

Greater Lincolnshire

Combined County Authority 

This is a live document. Further amendments will be made before it is approved at the meeting of the Authority on 10th December 2025.

Adult Skills Fund Strategic Skills Plan

The information in this report will be assessed by the Department for Education to give assurance that the budget will be effectively administered after it is devolved. The preparation of processes to meet the 'readiness conditions' has been led by Lincolnshire County Council, an established and experienced deliverer and commissioner of the Adult Skills Fund, working in partnership with North Lincolnshire Council and North East Lincolnshire Council.

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Contents

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Introduction

What is the Strategic Skills Plan?

This Strategic Skills Plan (SSP) explains how the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) and Free Courses for Jobs Fund (FCFJ) will operate once devolved to the Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority (GLCCA).

The ASF incorporates the tailored learning fund, previously known as the community learning fund. (Unless stated otherwise in the report, where it says ASF, please assume this intended to include FCFJ and tailored learning).

The Department for Education (DfE) will confirm the amount to be devolved in February 2026 and GLCCA will take control of the budget from 1st August 2026. The budget is expected to be in the region of £17m - £19m a year.

This plan sets out the intended purpose of the fund and how it will be used to support our residents and our growth ambitions in Greater Lincolnshire.

The Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority

The Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority (GLCCA) is governed by a main board responsible for overseeing strategic decision-making and ensuring that devolution powers are used effectively to benefit the region.

Alongside the main board, three specialist boards will focus on areas critical to Greater Lincolnshire's growth and prosperity: Transport, Employment and Skills, and Business and Infrastructure. These boards will bring together local leaders, industry experts, and stakeholders to develop targeted policies, drive investment, and deliver tangible improvements



The Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority (GLCCA) was established on 5th February 2025 and held its inaugural meeting on 6th March 2025. A mayor was elected on 1st May 2025. It covers the administrative boundaries of Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire.

Website: [Home – Greater Lincolnshire CCA](#)

Adult Skills Fund Responsibilities after Devolution

- Determining funding priorities in line with local strategic plans
- Setting and publishing funding rates and rules within DfE parameters
- Allocating funding via grants or procurement in line with legal requirements
- Determining contracts and conditions of funding
- Managing contracted providers and payment mechanisms

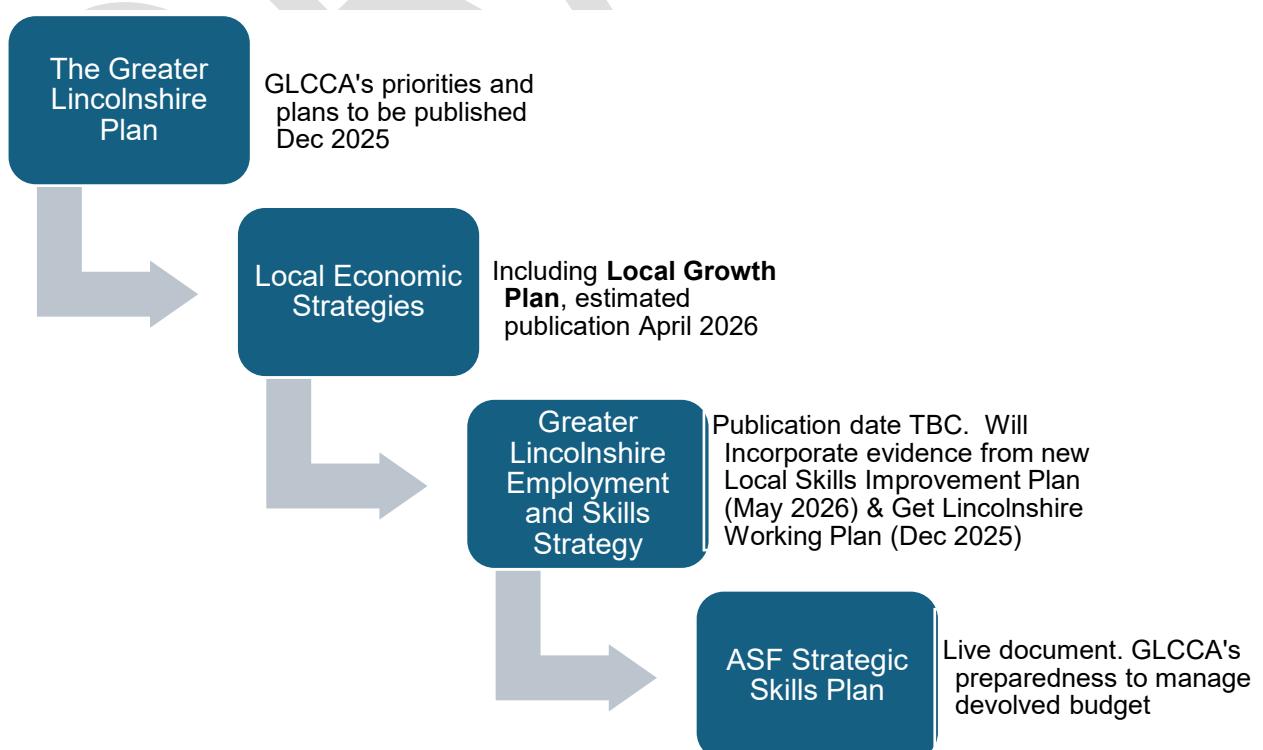
Strategic Context

Greater Lincolnshire's employment and skills challenges have been well documented over the last decade and the team at GLCCA has substantial experience of the evidence base having written several DfE-approved sources: the Area Review evidence base 2017; the SAP Analysis 2020 and the Local Skills Reports of 2021 and 2022.

Drawing on these, as well as the Local Skills Improvement Plan of 2023 and 2024; strategies produced by local authorities specific to their areas; and the Get Lincolnshire Working plan, the GLCCA will publish a ten-year employment and skills strategy for Greater Lincolnshire within its first year of operation.

The devolved Adult Skills Fund (ASF) will help to deliver brighter futures for local people and this Strategic Skills Plan (SSP) sets out our preparedness to successfully commission, manage and administer the devolved ASF.

Relationship between strategies and plans



What is the Adult Skills Fund?

The Adult Skills Fund, previously known as the Adult Education Budget (AEB), is the largest of central government's budgets for educating and training adults aged 19 and above and has already been devolved to 9 areas of England.

In the region of £15m–£18m per year is expected to be devolved to Greater Lincolnshire for the academic year starting August 2026 and the Department for Education will confirm the amount in February 2026.

The devolved budget covers three areas of learning:

- Tailored Learning (replacing a fund that used to be called Community Learning) is available within the ASF budget to deliver non-qualification and non-regulated learning. It is used to support wider outcomes such as to improve health and wellbeing, equip parents/carers to support their child's learning and develop stronger communities.
- The Adult Skills Fund supports adult learners to gain skills and qualifications up to Level 2 which will lead them to employment or enable them to progress to further learning which will deliver that outcome.
- The Free Courses for Jobs Fund helps adults gain valuable skills and qualifications to improve their job prospects and earning potential by fully funding a Level 3 qualification in particular subjects.

GLCCA will use the relevant budget to ensure that residents can take their first steps into learning, can progress in learning, can progress in their job, or gain employment.

Information later in the plan provides further detail of the purpose of the fund and the legal entitlement that will be transferred from the secretary of state for education to GLCCA on 1st August 2026.



