



East Midlands Combined County Authority

ASF Strategic Skills Plan

Version 2.0

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Section 1 – Introduction

Context

This document sets out the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) Strategic Skills Plan for the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA). It highlights strengths, opportunities and challenges across the region and sets out key priorities for the devolved Adult Skills Fund (ASF) to ensure it supports EMCCA's strategic vision.

To achieve its vision, EMCCA's focus will be on productivity, pay and jobs; spreading opportunity; community pride; and empowering local leaders and communities.

In support of this we will focus the ASF on the following ambitions:

- ❑ **Increased productivity for our region through the delivery of high-quality skills provision which enables our residents to enter the labour market or secure in-work progression.**
- ❑ **Reduce inequality, promote social mobility and allow people to achieve their potential.**
- ❑ **Work in alignment with other public funding sources to offer coherent routes to upskilling and greater prosperity across the region.**

EMCCA covers an area of 4,784 square kilometres, comprising 19 local authorities, including the two counties of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire and the cities of Nottingham and Derby.

The area has a population of 2.2m, of which 1.4 million people (63%) are of working age (16-64)¹.



Figure 1 Source ONS

EMCCA is home to 367,400 businesses, 89% of which employ less than 10 people.

The area accounts for 45% of the East Midlands economy and less than 3% of the gross value added (GVA) of England. In 2020, EMCCA's economy generated 50bn GVA.²

In 2020, GVA per filled post in EMCCA was £50,769, which was below the national average. Over the past decade the economy of D2N2 has lagged behind the national average.



EMCCA's vision: Making our region more prosperous, sustainable and fairer. Helping our people and businesses to create and seize opportunities.

¹ Source: ONS Annual Population Survey

² Source: ONS Regional Accounts. Note: Gross value added (GVA) is a measure of the increase in the value of the economy due to the production of goods and services.

From its origins as the birthplace of the first industrial revolution, manufacturing continues to play an important role in EMCCA, accounting for 11.8% of all jobs, much higher than the equivalent figure of 7% for England as a whole³. Recent technological advances are also bringing new sectors into the area, such as the STEP nuclear fusion plant at West Burton and the launch of East Midlands Hydrogen – a proposition for the East Midlands to become the UK’s largest inland hydrogen cluster.

The area also has strong natural assets in the Peak District National Park, leading to a vibrant tourism and hospitality sector.

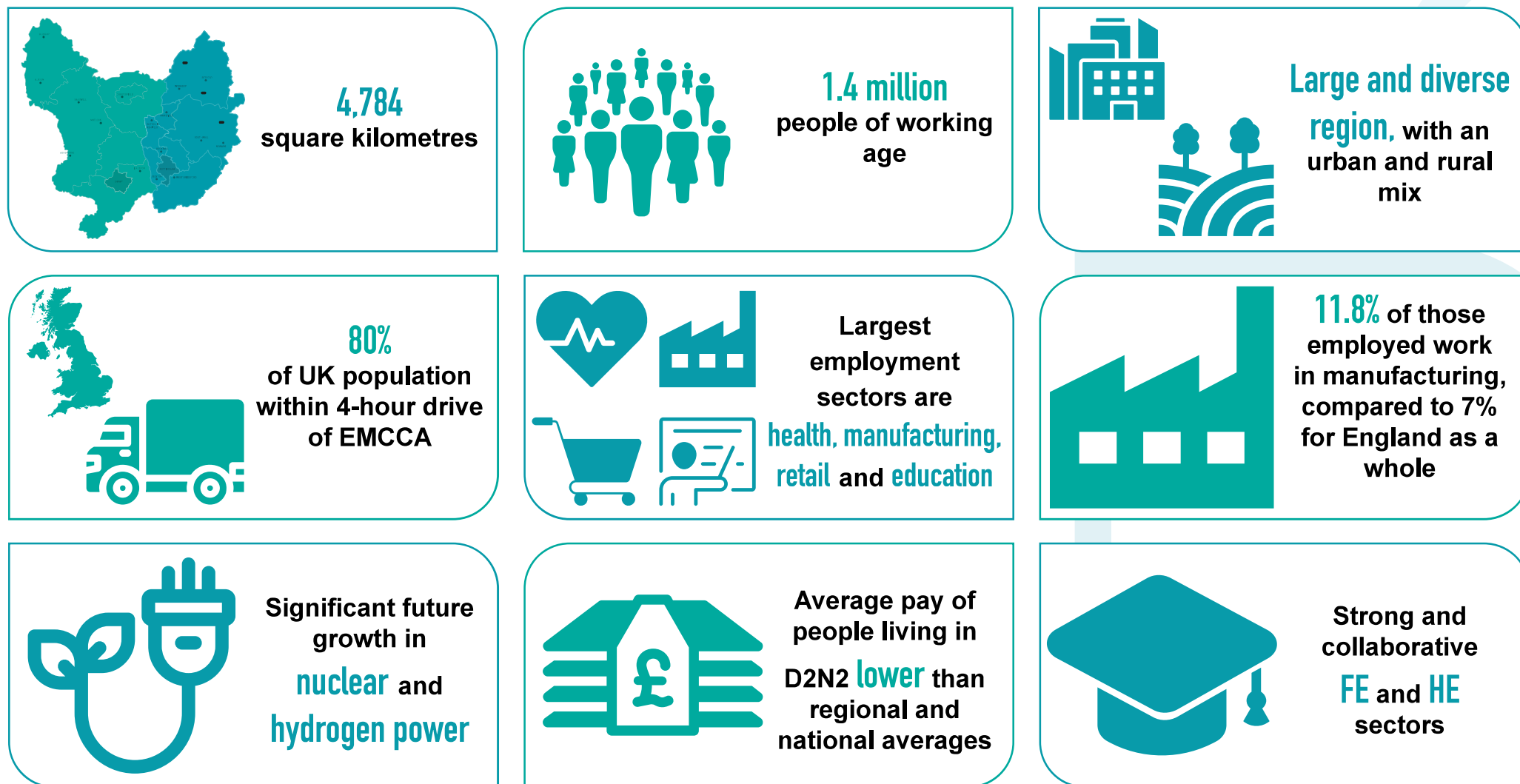


Figure 2 EMCCA Economic Indicators

³ Source: Business Register and Employment Survey (accessed via NOMIS)

The Adult Skills Fund

Currently administered through the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), this funding has been known as the Adult Education Budget, but in August 2024 the name changed to the Adult Skills Fund (ASF). The ASF aims to engage adults and provide the skills and learning they need to progress into, or within, work; or equip them for an apprenticeship or other learning. It enables more flexible tailored programmes of learning to be made available, which may or may not require a qualification, to help eligible learners engage in learning, build confidence, and/or enhance their wellbeing.

The budget is split into two funds: **Education and Training** which is qualification-based funding and **Tailored Learning** which is a fixed allocation that can be spent by learning organisations in the engagement, education and support of disadvantaged learners, or in subject areas not covered by recognised qualifications. Additionally, EMCCA will also be in receipt of Free Courses for Jobs (FCFJ) funding, a targeted level 3 offer to support adults without an existing full level 3 qualification, and adults who meet the definition of 'low wage' or 'unemployed'.

The Government will fully devolve the ASF to EMCCA from the academic year 2025/26 subject to the demonstration that it is able to carry out the functions of these devolved powers to improve the delivery of ASF in the area.

Much of the Adult Skills Fund is spent meeting statutory entitlements of learners, including fully funded provision for basic English, Maths and digital skills and any entitlement for 19-23-year-olds to achieve a first full Level 2 or Level 3 qualification.

ASF funding is also used to deliver the pre-employment training element of the Sector-based Work Academy Programme⁴, designed to



help Job Centre Plus claimants build confidence to improve their job prospects and enhance their CV, whilst helping employers in sectors with current local vacancies to fill them.

Skills Bootcamps will also form part of EMCCA's portfolio of government funded skills programmes including the grant for delivery of Skills Bootcamps previously held by the D2N2 LEP. Skills Bootcamps are flexible training courses up to 16 weeks, with a guaranteed job interview (where a candidate is being recruited to a new job) or new opportunities. Developed in conjunction with employers, Skills Bootcamps equip adults with technical skills at Levels 3-5 that enable them to access in-demand jobs, apprenticeships, and new opportunities leading to increased income and productivity.

With the transfer of funding to EMCCA will come the ability for us to be able to shape adult education provision in the area in a way that best suits the needs of our residents and the local economy. We recognise that there is excellent provision currently being delivered in our area, with all of our FE colleges and Local Authority adult learning services rated 'good' or better by Ofsted and recognise the importance of maintaining a stable post-16 learning organisation base. However, this does not preclude the drive to align delivery more closely with the needs of the area. Notwithstanding this a substantial part of the devolved funding will have to be used to fund the statutory entitlements.

4 www.gov.uk/government/publications/sector-based-work-academies-employer-guide/sector-based-work-academies-employer-guide

Section 2 – Strategic Vision and Priorities

EMCCA Strategic Framework:

Making our region more prosperous, sustainable and fairer. Helping our people and businesses to create and seize opportunities.

To deliver our strategic framework, we have created a set of shared objectives or priorities, which will guide our work and act as the basis for effecting change across the region.

Our focus will be on productivity, pay and jobs; spreading opportunity; community pride; and empowering local leaders and communities. More specifically, we will:

- ❑ Grow our economy faster, through targeted long-term investment, so that it is resilient enough to withstand future challenges.
- ❑ Match skills to economic need to increase productivity and wellbeing.
- ❑ Support businesses to create more and higher paid sustainable jobs so that our citizens access the jobs they want within the area.
- ❑ Create a net-zero economy with a resilient energy supply.
- ❑ Create modern and robust infrastructure that releases the private sector to grow businesses, and deliver high quality, sustainable new homes in the places they are needed.
- ❑ Build new and coherent transport links to facilitate better and more sustainable movement across the area, connecting our cities, towns and rural areas, linking employers to skills and our people to opportunities.
- ❑ Reduce inequality and promote social mobility to allow people to achieve their potential.
- ❑ Improve healthy life expectancy and reduce inequalities, especially in communities and groups who are most disadvantaged.
- ❑ Support enhanced green spaces to welcome nature back into our communities.
- ❑ Use our devolution powers to bring decision-making closer to those who live and work here, increasing the visibility of these decisions.
- ❑ Strengthen the ability of the East Midlands to maximise the benefits of collaborating with neighbouring regions.
- ❑ Responsive to changing local circumstances and business needs so skills provision can be matched to the job market.



EMCCA's strategic skills priorities consider how we will support the delivery of national objectives through locally determined delivery, and we have also considered the intelligence and recommendations within both the *D2N2 LEP Local Skills Report*⁶, and more recently, the *D2N2 Local Skills Improvement Plan*⁶ developed by the Federation of Small Businesses.

An economic growth plan for the new combined authority is in development but we are also able to draw on the existing *D2N2 LEP Recovery and Growth Strategy*⁷ which covered the EMCCA footprint and reflects the skills needs of the area.

We recognise that the Adult Skills Fund is part of a wider education landscape, and our ambition as a combined authority is to ensure that funding streams are aligned to deliver the best possible results for our residents, communities and businesses. The devolution of ASF, together with the potential afforded by linking to other funding streams such as FCFJ, Skills Bootcamps and UKSPF will enable us to target provision and reduce duplication more effectively.

There are clearly strong synergies with the strategic skills objectives of EMCCA, particularly in terms of the desire to create a more cohesive local skills system and the skills response to local socio-economic conditions.

