' collection of participant information will take place regularly (each term) this will ensure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual disability requirements and adaptations are being provided 	30/06/2024	Programme management team	Quarterly review meetings with delivery provider	<input type="checkbox"/>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants can use their preferred pronouns and names • Delivery locations will consider social mobility issues including digital inclusion to enable isolated individuals to participate • Participants can alert the delivery provider of their preferred language • All application forms will be available in different formats to ensure accessibility is available to all. 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All contracts and agreements with delivery providers will reflect the requirement to deliver in accordance with both SC and DfE Equalities and Diversity policies. 	30/06/2024	Programme management team	Quarterly review meetings with delivery provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery providers will be requested to provide their safeguarding, prevent and equalities policies to SC programme management team. 	30/06/2024	Programme management team	Quarterly review meetings with delivery provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any incidents to be reported to the SC programme management team to allow review and the appropriate response if made 	30/06/2024	Programme management team	Quarterly review meetings with delivery provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no further negative outcomes to consider. • This will be regularly reviewed and updated if necessary, via the programme review meetings 	Quarterly	Programme manager	Regular quarterly reviews of reports, feedback, and meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>

If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.				
Completed by:	Sue Taylor			
Date	20 th February 2024			
Signed off by:	Melanie Roberts			
Date	14 th March 2024			
Equality Lead sign off name:	Tom Rutland			
Equality Lead sign off date:	14 th March 2024			
To be reviewed by: (officer name)				
Review date:				