Adult Learning in Action

Martin had a very difficult time in the last year, due to health issues that caused him to lose his job 6 months ago. He had to learn to walk and talk again during this period and he was adamant that the disability he had was not going to beat him.

He enrolled on the HGV Driver Training Programme. Due to his disability, the medical checks required for the provisional licence took longer than normal, but Martin was successful and went on to complete and pass the theory and practical driver training within 10 days. He gained his full HGV licence and is now employed full-time.

Natalie initially joined Lincoln College after a cancer diagnosis and was keen to support her young son. She initially applied for a Level 2 Certificate in Understanding Autism but over the following 12 months took a series of short courses including Understanding Children and Young People's Mental Health; Self harm and Suicide Prevention; Mental Health First Aid, Special Education Needs Awareness; and a Level 3 Mental Health course. She achieved more than she could ever have anticipated, and she has secured a role as a teaching assistant in a Special Education Needs school.

Thomas was referred to training from the Restart programme to help him in his search for work. He was keen to become a chef in the RAF. To support his goal, he completed a food hygiene certificate, and attended a Get into Hospitality and Catering course, also learning about kitchen safety, risk assessments, legislation, and customer service. He also completed an Employability Skills course and a Find your Mojo course to improve his confidence and motivation.

He secured an interview with the RAF but was unsuccessful, however is now working in a restaurant in Gainsborough and working towards becoming a chef. He earned more in five shifts than he would have on Universal Credit, affording a gym membership and maintaining a positive mindset.

How is the national education budget spent?

For context, the total national annual budget for all age education and training is approximately £86 billion.

- Around 75% of this is allocated for early years, primary and secondary education.
- Approximately 9% for higher education.

Funding for further education and work-based learning is split into:

- 16-19 education
- Apprenticeships (all age), and
- Adult Education (age 19+).

Adult Education is funded through different national DfE-led funds, each with their own criteria, rules or purpose.

- Adult Skills Fund (ASF) (£1.4 billion**)
- Free Courses for Jobs (FCFJ) (£0.5 billion**)
- Skills Bootcamps (£34 million**)
- Advanced Learner Loans (£200 million**)
- Other: e.g. UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Multiply

*** numbers are approximate national 2024-2025 budgets*

Schemes that are delivered through the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) aimed at reducing barriers to work (e.g. Restart, Connect to Work and the Sector Based Work Academy Programme) do not generally fund the training and education part of the scheme, learners are instead linked to the relevant training course funding through DfE.

(Note: persons subject to adult detention are not funded through the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) and adult learners with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) who are aged under 25 are also outside the ASF as they fall within 16-19 funding. Accordingly, devolved skills funding for the ASF excludes those two groups because they are supported with other funding).

Greater Lincolnshire Landscape – Employment and Skills

Greater Lincolnshire is a dispersed economy which is distinctive in its variety, from the world-leading offshore wind energy sector and manufacturers, ports and petrochemicals in the north to the centre of the UK's food and agricultural heartland in the south.

Rural areas and coastal areas constitute more than 90% of Greater Lincolnshire's landmass, attracting visitors to destinations such as Cleethorpes and Skegness.

To the west of Greater Lincolnshire towns such as Grantham, Stamford and Gainsborough act as gateways into the Midlands, Yorkshire and the North West.

Industrial centres like Grimsby, Immingham and Scunthorpe, clusters of chemical and energy production companies on the South Humber Bank, the heritage city of Lincoln, and market towns

such as Boston and Sleaford all contribute to the economy as drivers of growth and innovation, housing residents, and providing vital services to their rural hinterland.

It has a population of 1.1 million, with nearly 49,000 businesses all contributing to a £30bn economy, which has grown by 40% in the past 10 years.

It has a rich heritage in agriculture, engineering and industry and a major role to play in the future of the UKs energy and food security as well as the way we trade with the rest of the world.

Over the past decade, the population of Greater Lincolnshire has increased by 5.4%, below the national average of 6.6%.

There has been 1% growth in the working age population (16–64-year-olds) over the past decade across Greater Lincolnshire as a whole, whilst the 65+ population has grown by 21%. This is more pronounced in rural and coastal areas and variation exists.

There are significant variations. In Boston there has been a 14% increase in 0–15-year-olds, whereas in North Lincolnshire, North East Lincolnshire and East Lindsey the number of 0–15-year-olds has decreased; in Lincoln there has been a 10% increase in 16–64-year-olds, whilst in West Lindsey and South Kesteven there has been a 29% increase in over 65s.

Employment

Greater Lincolnshire has amongst the highest proportion of employment in small and medium sized businesses of any place in the country.

Greater Lincolnshire supports 528,000 jobs (including 66,800 self-employed) and has the third highest proportion of employment in micro and SME-sized businesses (at 64% of employment) in the country.

Wholesale & retail, health and manufacturing continue to make up a significant proportion of overall employment. These sectors, combined, account for nearly half of total employment in Greater Lincolnshire.

Manufacturing makes up almost double the proportion of employment compared to nationally.

Transport & storage and agriculture also have a significantly higher proportion of people employed in Greater Lincolnshire than nationally.

Accommodation and food services has seen strong growth of 3% annually in employment, this is above rise seen nationally.

Analysis shows that agriculture, public admin & defence, manufacturing, and transport are sector specialisms in Greater Lincolnshire, especially agriculture which is over twice as specialised as nationally. Construction is also somewhat specialised as the sector makes up over 15% of total businesses with strong growth and 5% of total employment.

The new Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) will ensure it covers occupations and skills needs in the following sectors: Agri-Tech and Food Manufacturing, Advanced Manufacturing, Energy Industries, Defence, Digital and Technologies, Ports and Logistics, Professional and Business Services, Health and Adult Social Care, Construction and Visitor Economy/hospitality. This does not mean the LSIP will be limited to these, as sectors such as retail are vital for local employment.