5 d2n2lep.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/D2N2-Local-Skills-Report-January_2022.pdf

6 www.fsb.org.uk/derbyshire-and-nottinghamshire-lsip.html

7 d2n2lep.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Recovery-Strategy-2020_V4_190121-compressed.pdf

Priorities for the Adult Skills Fund

The Adult Skills Fund forms part of the wider skills landscape. The advent of EMCCA offers an opportunity for the region to develop a coherent, connected and place-focused skills system for the region, utilising both national and devolved funding to align delivery to meet our objectives.

We will focus on the following priorities:

❑ **Increased productivity for our region through the delivery of high-quality skills provision which enables our residents to enter the labour market or secure in-work progression.**

- ❑ Sectors which are supporting the growth of our economy including manufacturing, nuclear, and hydrogen.
- ❑ Sectors which support progress towards net zero, green skills, sustainability and resilience to climate change.
- ❑ Sectors which enable our economy to function effectively including transport and logistics, digital, the visitor economy and health & social care (including childcare and early years).
- ❑ Sectors that contribute to current and future prosperity and growth, including construction and engineering.
- ❑ Match skills provision to economic need to increase productivity and wellbeing.



❑ **Reduce inequality, promote social mobility and allow people to achieve their potential.**

- ❑ Focus on the most disadvantaged people who have multiple barriers and require support to engage in learning and to progress towards further learning and/or employment.
- ❑ Focus delivery on communities of need and disadvantaged areas such as neighbourhoods that are in the 10% most deprived Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs).
- ❑ Low-level skills (entry level, Level 1 and Level 2), economically inactive people and those in low paid, low skilled jobs seeking to progress.
- ❑ Identify and deliver the transferable skills needed to enable a resilient regional economy.

❑ **Work in alignment with other public funding sources to offer coherent routes to upskilling and greater prosperity across the region.**

- ❑ Develop innovative and collaborative delivery models focused on enabling residents to achieve their full potential and increase levels of social mobility.
- ❑ Continue to develop clear progression pathways for all residents, particularly those on low wages and with insecure work.
- ❑ Reduce levels of low attainment and increase opportunities for in-work progression, including Skills Bootcamps and Apprenticeships, and access to the Lifelong Learning Entitlement.



Specifically, in support of EMCCA stated objectives, the devolved Adult Skills Fund will enable us to:

- ❑ Maintain a stable and high-performing learning organisation base focused on meeting learner and employer needs.
- ❑ Work more effectively with stakeholders to support those who are economically inactive or unemployed to gain and sustain good employment.
- ❑ Utilise other programmes to enable learners to progress to higher-level qualifications which meet employer skills needs.

In developing the plan, EMCCA has considered existing data and research from the D2N2 LEP produced using Skills Advisory Panel funding and also ensured that where appropriate the plan's aims reflect the findings and recommendations of the Local Skills Improvement Plan published in August 2023.



Section 3 – EMCCA Area Profile

Opportunities and Challenges

Opportunities

Multiple major infrastructure developments are in development including the STEP Fusion Plant, East Midlands Freeport, Smartparc and Queens Medical Centre redevelopment which will bring with them a demand for jobs and skills.

Innovation, research and development hubs based in our three universities together with a concentration of world-leading advanced manufacturing businesses.

Strong place-based cross institutional collaboration among our eight FE colleges, all rated 'good' by Ofsted and our three universities.

Robust progression pathways already in place across the region for certain sectors.

The region is at the forefront of the development of emerging nuclear and hydrogen technology sectors.

Challenges

Higher economic inactivity than the national average.

Significant place-based disparities with pockets of deprivation.

Lower productivity than the national average.

Proliferation of low-skilled, low-paid jobs.

Proportion of working age adults qualified to Level 4 or above is lower than the national average.

The area was ranked 9th out of 38 LEPs for worsening deprivation in education, skills and training in EMCCA Districts since 2015.

Average pay of working people who live in EMCCA but work outside of the region is higher than those residents who work in the region, suggesting that people are commuting out of the area to higher paying jobs.

Workplace wages are below the national and regional averages.

Figure 3 Education and Skills Opportunities and Challenges

Employment by Sector

Figure 4 below shows that the four largest employment sectors in EMCCA are:

- public administration, education and health (32.9%)
- distribution, hotels and restaurants (17.6%)
- banking, finance and insurance (14.7%)
- manufacturing (11.9%).

The predominance of public administration, education and health is similar to many regions but highlights the continued need to focus on the skills needs in the sector. The continued prominence of manufacturing (11.9% of employment compared to 8.1% nationally) makes the EMCCA economy distinctive. The area’s central location contributes to the importance of the logistics sector, and activity in this sector is likely to increase as a result of the establishment of the East Midlands Freeport within the EMCCA footprint. The visitor economy is also an important contributor locally, particularly in the northwest of the area, but it is notable that jobs in this sector are often low-wage and low-skilled labour, with a high turnover.

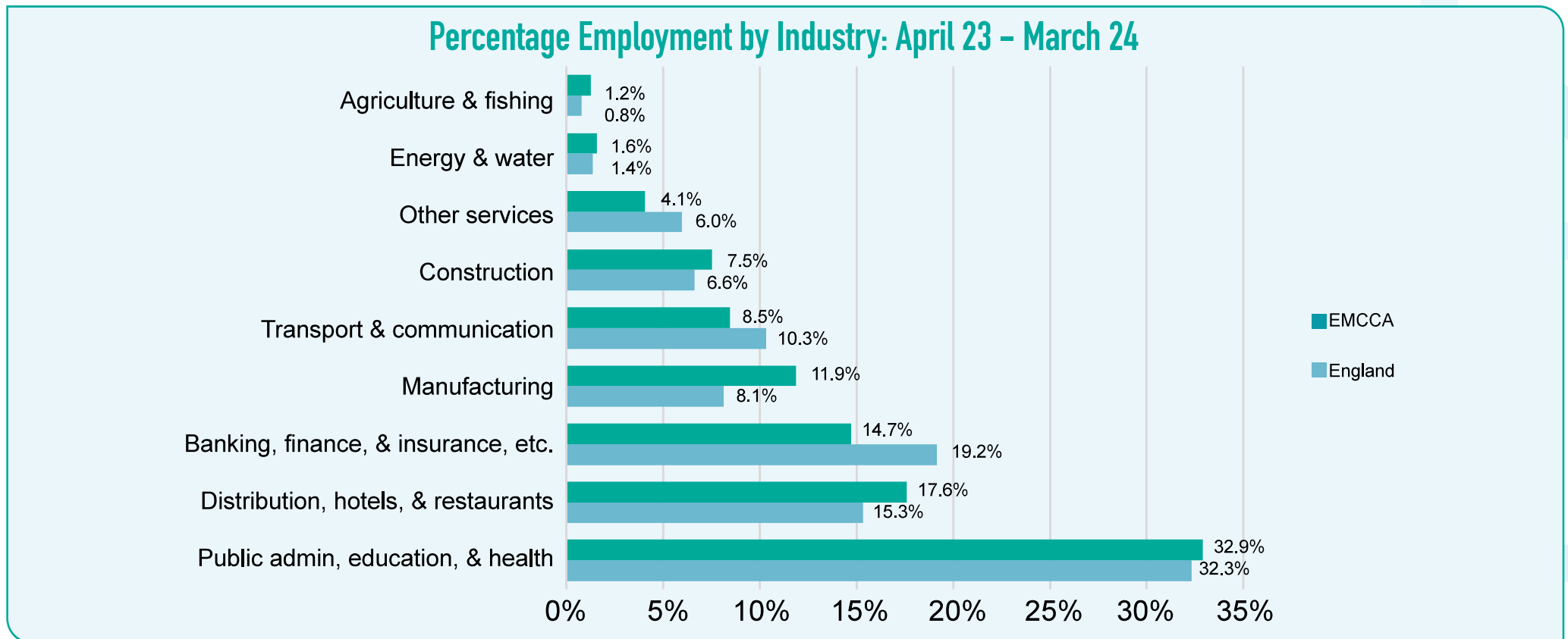


Figure 4 Source DfE local skills dashboard

Figure 5 below shows that almost all sectors are expected to grow in terms of employee numbers by 2030. Planned infrastructure projects such as the STEP Fusion Plant, Freeport and redevelopment of Queens Medical Centre, together with increased investment in transport infrastructure are likely to result in an increased demand for construction skills. Highest percentage increase is expected to be seen in electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply – reflective of the shift to zero carbon emissions.

Description	2022 Jobs	2030 Jobs	2022-2030 Change	2022-2030 % Change
Human Health and Social Work Activities	146,166	155,384	9,218	6%
Wholesale and Retail Trade	148,662	156,585	7,924	5%
Accommodation and Food Service Activities	71,921	77,590	5,669	8%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	65,757	69,560	3,803	6%
Transportation and Storage	48,977	52,555	3,578	7%
Construction	49,286	52,471	3,185	6%
Information and Communication	34,772	37,450	2,678	7%
Public Administration and Defence; Compulsory Social Security	42,621	45,192	2,571	6%
Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply	10,203	12,601	2,398	24%
Manufacturing	115,732	117,311	1,599	1%
Administrative and Support Service Activities	69,056	70,526	1,469	2%
Other Service Activities	16,537	18,003	1,466	9%
Financial and Insurance Activities	13,639	114,861	1,223	9%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	21,396	21,991	595	3%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	5,357	5,670	313	6%
Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	5,768	6,002	234	4%
Mining and Quarrying	1,405	1,459	54	4%
Education	84,911	84,326	(585)	(1%)
Real Estate Activities	11,356	9,581	(1,775)	(16%)

Figure 5 Projected Employment Growth to 2030. Source: Lightcast Analyst

Economic Inactivity

The percentage of people who are economically inactive (22.9%) in EMCCA is greater than the national average (21.2%). In addition to this, the inactivity rate in EMCCA has increased faster than the national average in the last five years (see figure 6). Over the last four years, there has been a steepening gap between national inactivity rates and those in EMCCA. However, in the 12 months to June 2024, the gap narrowed slightly perhaps indicating a positive trend.

Whether the trend is a positive one or not, we must keep a focus on this group of people to support those who want to into the workforce or reduce the overall percentage of people in this group in line with benchmarks.