Challenges

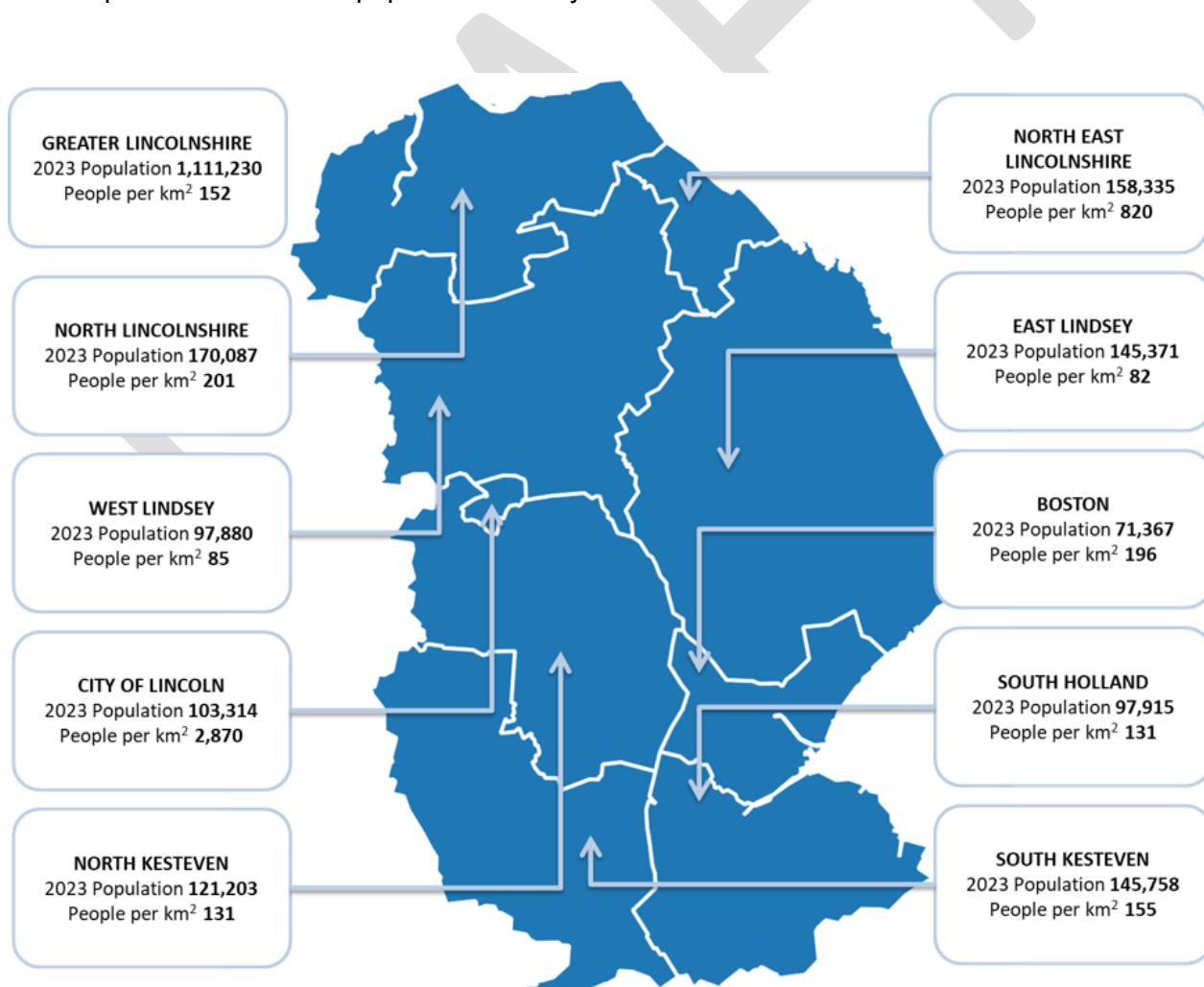
It is 7,997 sq. km in size, which is more than six times the size of the Greater Manchester City Region! It is one of the most rural and sparsely populated areas in the country with a population density of just 142 people per sq.km compared to 434 nationally. That is lower than Cornwall's population density of 161 people per sq.km.

There are 6 enterprises per sq.km compared to 13 in the UK on average.

This level of sparsity means that reaching the critical mass required for service delivery can be difficult and expensive, and that some areas are poorly connected by road, public transport and digital infrastructure. Access to skills and jobs is difficult, particularly for those in more peripheral and dispersed areas; addressing this is critical to achieving greater prosperity within our economy.

GLCCA will use devolved funding to make it easier for our residents to access the training they need to get better jobs and careers.

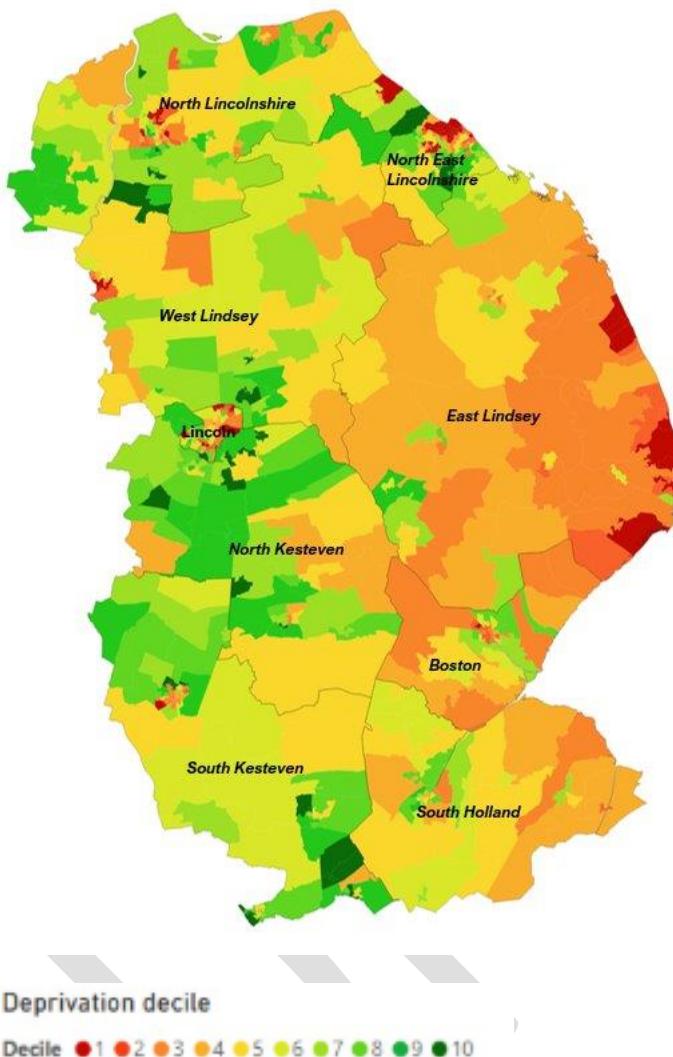
The map below shows how population density is different in areas around Greater Lincolnshire.



Deprivation in Greater Lincolnshire

Across Greater Lincolnshire there are challenges ensuring residents have access to the opportunities they need, and over 20% of neighbourhoods are amongst the most 10% deprived nationally with acute challenges in some of the region's coastal communities.

Overall Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019)



Deprivation is particularly high in East Lindsey, which ranks amongst the top 10% most deprived local authorities nationally (30 out of 317 local authorities) - high levels of deprivation around Skegness and Mablethorpe.

North East Lincolnshire ranks around the top 20% most deprived local authorities (66 out of 317 local authorities), with high deprivation in Grimsby, Cleethorpes, and area around Immingham Dock.

Lincoln (68th) and Boston (85th) also rank in and around the top 25% most deprived local authorities nationally.

North Lincolnshire ranks 120th most deprived out of 317 local authorities, with high deprivation in Scunthorpe.

South Holland (144th) and West Lindsey (146th) rank towards the median. South Kesteven and North Kesteven amongst the 30% least deprived local authorities nationally. North Kesteven 49th least deprived and South Kesteven 84th least deprived out of 317 local authorities in England.

Across Greater Lincolnshire, it is estimated that men from most deprived areas will live 10.5 years fewer and for women 8.8 years fewer than those from least deprived areas. This is in line with inequality found across Yorkshire but above other comparator areas, and more pronounced in North and North East Lincolnshire.

Source: *Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government English indices of deprivation (2019)*

Employment and Skills

Historically, employment in Greater Lincolnshire has been strong in sectors which tend to be labour intensive, have relatively higher numbers of lower skilled roles and therefore lower paid, but sectors, jobs and skills needs are changing.

Over the fifteen-year period 2020-2035 the Greater Lincolnshire economy is expected to have filled 268,000 jobs. The vast majority (93%, or 250,000) of positions will become available due to people leaving the Greater Lincolnshire workforce, mainly because of retirement, *with significant increases in demand for Level 3 roles* reflecting future opportunities within our economy.

GLCCA will use its devolved funding to support residents into these roles.

It is estimated that between now and 2035, nearly 135,000 jobs in the Greater Lincolnshire economy will be impacted in some way through developments relating to Industrial Revolution 4.0 and therefore *ensuring that people have digital skills is vital*.

Due to the changes in population previously described it is vital to recognise that the future success of the Greater Lincolnshire economy relies on the reskilling of the existing workforce, as well as providing the right pathways into work for young people.

Unemployment has historically been low in Greater Lincolnshire, but levels of economic inactivity are high. Economic inactivity is particularly significant in areas with older populations with early retirement and long-term sickness particular drivers for economic inactivity.

Across Greater Lincolnshire it is estimated that a quarter of employees (20%) are paid below the current National Living Wage of £12.21 per hour (2025 data), well above the national average. This has come down from 27% over the last 5 years but is an area of concern given that the real living wage acts as a proxy for in-work poverty, which remains a major issue for achieving inclusive growth, although living costs may also be lower in Greater Lincolnshire too.

Qualification attainment remains relatively low in Greater Lincolnshire, where fewer people are qualified to degree level and more people have no formal qualifications than compared to regionally and nationally.

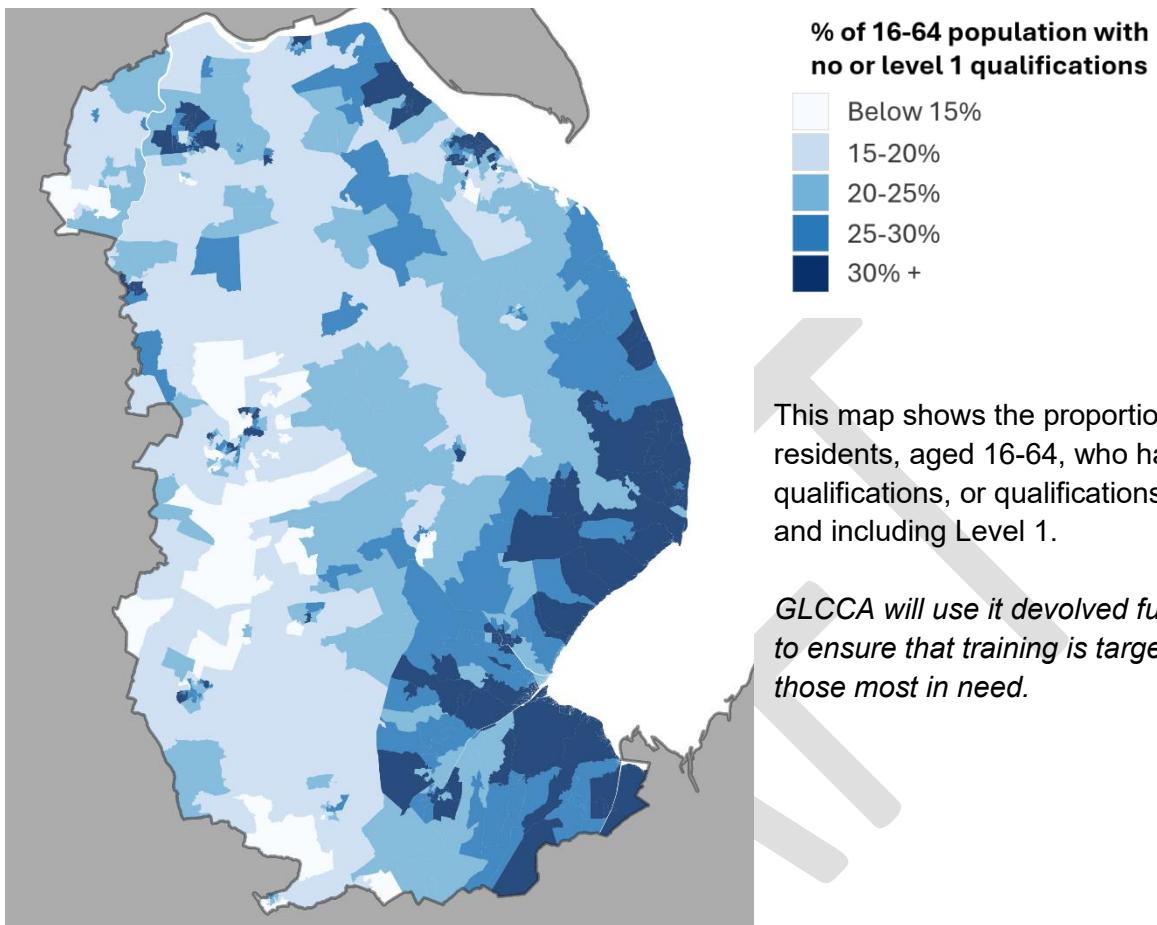
The difference in the proportion qualified to degree level is particularly stark. Despite progress, just over 32% of the working age population are qualified to degree level or above (RQF4+), a rise from four years prior, however this remains low compared to comparator areas, where regionally, the proportion is at least 40% and nationally, it is 47%.

FE education and skills participation and achievements have grown since 2019/20 despite being impacted by the Pandemic, and in 2023/24 rank among the highest of comparator areas. Achievements are relatively high across Greater Lincolnshire but have fallen since 2019/20 in North East Lincolnshire.

In Greater Lincolnshire, more people are qualified to level 2 (GSCE grades 9-4/A*-C) or level 1 (GCSE 3-1/D-G) or hold no formal qualifications.

1 in 10 people in Lincolnshire have no qualifications, 3pp above the UK average. The proportion with no qualifications is also high in North East Lincolnshire.

Qualifications attainment in North Lincolnshire is highest amongst areas in Greater Lincolnshire, with the proportion with no qualifications in line with nationally, but fewer people are qualified to degree level.



Adult Learning in Action

Five learners celebrated success after balancing their studies with busy work and family lives. Allison, Laura, Anna, Vicky and Amy all achieved GCSE Maths after studying part time.

For Allison, the challenge was a personal one, taken on to prove to herself that she could succeed. Laura is now preparing to progress onto an Access course with the long-term goal of becoming a midwife, while Anna will continue her studies in September with GCSE Combined Science.

Vicky, a teaching assistant at a local school, needed the qualification to support her role, and Amy, also a teaching assistant, marked the achievement with her two children, who had proudly promised her sweets if she passed.

Vickie enrolled in a 12-week Level 2 Business and Administration course, having never taken any courses since leaving school.

Initially nervous and uncertain, Vickie quickly gained confidence and excelled in the course. She transitioned from part-time supermarket work to a full-time apprenticeship with East Lindsey District Council.

Vickie's achievements include attending an event at the House of Commons and progressing rapidly in her apprenticeship, scoring 90% on a recent exam. Vicki says it still feels like a dream that this time last year she was stacking shelves. She is now a role model for adult learners and has been recognised by the apprenticeship team.

Strategic Priorities

Intended Purpose of Adult Skills Funding

Receiving the devolved adult skills funding allows the GLCCA to take commissioning decisions at a local level that better meet the need of residents, alongside the provision of statutory entitlement set by legislation set out below.