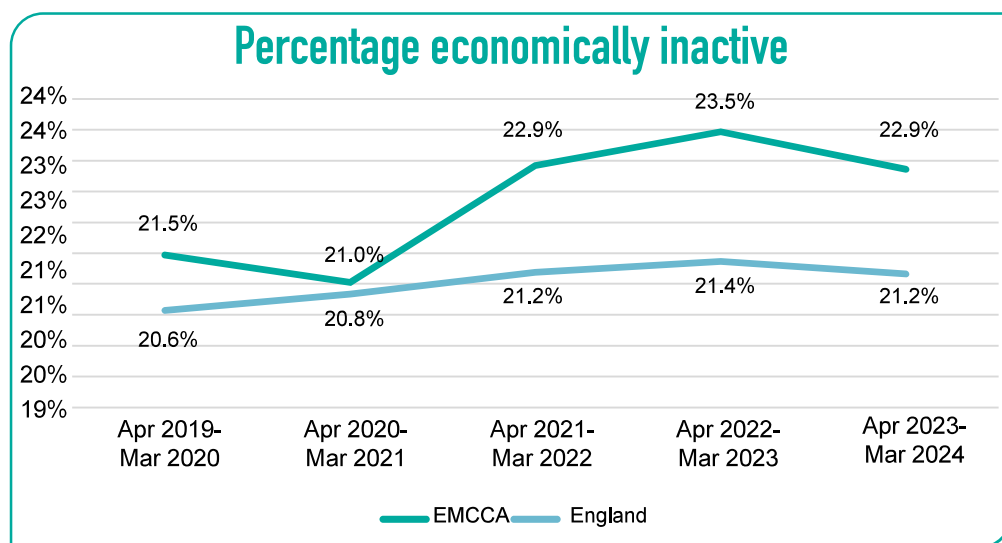
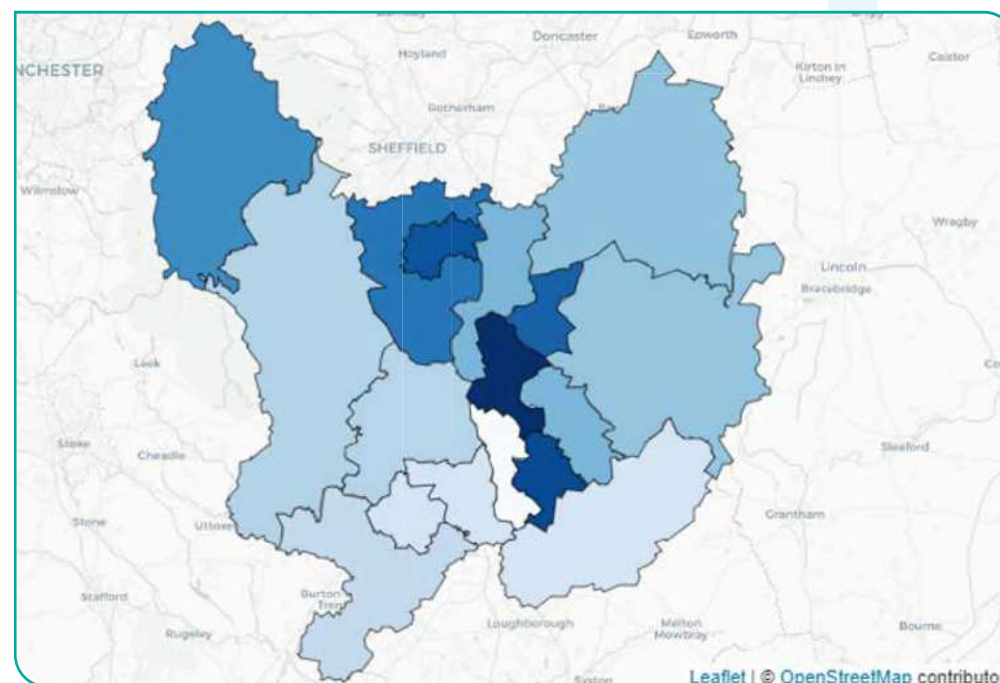


Figure 6 Source DfE local skills dashboard

Levels of economic inactivity are more pronounced in areas of highest deprivation, with economic inactivity rates in six of our districts and boroughs above the regional average of 23%.

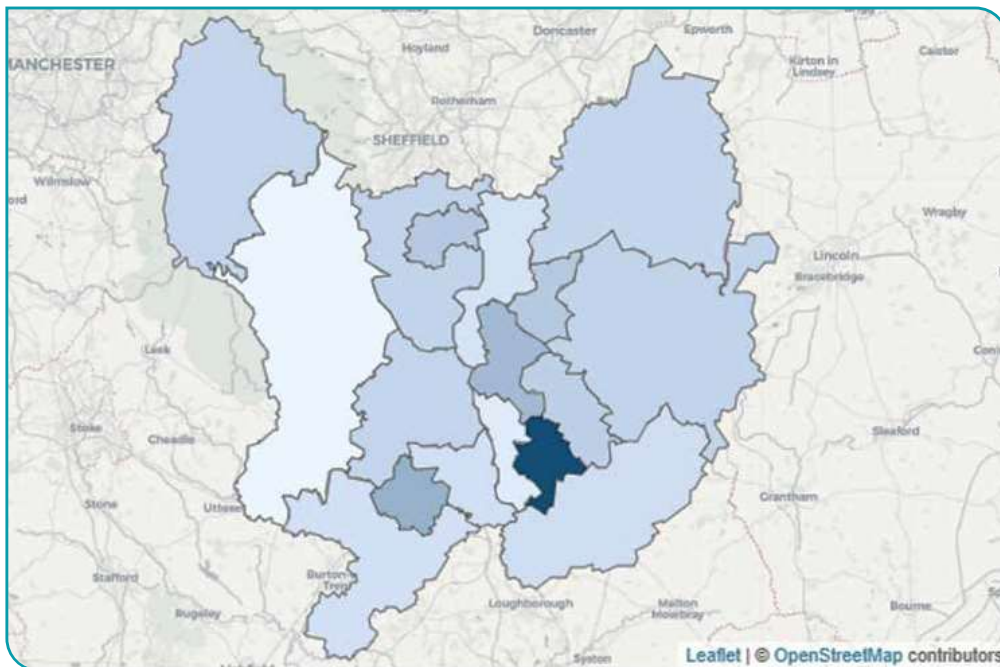
District	Inactivity Rate
Ashfield	31%
Nottingham	30%
Chesterfield	29%
Mansfield	28%
North-East Derbyshire	27%
High Peak	25%



Jan 2023 – Dec 2023

Figure 7 Source: DfE Unit for Future Skills department-for-education.shinyapps.io/local-skills-dashboard/ and *Annual Population Survey*

The picture differs slightly when we consider volumes of economically inactive people, where although Derby has a lower inactivity rate of 17%, actual numbers of economically inactive are the second highest in the region at circa 28,000 residents.



Jan 2023 – Dec 2023

Figure 8 Source: DfE Unit for Future Skills department-for-education.shinyapps.io/local-skills-dashboard/ and *Annual Population Survey*

Clearly there is a disparity between districts across the area and our goal is to utilise ASF funding to:

- ❑ Reduce the overall inactivity rate.
- ❑ Focus on a reduction in inactivity in communities and groups (e.g. SEND, ethnic minorities, care leavers, NEETS and ex-offenders) where the likelihood of economic inactivity is highest, and not just in our cities, but across the more rural spaces within our region.
- ❑ Increase the proportion of the population qualified up to and including Level 2

We intend to use our ASF funding to target those areas where economic inactivity is highest to arrest its growth and reduce overall numbers. To do so, we will:

- ❑ Ensure a place-based approach, working in tandem with existing Local Authority employment and skills forums and learning organisations who are already embedded into the community and targeting spending in areas of need.
- ❑ Set specific measures for the improvements that we wish to achieve over time, recognising that this will be achieved over the coming years.

We will also ensure that we maximise the use of ASF funding to increase skills levels, particularly in English and Maths through:

- ❑ Increasing engagement with legal entitlements, digital and full qualifications
- ❑ Ensuring that we work with employers to deliver increased volumes of workplace training.
- ❑ Ensuring that provision is joined up and that it forms part of identifiable progression pathways which are recognised by learning organisations, individuals and employers.



Figure 9 shows that economic inactivity is slightly higher than the national rate for all age groups.

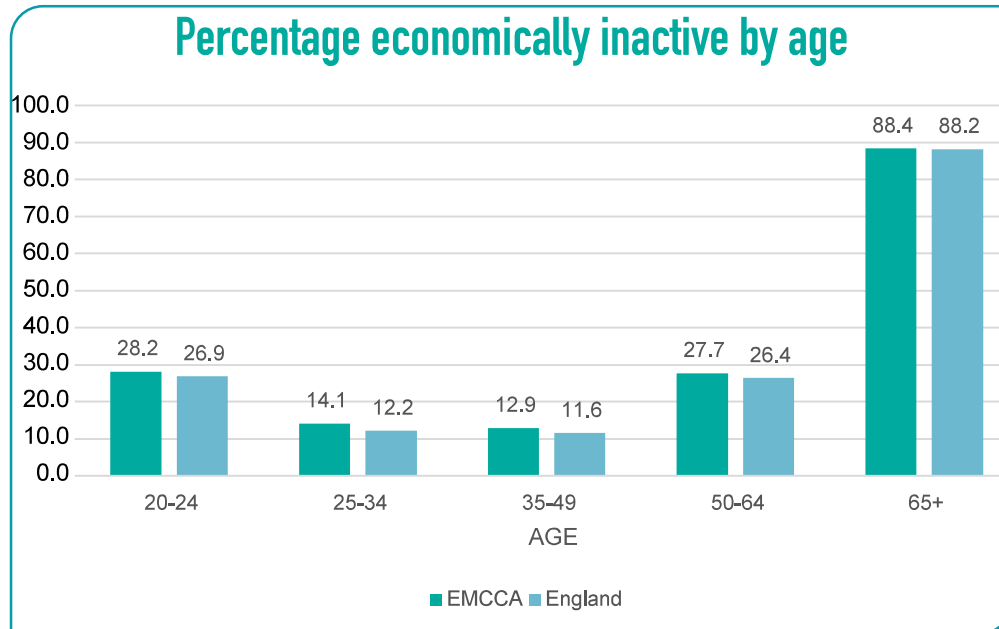


Figure 9 Source: NOMIS

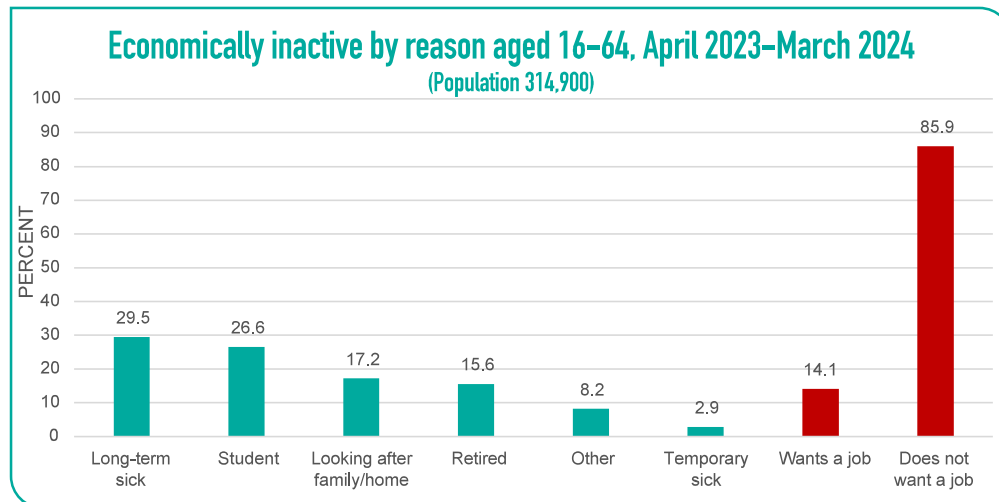


Figure 10 Source: NOMIS

Employment

Employment in EMCCA has decreased whilst nationally it has increased over the last five years. The employment rate for EMCCA was 74% to March 24, which was 1.6% below the national rate. Rates of employment dipped as a result of the pandemic but whilst nationally rates recovered fairly quickly, they continued to fall in EMCCA and have only started to pick up in the last year.

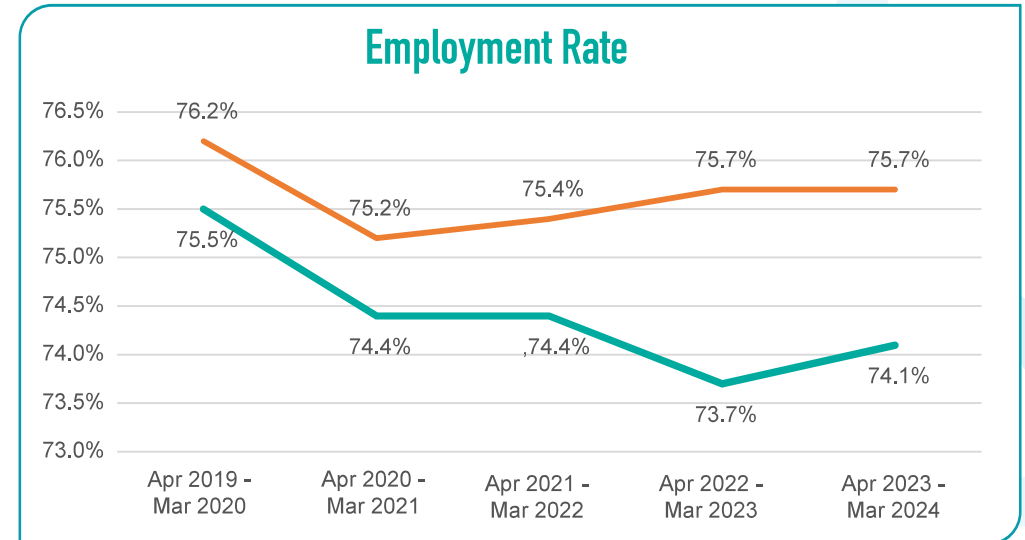


Figure 11 Source: NOMIS



Figure 12 below shows that the number of people in employment has decreased overall since 2019/20. There was a marked dip in 2020 perhaps as a result of COVID19 but recovery has been slow and is markedly behind national rates.