It is set out in the English Devolution White Paper that Mayoral Strategic Authorities will receive combined and un-ringfenced funding for the Adult Skills Fund, Free Courses for Jobs, and Skills Bootcamps from 2026/27 onwards. [English Devolution White Paper - GOV.UK](#)

The devolved budget covers different areas of learning, and the budget has historically been split nationally as follows.

The Adult Skills Fund: (approx. 70%) aims to support adult learners to gain skills and qualifications up to Level 2 which will lead them to meaningful, sustained and relevant employment, or enable them to progress to further learning which will deliver that outcome.

The Tailored Learning: (approx. 20%), (replacing a fund that used to be called Community Learning) is available within the ASF budget to deliver non-qualification and non-regulated learning. It is used to support wider outcomes such as to improve health and wellbeing, equip parents/carers to support their child's learning and develop stronger communities.

The Free Courses for Jobs Fund (approx. 7%) aims to help adults gain valuable skills and qualifications to improve their job prospects and earning potential. It provides adult learners who are unemployed, or who do not already have a Level 3 qualification, an opportunity to access free qualifications in particular subjects. A list of eligible courses is available via this link [Free courses for jobs - GOV.UK](#) Mayoral Combined Authorities can add to the list of qualifications within certain parameters set out by DfE.

Innovation Funding (approx. 3%): this funding encourages local innovation and supports providers to be able to develop new provision, in partnership with local employers and others. It is only available to Grant Funded Providers (Colleges and Local Authorities).

Skills Bootcamps provide flexible training courses for adults that must lead to a job outcome. Generally, at Level 3 or higher, any adult can benefit whether unemployed, in work or self-employed. Courses must be created in partnership with employers.



Statutory Entitlements

The Department for Education (DfE) retains the power to specify which qualifications are statutory entitlements in devolved as well as non-devolved authorities.

The Adult Skills Fund fully funds 4 statutory entitlements for eligible adult learners. These are shown below:

1	English and maths up to and including level 2 for learners who have not previously attained a GCSE grade A* to C or a grade 4 or higher	19+
2	a first full qualification at level 2 for learners	19-23
3	a first full qualification at level 3 for learners	19-23
4	essential digital skills qualifications up to and including level 1 for learners who have digital skills assessed as being below level 1	19+

The GLCCA will be able to change funding rules over time but will not be able to change the statutory entitlement in the table above.

The Adult Skills Fund can also fund:

- learning for adults of all ages to:
 - develop their skills
 - build their confidence, motivation and resilience
 - enable them to take up further learning or employment
 - improve their health and wellbeing
 - help them contribute to their community
- learning or learner support to overcome barriers that prevent individuals from taking part in education or work, and courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)

GLCCA's Strategic Priorities for the Adult Skills Fund (DRAFT)

1 *Ambition:*

provide Greater Lincolnshire residents with learning opportunities that improve their personal, and local economic prosperity.

ASF priorities:

- a. Create a programme of high-quality provision for Greater Lincolnshire adults that is accessible, aligned to local business need, well-promoted, and achieves good value for money by removing unnecessary duplication.
- b. Provide adults with the confidence and support to participate in learning and progress to higher levels.
- c. Fund qualifications that are business-led and contribute to the long-term prosperity of Greater Lincolnshire, creating a locally skilled workforce.
- d. Increase the capacity of the local provider base, so that Greater Lincolnshire's training infrastructure can be flexible and responsive to future local needs.

Evolution of the Programme:

Once funding is devolved the Authority will have access to better data and evidence that will help to shape its future programme. It expects to make a series of changes over time that will meet the priorities listed above.

For example:

- increasing provision in vocational and technical training to help residents into work.
- increasing the number of people with no qualifications into training to help their work prospects.
- providing a clear ladder of progression from Level 1 to 3 and beyond so that residents can fill the gaps that employers tell us they have in the workplace at a higher level.
- whole-place programme planning so that training is delivered in hard-to-reach areas; and,
- mandating residents who have not successfully found work to attend training programmes.

The Authority will work with stakeholders including colleges, DWP and business to shape the programme as it evolves in future years.

Eligibility

The Authority will inherit a set of national funding rules and will discuss changes to those in a meeting on 10th December 2025.

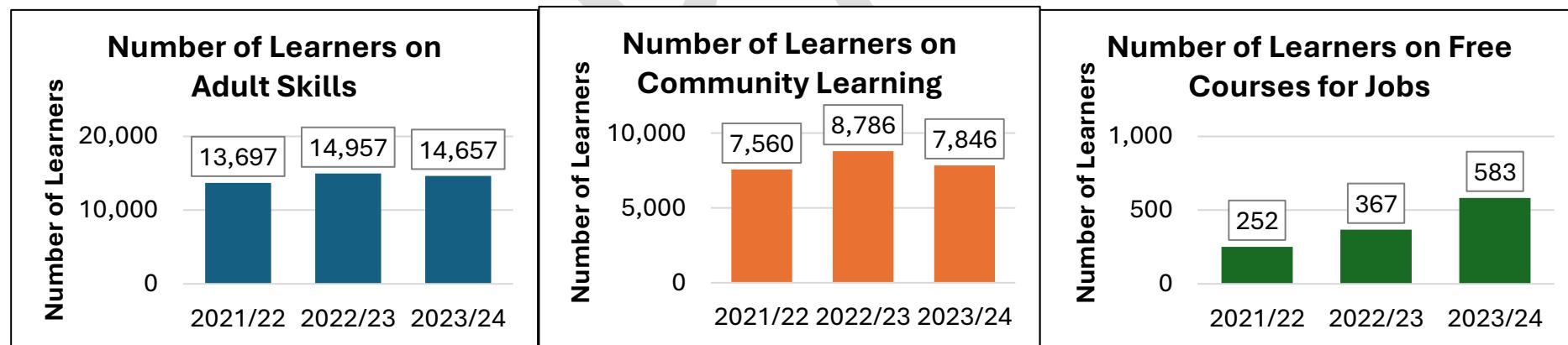
Data and Findings

Analysis of Adult Skills Funding Data

The most recent ASF data that is available to us is for the academic year August 2023 to July 2024. The data provides a detailed picture of how the funding that will be devolved to Greater Lincolnshire has been spent in previous years. Using this data GLCCA can make decisions on future funding priorities.

Total Number of Learners

The Adult Skills Fund supported approximately 14,657 learners during the academic 23/24, and 7,846 learners benefitted from tailored learning. Growth in the number of learners accessing the higher level (3) Free Courses for Jobs training was anticipated given that this fund is a relatively recent introduction. *(Learners may access more than one fund at the same time so the total number of learners supported each year is less than the total of all three funds below)*

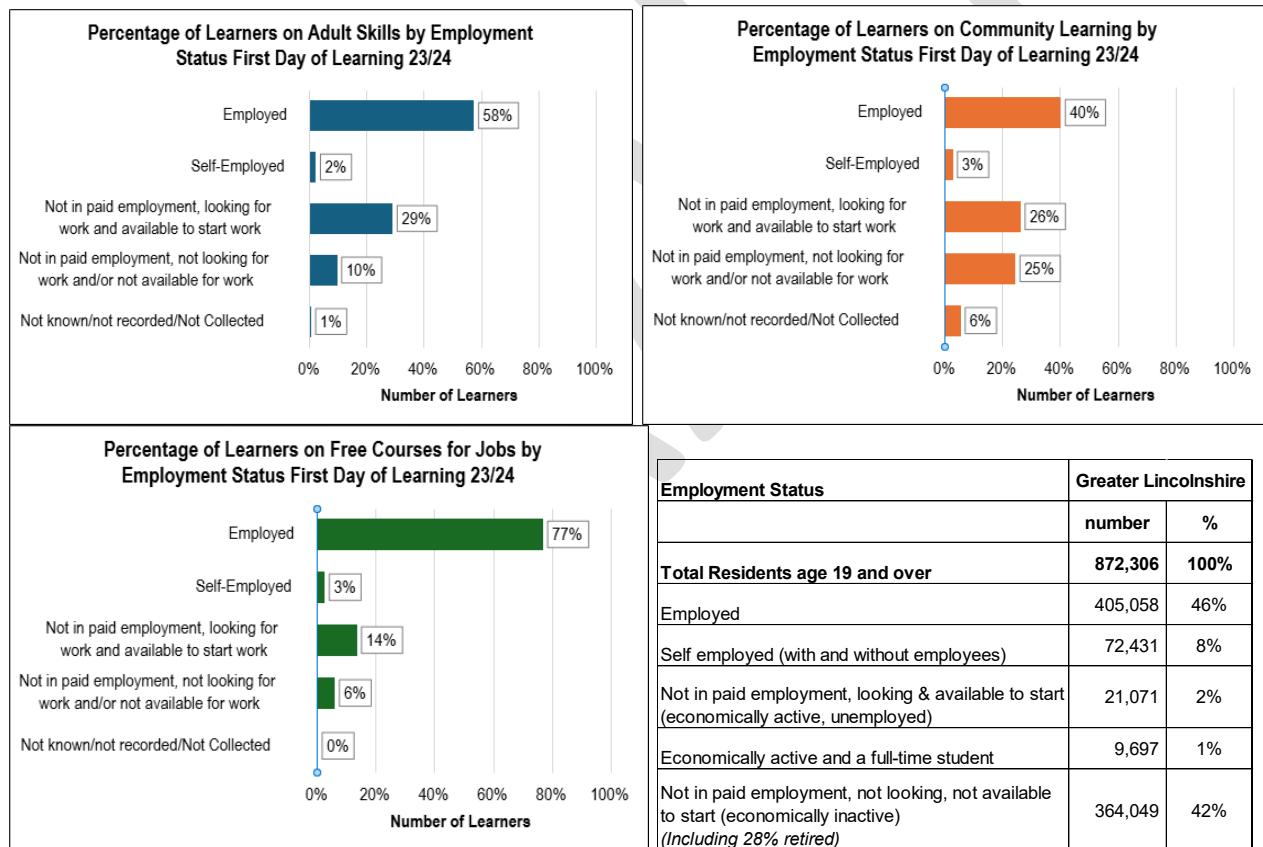


Learning by Age

Age Band	Adult Skills Budget Learners		Community Learning/ Tailored Learning Learners		Free Courses for Job Learners		Total GL Population (Census 2021)	Proportion of Total GL Population (Census 2021) %
	2023/24	Distribution of learners %	2023/24	Distribution of learners %	2023/24	Distribution of learners %		
19-24	2,400	16%	758	10%	14	2%	71,157	6.5%
25-30	2,111	14%	940	12%	107	18%	317,343	29%
31-49	7,180	49%	3,257	42%	361	62%		
50-64	2,763	19%	2,053	26%	100	17%	233,532	21.30%
65+	203	1%	838	11%	<5	0%	250,270	22.90%

GLCCA will drive growth in the number of residents obtaining Level 3 qualifications via the Free Courses for Jobs Fund.

Employment Status of Learners – Learners versus Population



GLCCA will measure the impact that learning is having on employed as well as unemployed residents to ensure it is supporting progression in work and improving the lives of people

Prior Learning

At least 2,300 (15%) of Greater Lincolnshire learners who enrolled on ASF learning in 23/24 already had a Level 6 qualification, equivalent to a degree, and is mirrored in previous years. This is higher than expected since the purpose of the fund is to support level residents with no qualifications or low qualifications. It will be monitored in Year 1.

Provider Analysis

In total, across all three funds, and three years of data, 254 different colleges, independent training providers, universities and local authorities have received a grant allocation of funding from DfE, or have bid successfully to DfE for a contract, for provision to Greater Lincolnshire learners. Throughout this report this group are generally referred to as providers or training providers. In 21/22, 192 providers; 22/23 190 providers, and 23/24 183 providers.

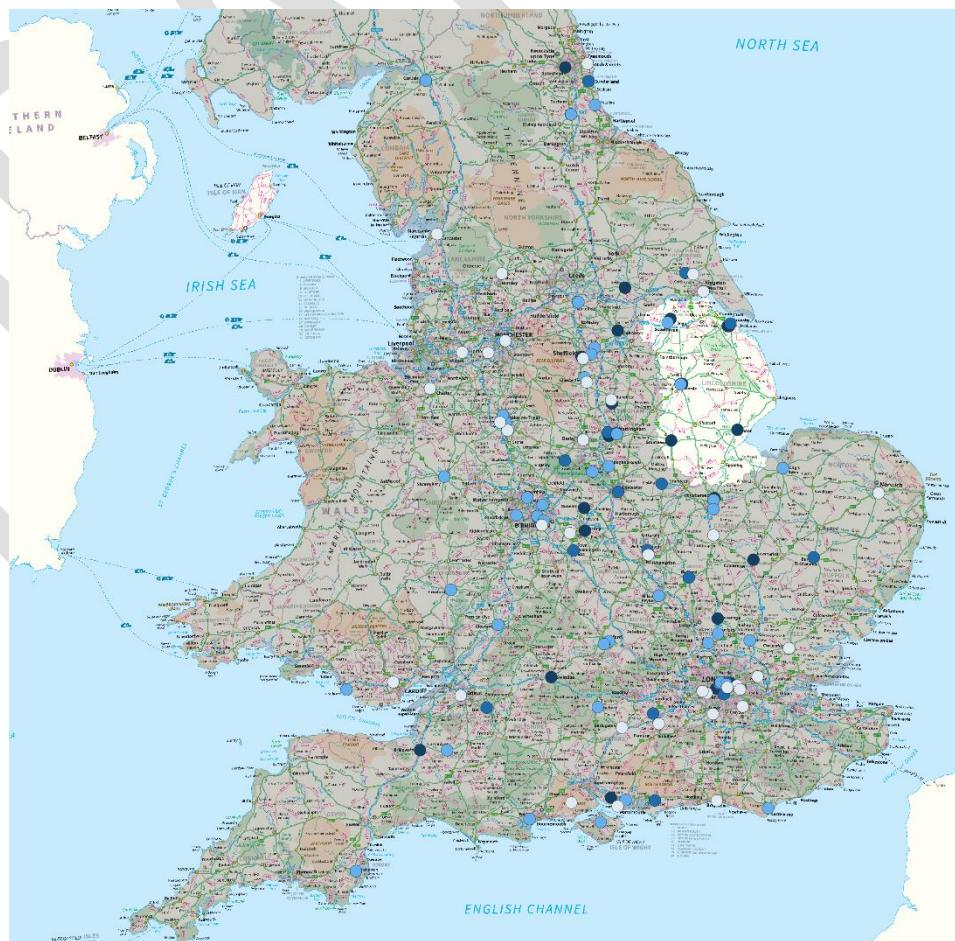
Some of this funding is then subcontracted to others to deliver the provision.