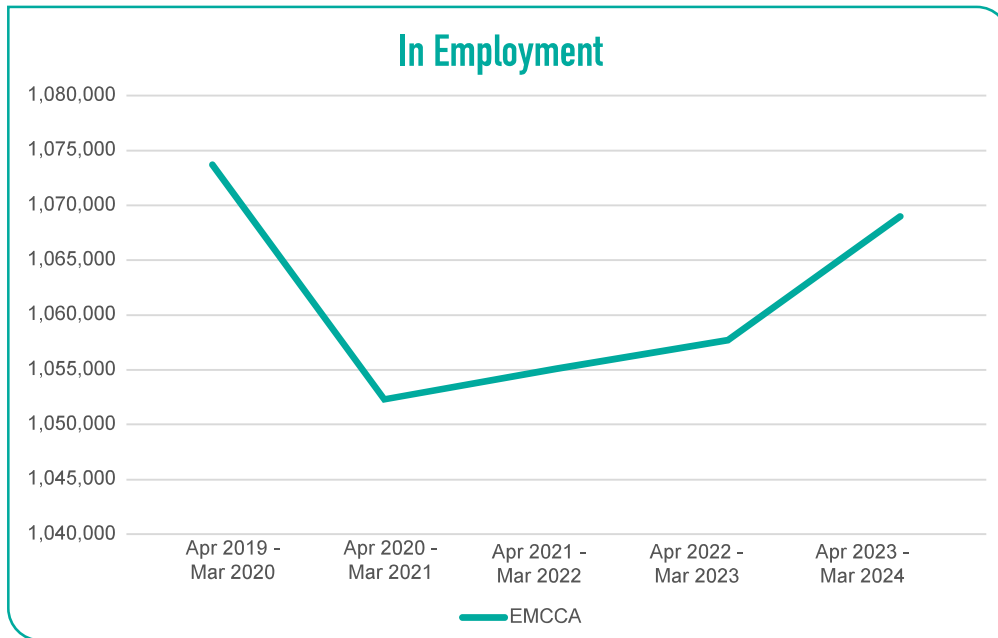


Figure 12 Source: NOMIS



Employment Change By Industry and Level

According to the DfE local skills dashboard there is a mixed picture of predicted percentage employment change by industry 2023-2035 with the largest growth being seen in food and drink and accommodation and food (i.e. principal components of the visitor economy). It is interesting to note that, according to this source, there could be contraction of the engineering and manufacturing industries. As more highly skilled, better paid jobs are replaced by lower paid, lower wage and sometimes seasonal jobs, this can have a detrimental effect on household incomes and average wage per person in the region.

NB these figures are forecast only and subject to change.



Predicted % change in employment by industry: 2023 to 2035

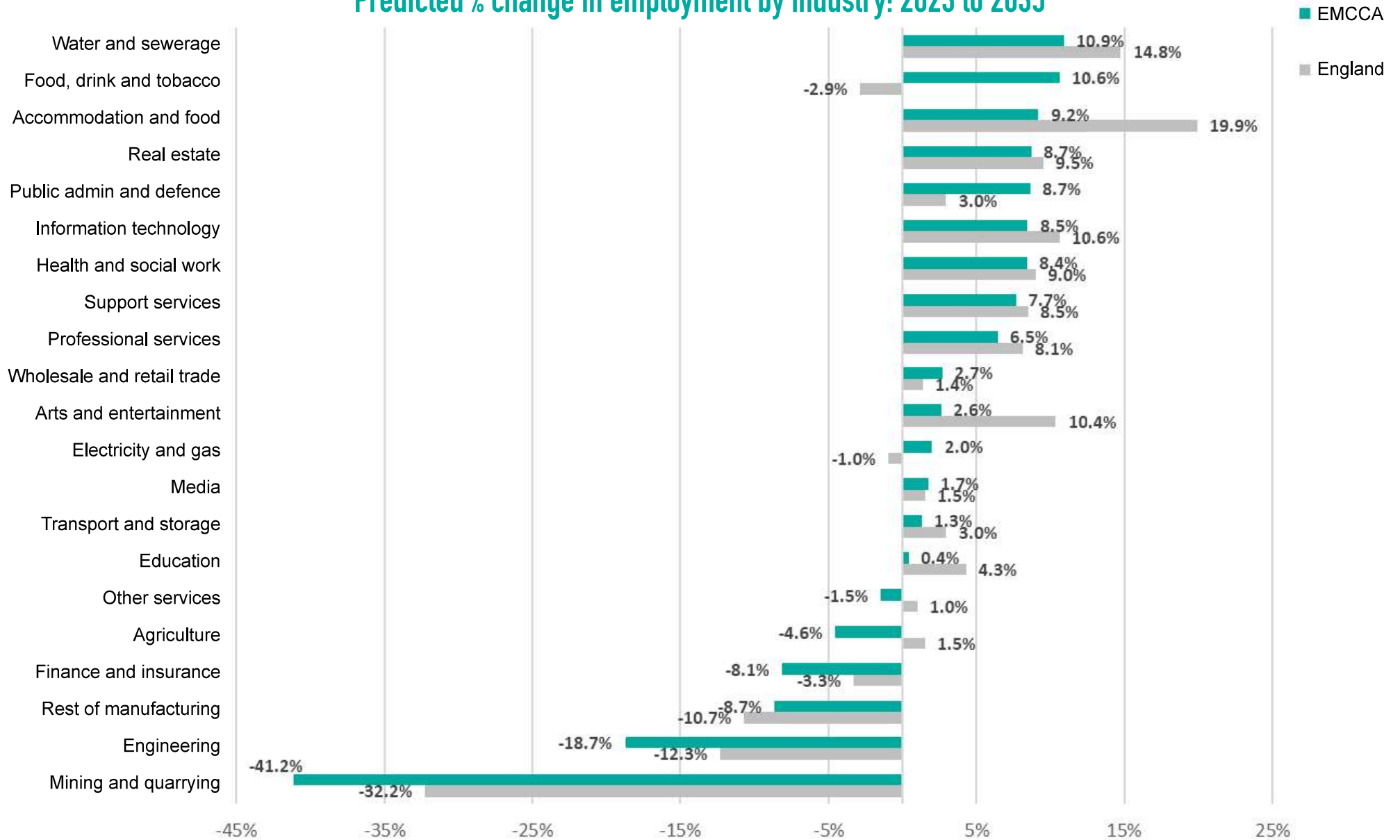


Figure 13 Source: DfE local skills dashboard

Figure 14 below shows the predicted % change in employment by qualification level and indicates that jobs with low level of skills (Level 2) or no skills will reduce over time, whilst jobs requiring Level 3 and above are all increasing. This means that it is imperative to support people with lower level or no skills to increase their skills attainment to safeguard jobs in the future.

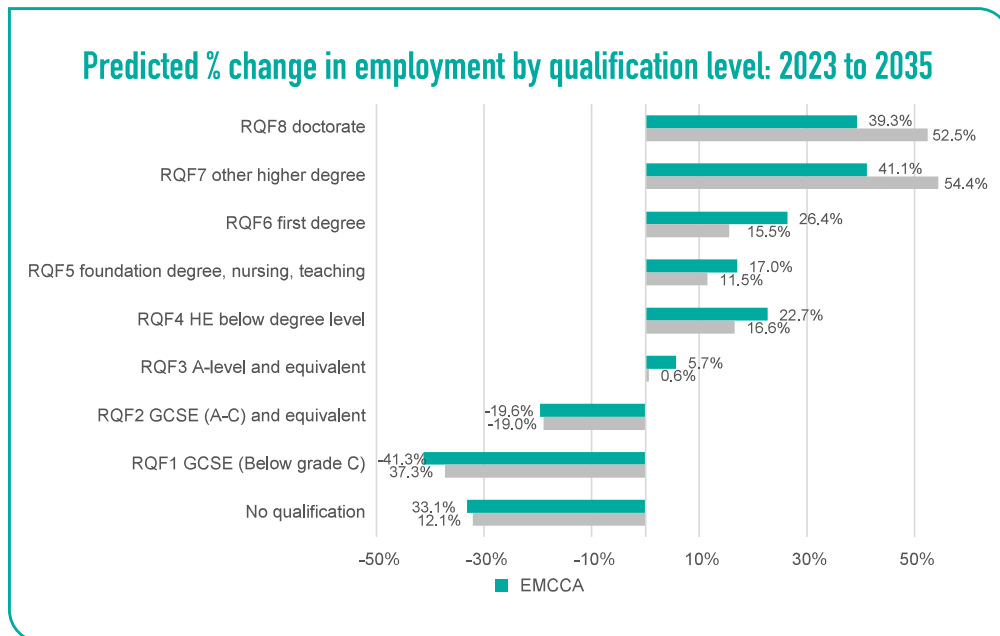


Figure 14 Source: DfE local skills dashboard



EMCCA Skills Profile

Figure 15 shows the breakdown of the workforce by qualification level and demonstrates that over 30% of the workforce are only qualified to Level 2 or below. Therefore, around a third of the workforce may experience a squeeze on employment in coming years and the challenge to upskill them is all the greater. It is also sobering to note that around one in every fourteen people of working age in EMCCA lack any formal qualifications at all.

Whilst residents with Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications are slightly higher than the national average, the region lags behind in terms of higher qualifications at Level 4 and above, with a five per cent difference to the national rate. This is concerning, given the future demand for advanced technical skills in the region, not just in advanced manufacturing, but in the emerging nuclear and hydrogen sectors.

It is worth noting the pattern on skills attainment varies across EMCCA. In Ashfield, Chesterfield, Mansfield and Nottingham, ten per cent of the working age population have no qualifications – higher than both the national and regional average of seven per cent. There remain too many residents leaving formal education with low levels of skills. This is concerning, given what we know about the rise of automation and the predicted decrease in entry-level job roles in future years.

In Bolsover and Mansfield, the percentage of people with a Level 2 as their highest level of qualification is greater than those qualified to Level 4 and above, in contrast to the pattern across the rest of the region. In a region which is set leading on the transformation of green power we want to enable our residents to take advantage of the opportunities which will be available to them in the future.

The relatively high percentage of working-age people with a Level 3 qualification highlights the importance of providing accessible progression routes for them to access further job-related qualifications, particularly Higher Technical Qualifications at Levels 4 and 5 to meet employer demand and raise both productivity and better living standards.