Main location of providers in direct receipt of ASF delivering provision to Greater Lincolnshire residents in 23/24. (This excludes providers who received subcontracts from one of these main organisations)

Providers funding training for 4 or fewer residents have been removed from the map to make it less cluttered. None of these providers were in Greater Lincolnshire.

- 100+
- 50-99
- 15-49
- 5-14

Most of these providers do not have delivery bases in Greater Lincolnshire.



Adult Skills Fund

The total number of Greater Lincolnshire learners receiving ASF support in 23/24 was 14,657, and they were funded by 174 different providers, some directly and some through subcontracting arrangements.

Only 22 of these providers funded more than 100 Greater Lincolnshire learners.

102 of these providers funded between 1 and 20 Greater Lincolnshire learners (615 Greater Lincolnshire learners in total). 39 providers funded more than 50 learners each.

Tailored Learning

The total number of Greater Lincolnshire learners receiving Tailored Learning support in 23/24 was 7,846, and they were funded by 32 different providers, some directly and some through subcontracting arrangements.

14 providers funded more than 10 learners each and of these providers, 8 funded provision for 7,572 Greater Lincolnshire learners.

Free Courses for Jobs

The total number of Greater Lincolnshire learners receiving Free Courses for Jobs support in 23/24 was 583 and they were funded by 61 different providers, some directly and some through subcontracting arrangements.

15 providers funded 10 or more Greater Lincolnshire learners each. Of these providers, 9 funded provision for 20 or more learners totalling 368 learners.

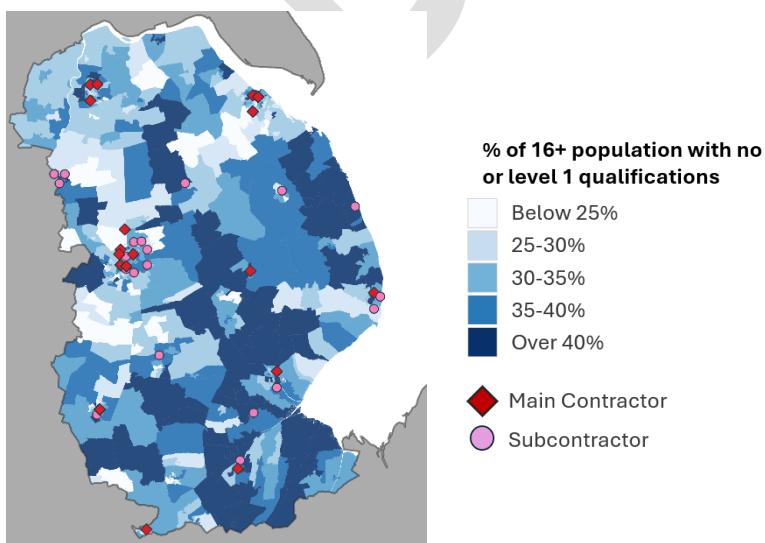
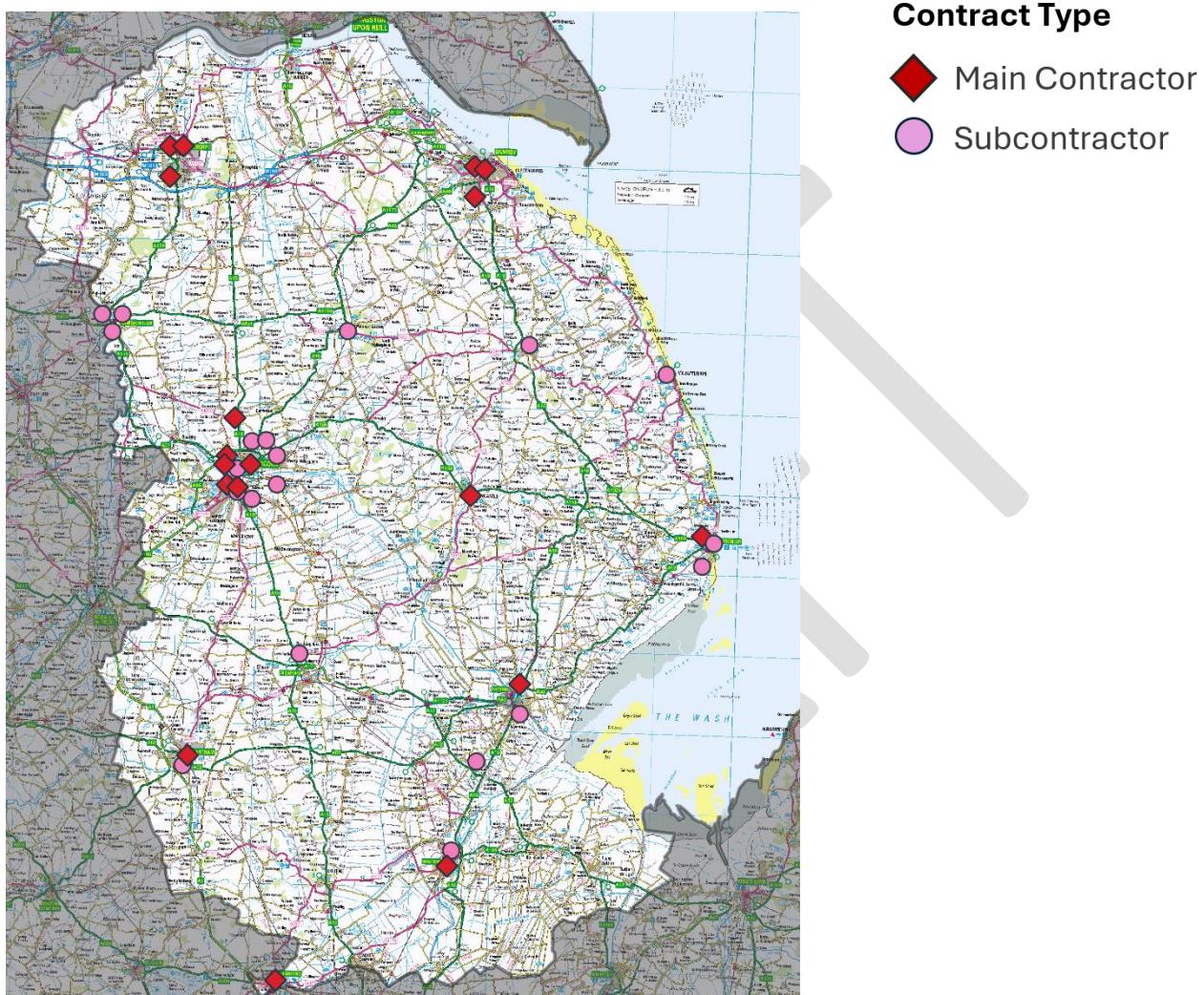
Funding for provision of Free Courses for Jobs for Greater Lincolnshire learners is spread differently to ASF and tailored learning, and several locally based Colleges and training providers are not within this 'top' 9 by volume.