Highest qualification level by age (16 – 64): January 2023 – December 2023

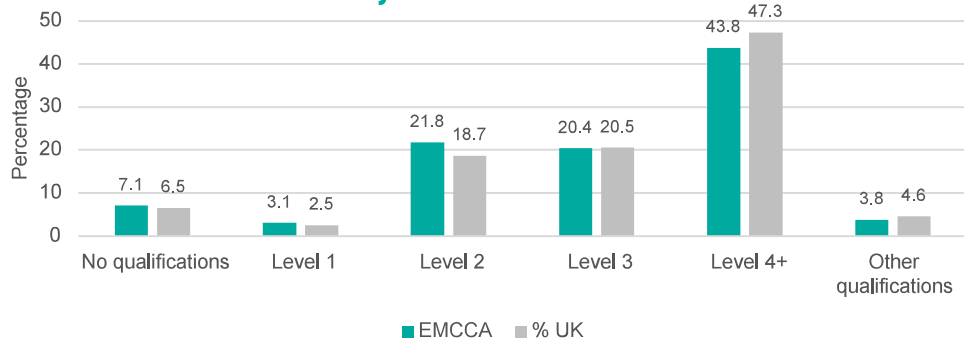


Figure 15 Source: NOMIS



Figure 14 Source: DfE local skills dashboard

Job Openings December 2023

The number of online job postings is highest in Nottingham and lowest in North East Derbyshire.

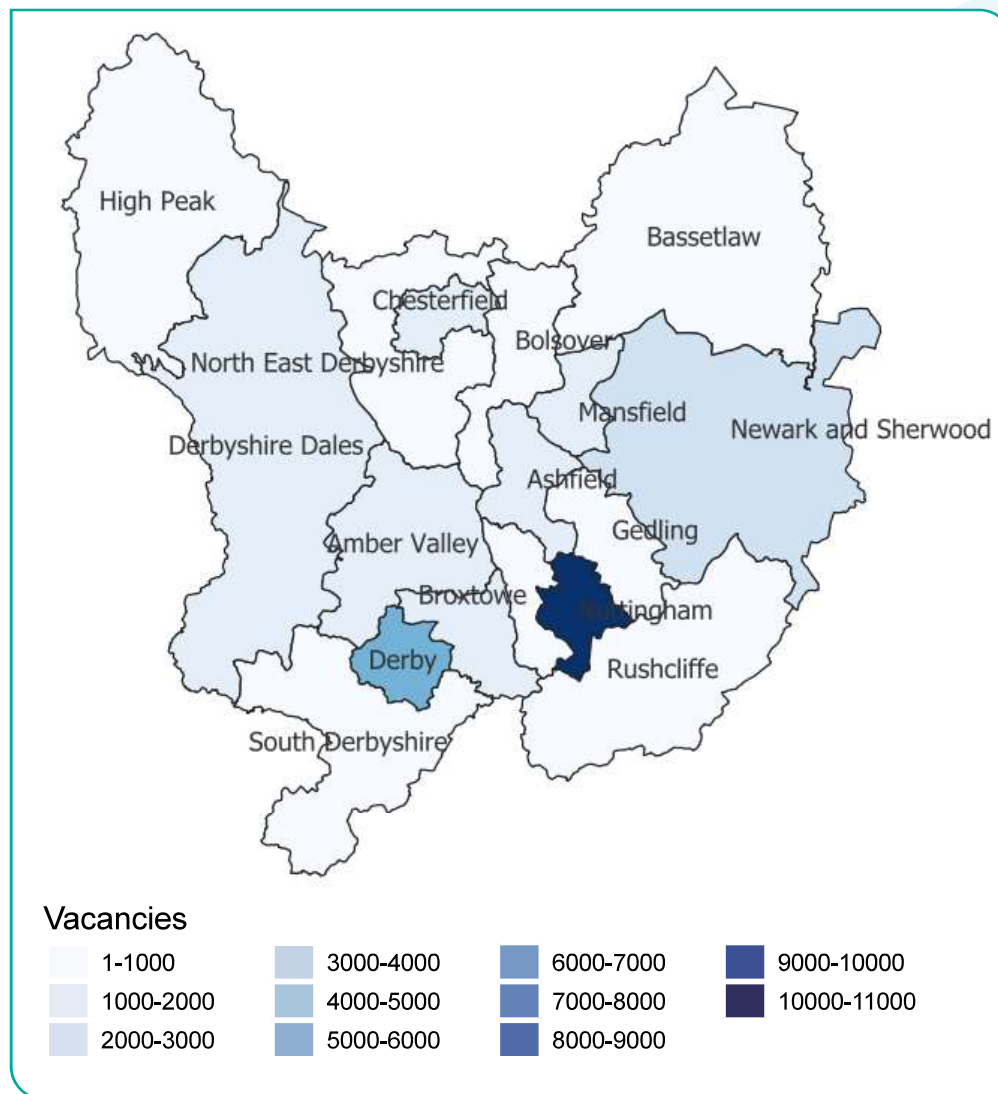


Figure 16 Density of Online Job Postings. Source: Unit for Future Skills department-for-education.shinyapps.io/local-skills-dashboard/

Percentage of online vacancies December 2023 (total vacancies 32, 515)

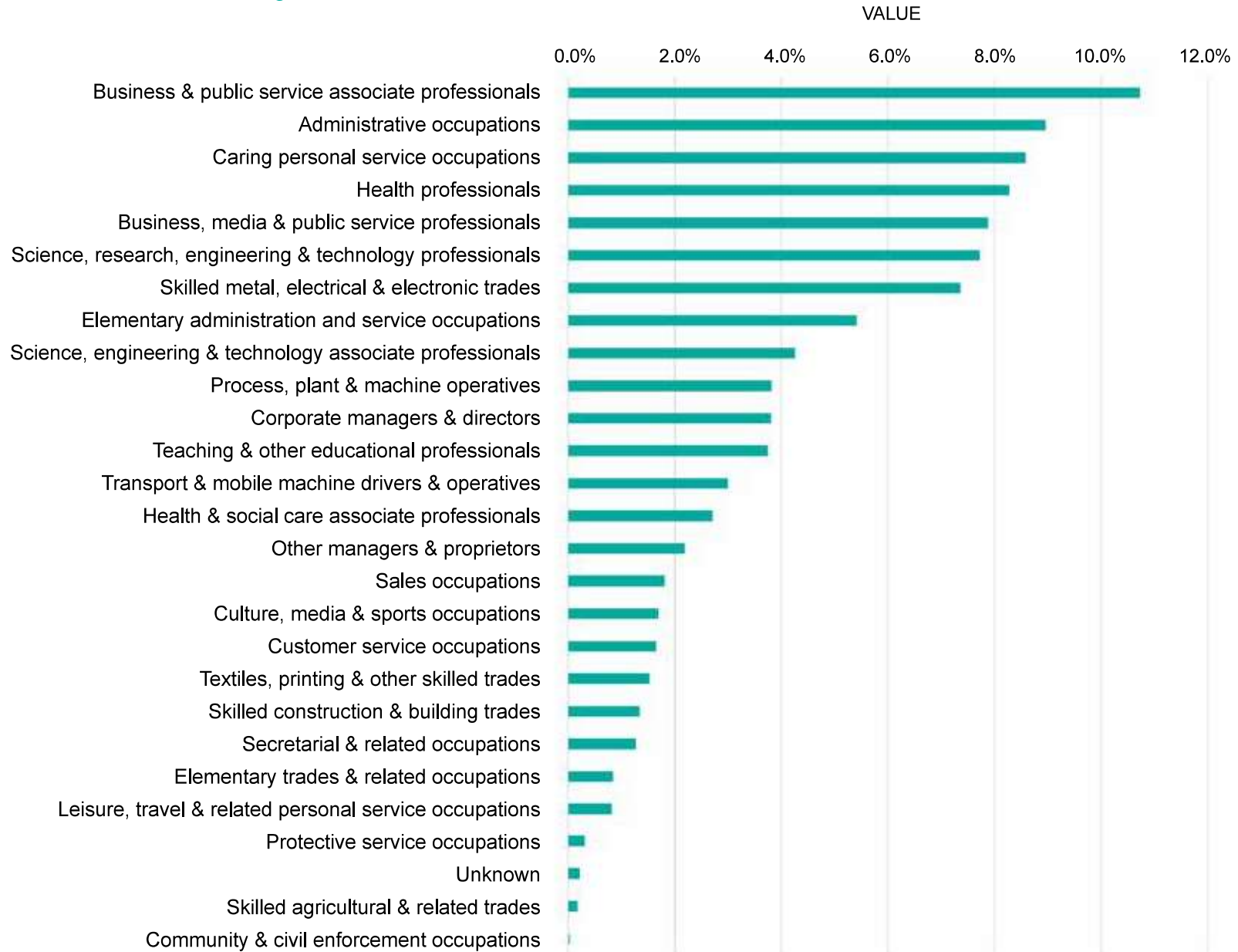


Figure 17 Source: DfE local skills dashboard 17 Source: DfE local skills dashboard

Indices of Deprivation

Figure 18 shows the proportion of Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) within each Lower Tier Local Authority within the EMCCA boundary which fall within the most deprived 10% nationally. (LSOAs are small areas designed to be of a similar population size, with an average of approximately 1,500 residents or 650 households. Local Authorities which have no LSOAs in the most deprived 10% of all such areas in England have a score of zero for this summary measure).

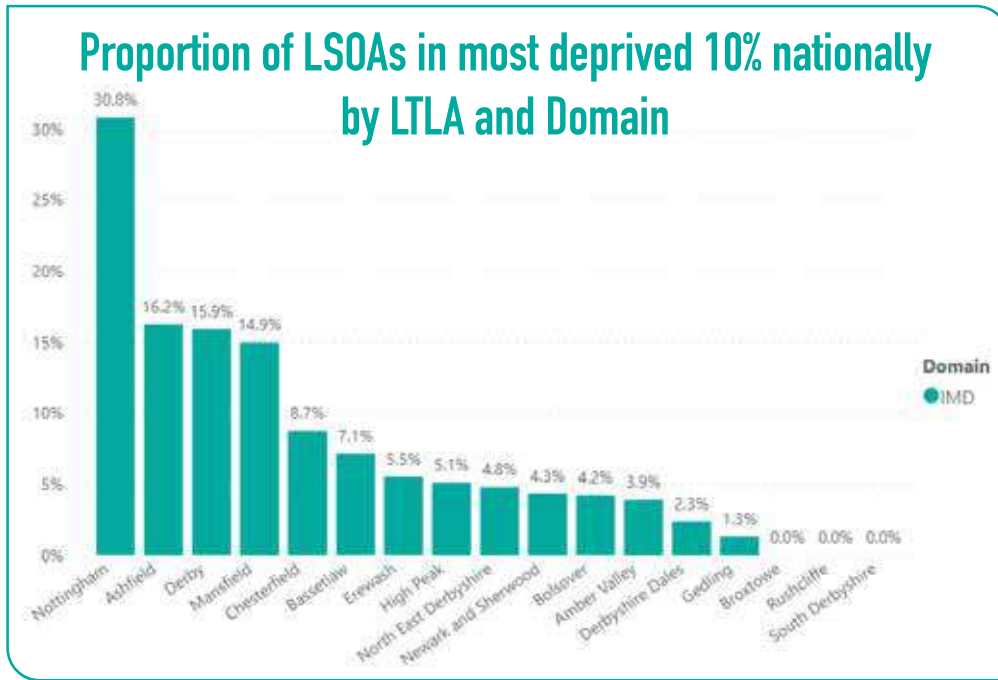


Figure 18 Source: MHCLG, English Indices of Deprivation, 2019



Section 4 – AEB Data and Delivery: contextual overview

Funding Overview 2022/23

The information given in this section applies to historic Adult Education Budget delivery and is therefore termed AEB rather than ASF, which did not come into effect until 1 August 2024.

In the Academic Year 2022/23 the total amount of AEB education and training funding spent on EMCCA residents was around £36.5 million (excluding Community Learning). Of the total funding available under AEB, approximately 79% of the funding was used for AEB skills (education and training) provision and 21% for delivery of AEB Community Learning Provision. This was also reflected in the split by learning aims, Education and Training provision accounting for 87% of all learning aims and the remaining 13% was delivered through Adult and Community Learning⁸.

The majority of provision (80.7%) was delivered directly by contracted providers with the remaining 19.3% delivered through subcontracted provision.

Based on the data available, 82.3% of Adult Education Budget Funding was allocated to grant funded providers with the remaining 17.7% delivered through procured contracts for services.

It is estimated that approximately 13% of skills funding was used to meet statutory learner entitlements in 2022/23.



Percentage of enrolments 2022/23

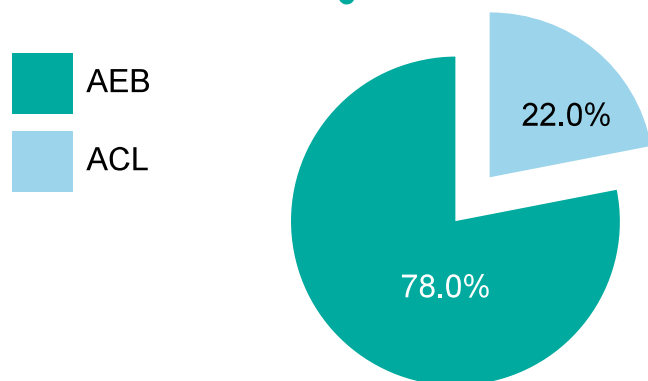


Figure 19 Source: Unit for Future Skills
department-for-education.shinyapps.io/local-skills-dashboard/

Learning Organisation Base

The learning organisation base catering for AEB Education and Training funded learners in EMCCA is large, with 281 organisations listed as prime contractors in 2022/23⁹. The funding value for most learning organisations however, was small, with a median value of around £8,000.

Figure 20 below shows that the vast majority of provision is at entry level, level 1 and level 2 which is strategically aligned to support people

⁸ ACL providers, including local authorities, may have contracts for both education and training and community learning ASF.

⁹ Localities Data Cube

2022/23 AEB learning aims by level

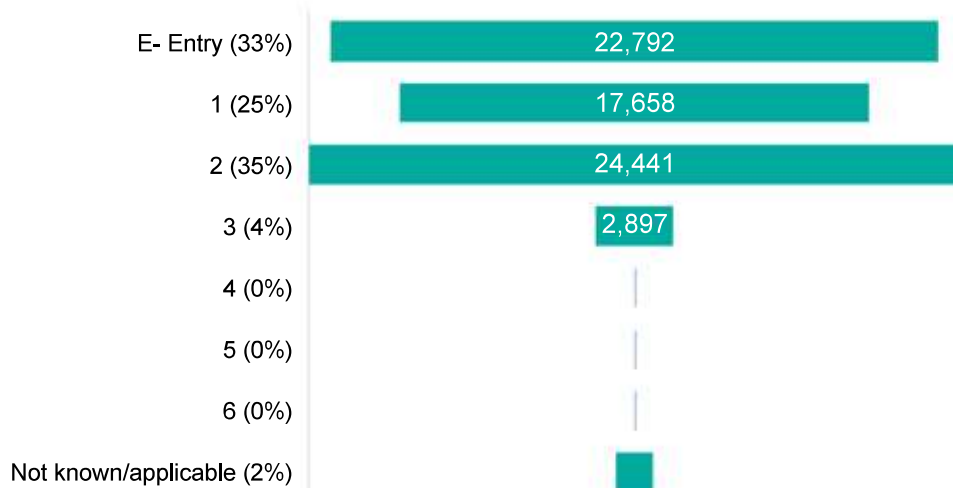


Figure 20 Source: Further education and skills, Academic year 2023/24 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)



Participation in the Adult Skills Fund

Figures 21 and 22 show the density of learner participation per 100,000 residents.

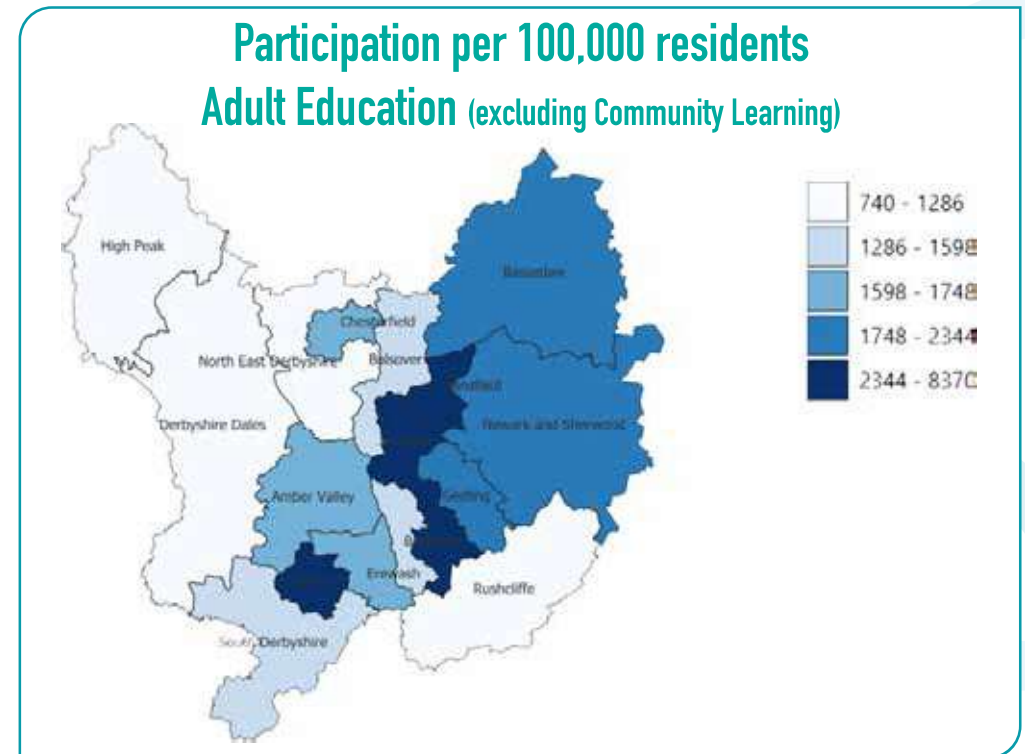


Figure 21 Source: Further education and skills, Academic year 2023/24 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

The range of subjects funded by AEB is narrow, of the 69,302 aim enrolments in 2022/23, 36,360 were for aims specifically linked to Preparation for Life and Work, which includes English, Maths, Digital and Employability Skills. The three biggest areas by volume of learning aims were Preparation for Life and Work, Health, Public Services and Care, and Business Administration.

Participation per 100,000 residents Community Learning

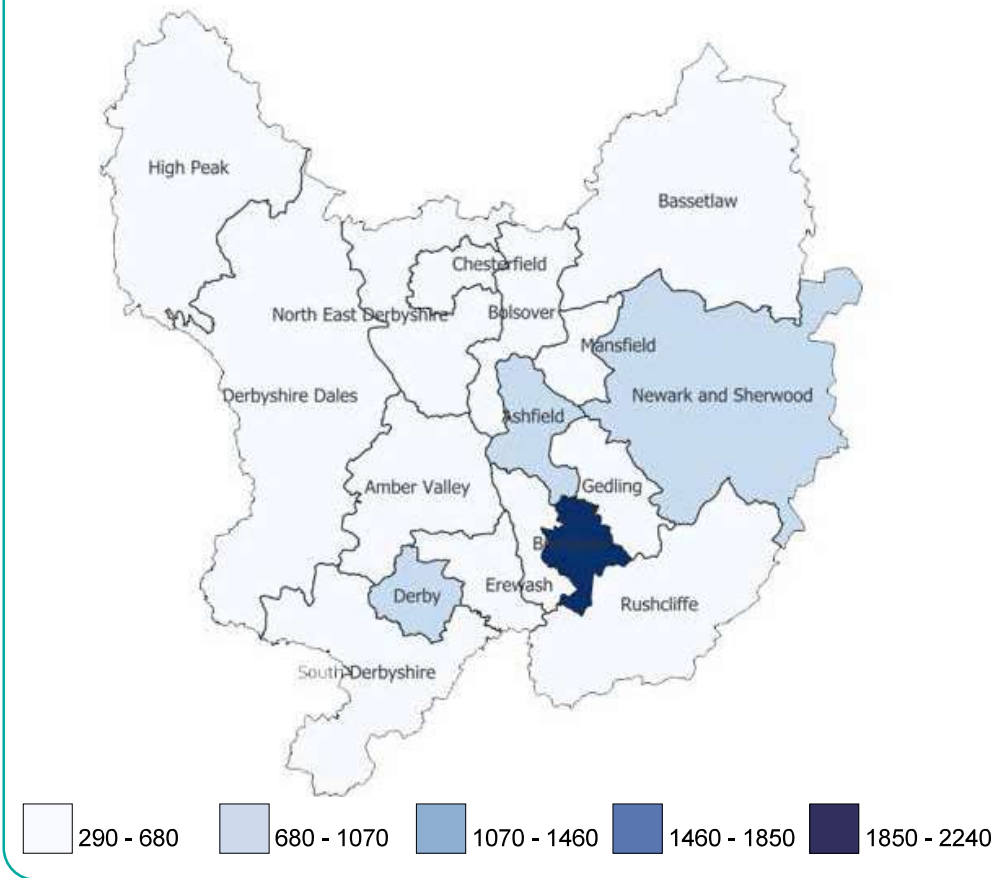


Figure 22 Source: Further education and skills, Academic year 2023/24 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

The majority of Education and Training ASF provision was delivered by general FE colleges (see figure 23 below), whereas for Adult and Community Learning the majority of provision was delivered by local authorities.

2022/23 AEB enrolments by provider type

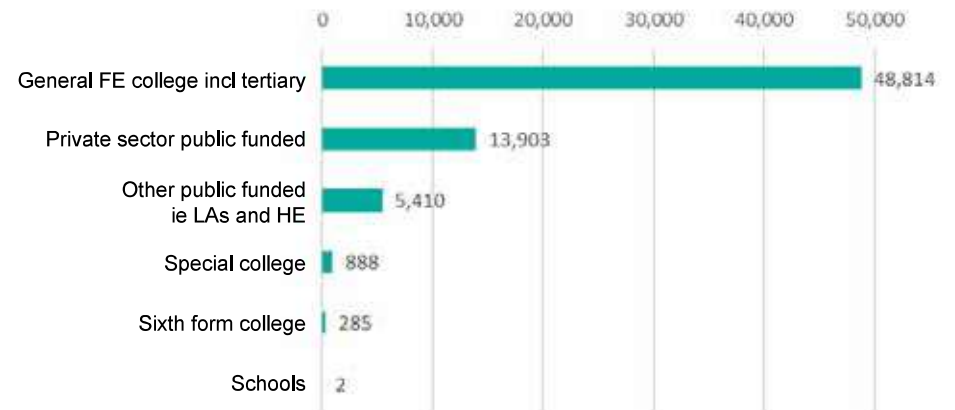


Figure 23 Source: Further education and skills, Academic year 2023/24 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

2022/23 ACL enrolments by provider type

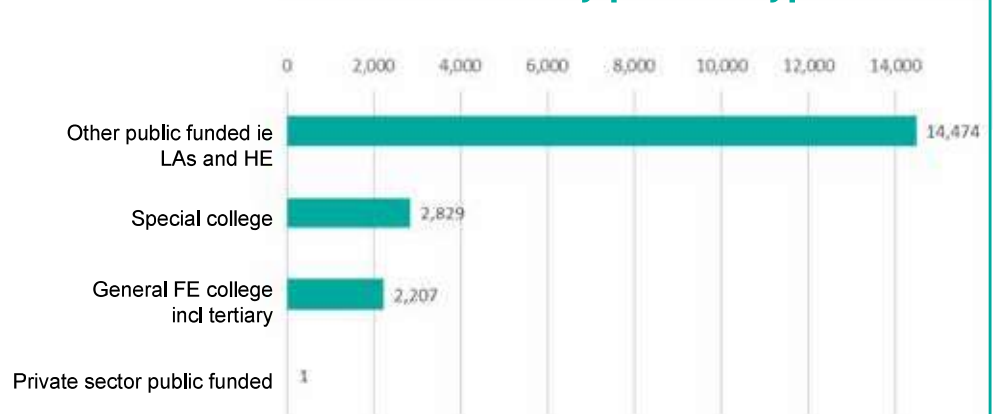


Figure 24 Source: Further education and skills, Academic year 2023/24 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

Enrolment Trends

Figure 25 below shows the breakdown of education and training enrolments by age. The graph indicates that there is a fairly even split between age groups, with a smaller proportion in the 60+ age group.