It is an ambition of the Authority to increase the number of Greater Lincolnshire learners accessing Level 3 Free Courses for Jobs locally.

Subcontracting

A subcontracting analysis has shown Lincolnshire County Council has a positive impact on reaching small providers that would not otherwise receive a direct contract from DfE, enabling greater reach into local communities.

Map of providers with a base in Greater Lincolnshire delivering ASF provision to GL residents in 23/24.



Stakeholder Engagement

As Greater Lincolnshire prepares for devolution it is working with the Greater Lincolnshire Federation of Colleges and with local training providers, to communicate plans and will engage on what currently works well and what could work better in the future for the area.

An event that took place on 28th November 2024 captured rich intelligence from providers that GLCCA has taken into consideration. For example, the negative impact of short-term funding decisions on staff, and staffing levels within providers; the inflexible nature of funding impacting the ability to change direction of provision as required to meet local labour market needs; duplication that could be reduced with better provider-to-provider collaboration; the opportunity to have a positive impact with more effective local employer engagement. This is just a snapshot of what was collected.

Conversations are also being held with MCA's on Greater Lincolnshire borders to understand how the devolved adult skills fund will support learners crossing areas for training.

Commissioning

A. Allocation via grant agreement (instead of a competitive process) is historically how ASF has been awarded to FE Colleges and Local Authorities. Therefore, to ensure stability within the training system we will allocate grants to providers, via a Grant Funding Agreement, who meet all the following criteria:

- Hold an existing grant agreement with DfE.
- Have an established delivery centre or FE college campus within the Greater Lincolnshire boundary
- Have an established face-to-face place-based approach that supports the strategic priorities of GLCCA and delivers significant volumes of activity within Greater Lincolnshire
- Are wholly or mainly funded by the public purse

Grant funded providers will be permitted to subcontract an agreed percentage of their grant (for Greater Lincolnshire residents only) subject to prior approval by GLCCA.

Organisations who are currently grant funded by DfE and do not meet the criteria above will not receive grant funding.

B. Remaining ASF will be distributed through a competitive tendering process, via a purpose-built framework.

Cross-Border Arrangements

Work is underway to ensure that Greater Lincolnshire learners who are closest to a place of learning that is just across the Greater Lincolnshire border (and learners who naturally attend a place of learning in Greater Lincolnshire who are not residents in Greater Lincolnshire) are not disadvantaged. This could be done through cross-board arrangements with adjacent Combined Authority.

This approach:

- Ensures stability of the local system while GLCCA takes over the budget
- Prioritises local knowledge of people, geography and employment opportunity so that we have the best offer we can for residents
- Addresses rurality by maintaining a spread of provision across Greater Lincolnshire, particularly through subcontracting arrangements developed by Lincolnshire County Council
- Provides flexibility so that innovative projects can be created at speed if there is an identified need

Procurement

GLCCA, via Lincolnshire County Council, has produced a procurement strategy and framework.

The strategy will establish the foundation to manage ASF effectively, ensuring transparency, financial accountability, and adherence to national policy requirements. It defines the approach to sourcing provider services, ensuring providers meet the necessary standards and that the devolution of ASF results in enhanced educational and employment opportunities in the region.

The strategy ensures legal compliance, financial due diligence, quality assurance, and social value alignment while supporting Greater Lincolnshire's devolution readiness for the ASF.

The procurement approach aims to:

- Ensure compliance with:
 - The Department for Education's rules on Adult Skills Funding, combined with adjustments made by GLCCA to meet Greater Lincolnshire's strategic objectives
 - The Procurement Act 2023 (PA23), Equality Act 2010, and GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.
- Achieve value for money (VfM) while maintaining high-quality provision.
- Promote social value by fostering employment opportunities and supporting local communities.
- Facilitate a transparent and competitive provider selection process.
- Develop robust contract governance and performance monitoring mechanisms.
- Align with ASF devolution, ensuring operational readiness for the academic year 2026/27.

The procurement will be conducted as an Open Framework Arrangement under the Light Touch Regime (LTR) through the Open Procedure.

This approach ensures:

- Compliance with PA23 and LTR procurement flexibilities.
- Maximum provider engagement.
- Transparency and accountability.
- Flexibility in provider onboarding.
- Compliance with funding regulations.

As part of the bidding process for access to the provider catalogue, bidders must also submit proposals detailing their delivery plans for the initial year's programmes. While successful entry onto the framework does not guarantee funding, providers will be assessed for their capability to deliver these initial programmes as part of the selection process. This ensures that only high-quality, capable providers are considered for funding allocations.

Impact

Devolution will provide GLCCA with data that has not previously been available at local level in the way it is needed to match people with opportunities for learning and track progression and employment.

Assessment of impact will include:

- Analysis of outcomes and impact data collected from delivery
- Feedback from Employers who have benefitted from ASF funded programmes
- Feedback from Providers delivering on Greater Lincolnshire's programme
- Feedback from residents who have benefitted from skills investment
- Evaluation of new partnerships and collaborative work undertaken

Analysis of outcomes and impact data

We will collect impact data as well as analyse mandatory monthly Individual Learner Record (ILR) data collections to assess the impact of our provision and drive improvements. This will include:

- Actual Progression Data for learners on qualification programmes (to be provided by those Providers funded to deliver Adult Skills formula funded qualification programmes)
- Intended Destination Data for all learners (to be provided by Providers delivering on Greater Lincolnshire's programme)
- Outcomes data for learners on tailored learning programmes (provided as part of the mandatory monthly ILR return)
- Outcomes data with regards to retention, attendance, success and achievement (provided as part of the mandatory monthly ILR return)
- Delivery Location data to identify where provision is being delivered and highlight any cold spots (provided as part of the mandatory monthly ILR return)
- Targeted learner data to ensure funding is reaching those learners who best benefit from skills investment (provided as part of the mandatory monthly ILR return)
- Sector subject area data to ensure we are meeting the objectives.

Feedback from Employers who have benefitted from ASF funded programmes

Providers funded through Greater Lincolnshire's ASF will be required to collect feedback from those Employers who have benefitted from ASF investment in their workforce, focusing on filling skills gaps and developing skills for progression.

Feedback from Providers delivering on Greater Lincolnshire's programme

An annual evaluation of Providers delivering on Greater Lincolnshire's programme will be undertaken to understand the impact of new arrangements introduced on their organisations. Have they led to improved outcomes for learners?

Feedback from residents who have benefitted from ASF funded provision

We want to hear from learners engaged in ASF funded activity to assess the impact of the funding. This will include:

- Feedback from regular Learner Satisfaction Survey
- Feedback from ad hoc learner focus groups

Evaluation of new partnerships and collaborative work undertaken

An annual evaluation of new partnerships developed, and collaborative work undertaken as a result of these will be carried out to feed into the annual Impact Report.

Governance

The GLCCA will be governed by a main board responsible for overseeing strategic decision-making and ensuring that devolution powers are used effectively to benefit the region.

Alongside the main board, three specialist boards will focus on areas critical to Greater Lincolnshire's growth and prosperity: Transport, Employment and Skills, and Business and Infrastructure. These boards will bring together local leaders, industry experts, and stakeholders to develop targeted policies, drive investment, and deliver tangible improvements in each sector.

[Constitution of the GLCCA – Greater Lincolnshire CCA](#)

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