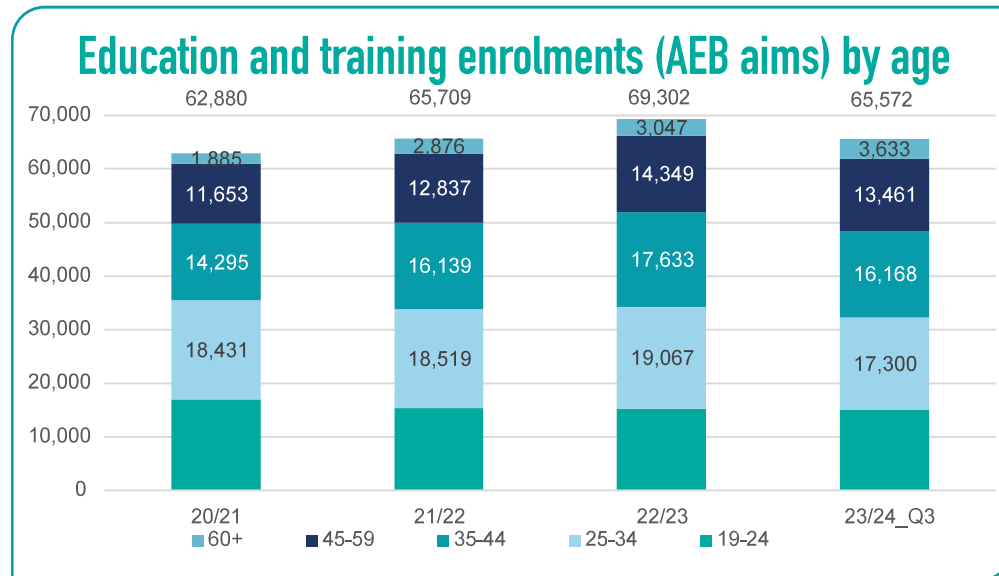


Figure 25 Source: Further education and skills, Academic year 2023/24 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

Proportion of provision (£ and learning aims) delivered by 'out-of-area' learning organisations, and of those, what percentage was subcontracted

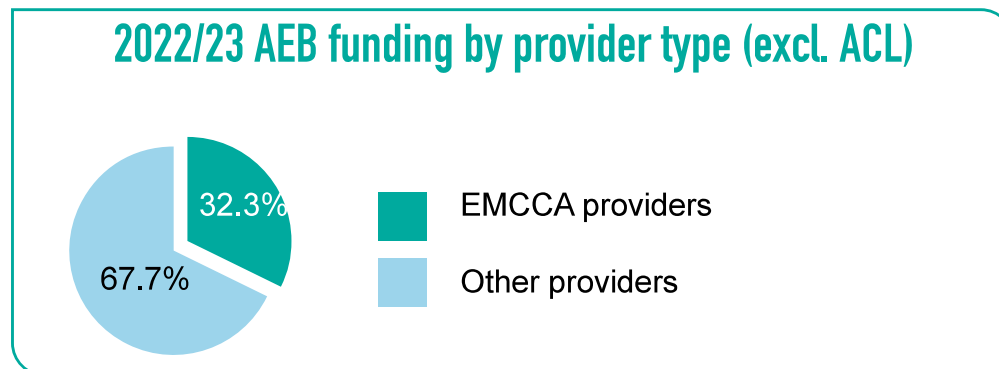


Figure 26 Source: DFE

Profile of Provision

Under the Education and Training strand of AEB there were 69,302 learning aim enrolments in 2022/23.

In terms of participation, almost all AEB-funded learners were enrolled on learning at or below Level 2 in 2022/23, or at an unassigned level via Community Learning.

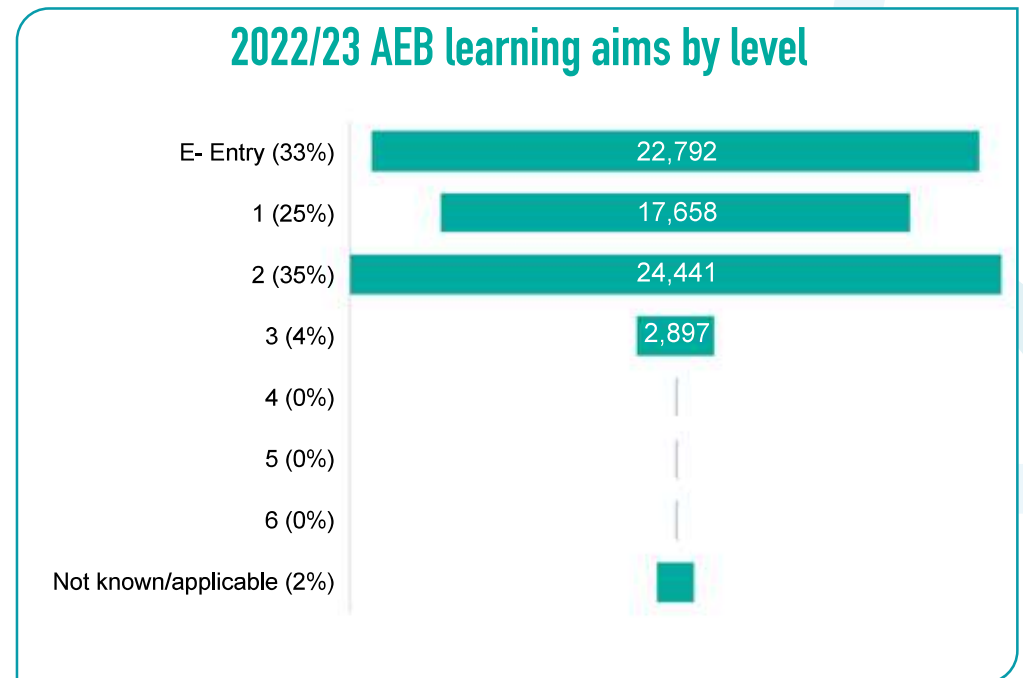


Figure 27 Source: Further education and skills, Academic year 2023/24 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

The range of subjects funded by AEB is narrow; of the 69,302 aim enrolments in 2022/23, 36,360 were for aims specifically linked to Preparation for Life and Work, which includes English, Maths, Digital and Employability Skills. The three biggest areas by volume of learning aims were Preparation for Life and Work, Health, Public Services and Care, and Business Administration.

2022/23 AEB (E & T) enrolments by SSA tier 1

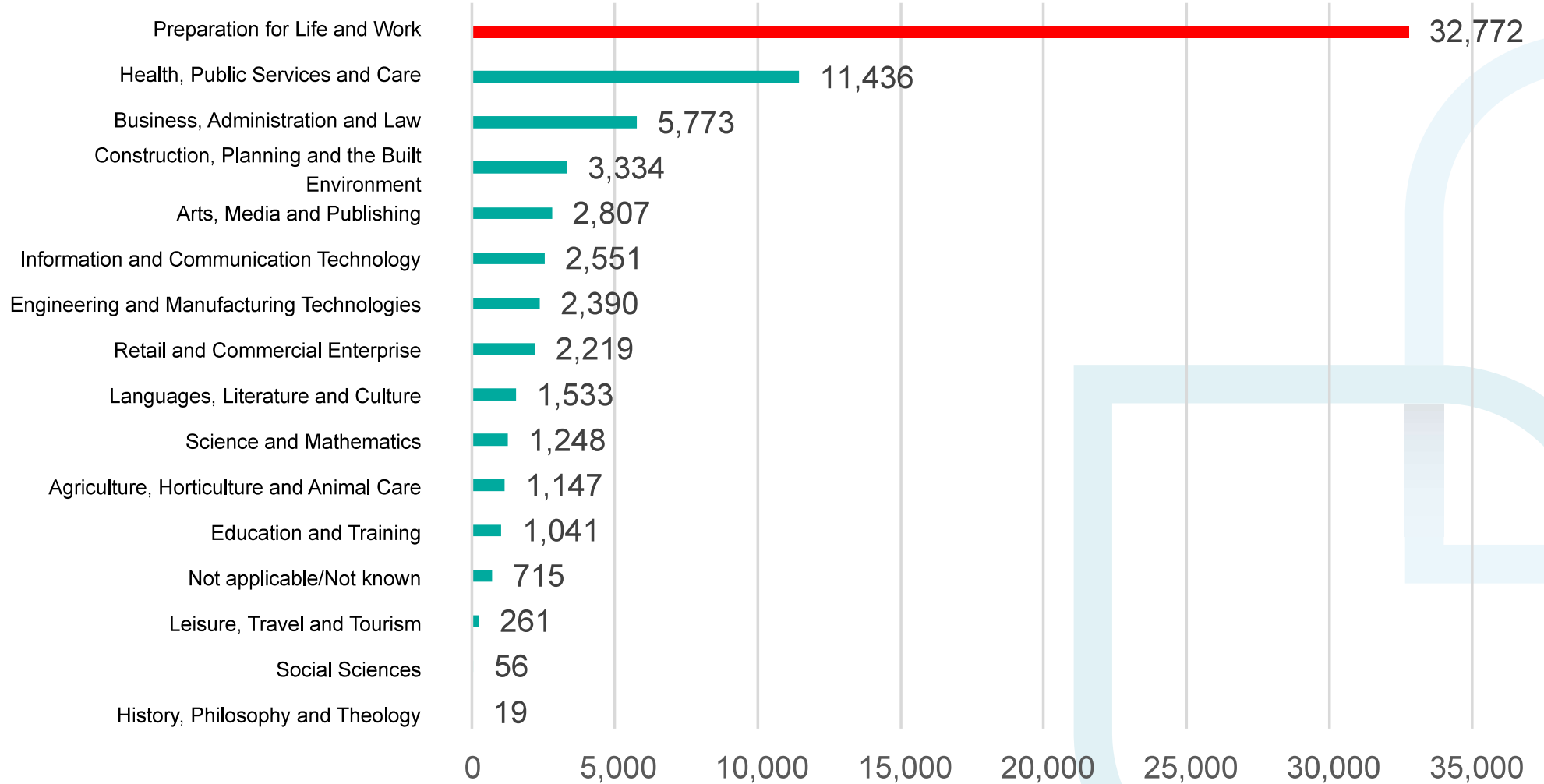


Figure 28 Source: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/further-education-and-skills> Profile of Learners

There are notable differences in the age profile of learning aims delivered through AEB Education and Training and through Adult and Community Learning (although the numbers accessing training through ACL are lower). The percentage of aim enrolments by 50+ learners is considerably higher in Adult and Community Learning.

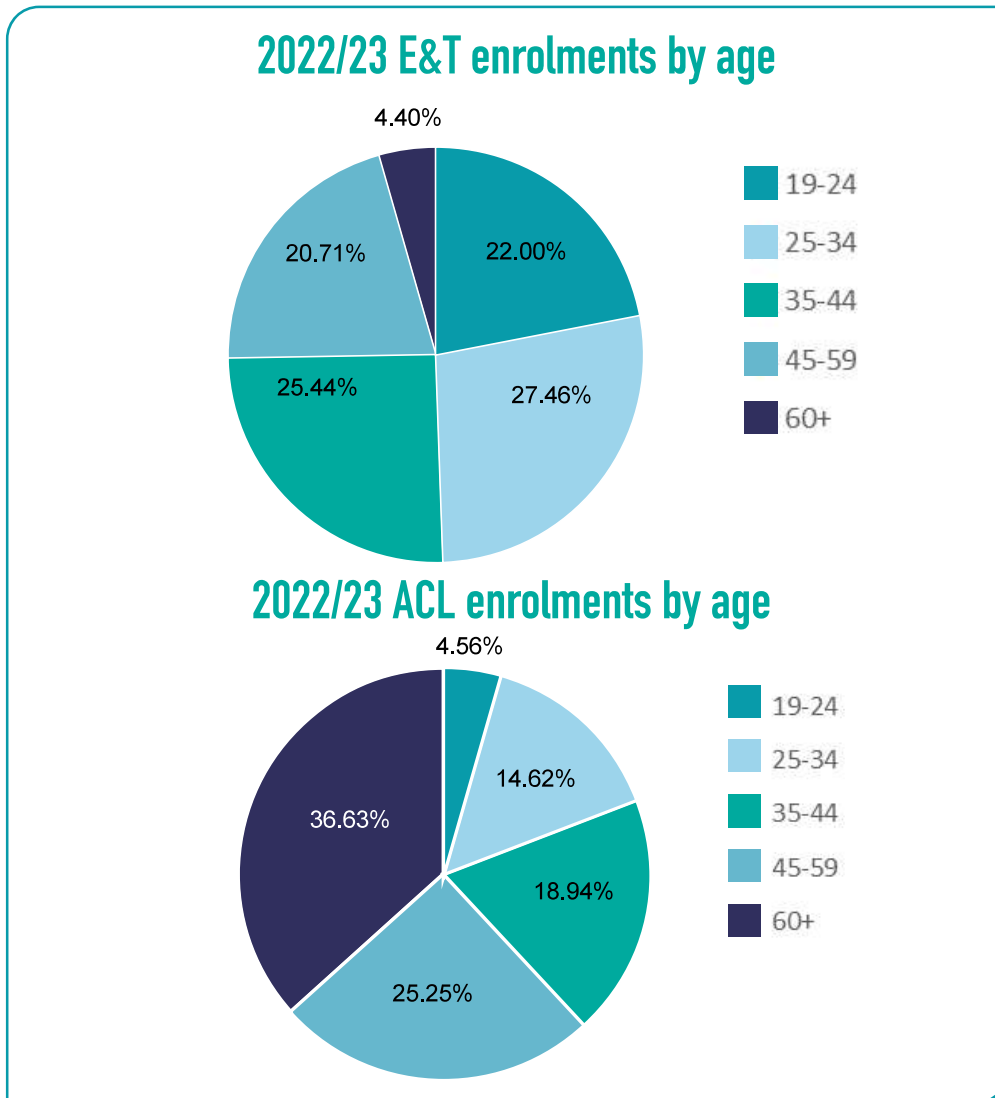


Figure 29 Source: explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/further-education-and-skills

A larger proportion of women than men accessed education and training through AEB funded provision in EMCCA in 2022/23.

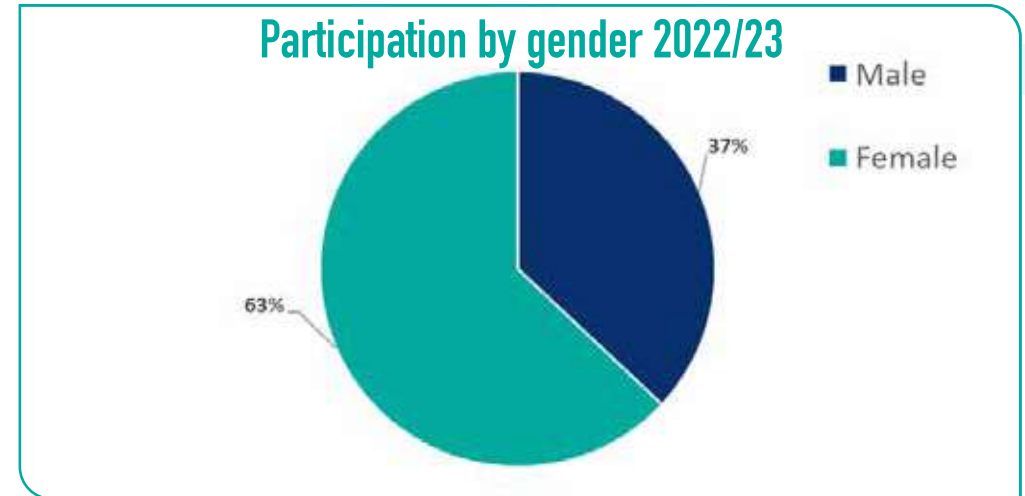


Figure 30 Source: explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/further-education-and-skills

Achievements

Whilst the achievement rate for AEB delivered through Education and Training is slightly higher than the national average at 63.5%, EMCCA has a lower share of FE achievements in Community Learning than the national average.



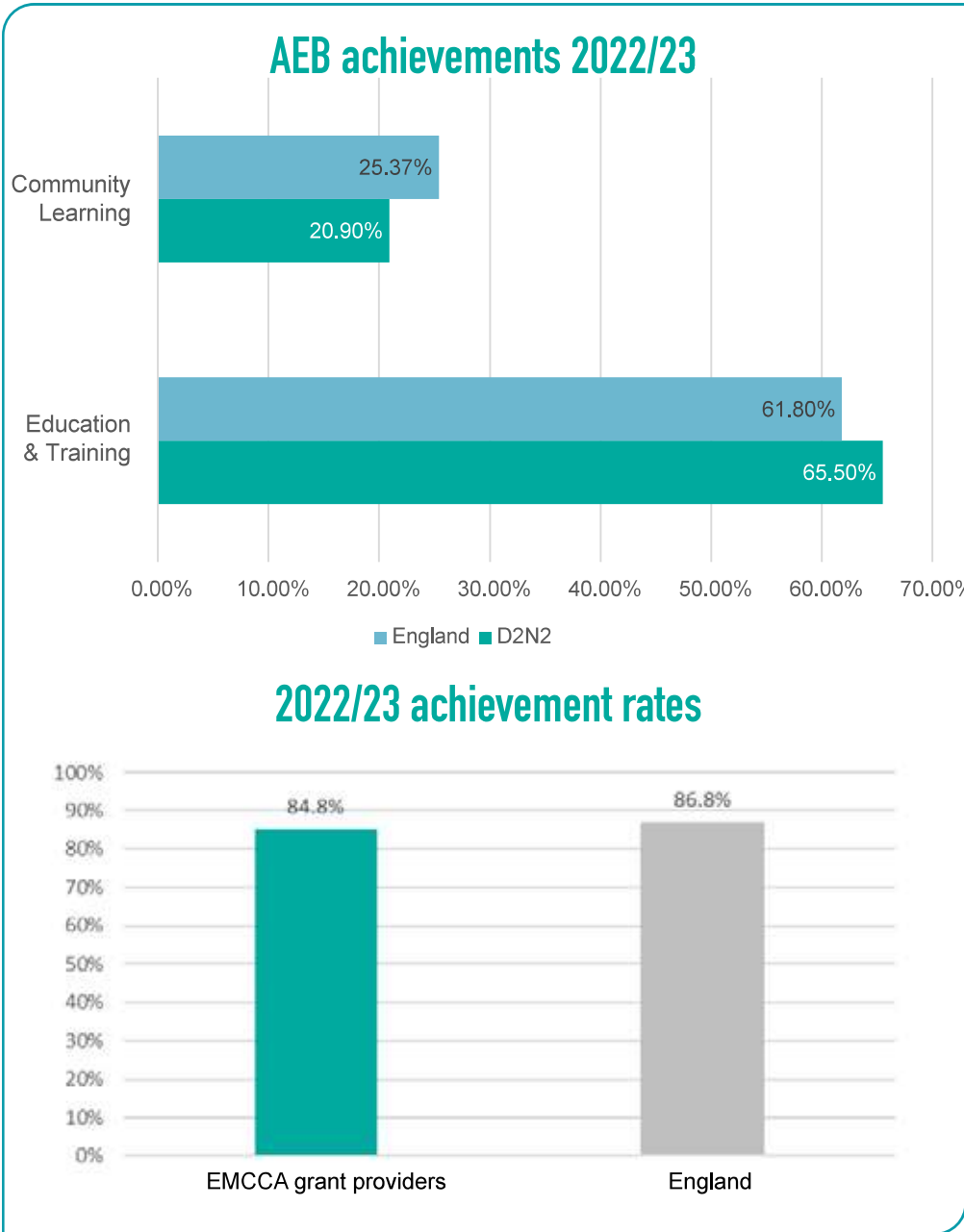


Figure 31 Source: department-for-education.shinyapps.io/local-skills-dashboard/



[CLICK TO RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE](#)

Section 5 – Funding Overview

EMCCA will be responsible for devolved ASF from the 2025/26 Academic Year. Our strategic approach will be informed by analysis of the full academic year data for 2023/24, robust engagement with our stakeholders and consideration of the wider skills landscape, including interfaces with other delegated (but not devolved) funding streams such as Free Courses for Jobs and Skills Bootcamps for which EMCCA will hold contracts with learning organisations.

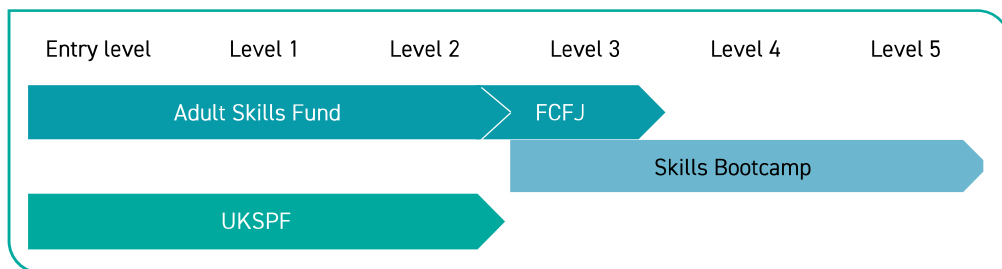


Figure 32: EMCCA Skills Funding

ASF

DFE-funded ASF aims to engage adults and provide the skills and learning they need to progress into, or within, work; or equip them for an apprenticeship or other learning. It enables more flexible tailored programmes of learning to be made available, which may or may not require a qualification, to help eligible learners engage in learning, build confidence, and/or enhance their wellbeing.

The ASF primarily funds qualifications up to and including Level 2, and although funding for Level 3 qualifications is available through the Free Courses for Jobs funding, the ASF does not fund all Level 3 qualifications or programmes at Level 4 and above, as these are funded through Advanced Learner Loans or Higher Education funding.

Much of the Adult Skills Fund is spent meeting statutory entitlements of learners, including fully funded provision for basic English, Maths and Digital skills and any entitlement to a first full Level 2 or Level 3 qualifications.

Free Courses for Jobs (FCFJ)

Free Courses for Jobs is a funding stream which sits within the ASF but is managed as a distinct delegated allocation and is part of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee. The funding is aimed at enabling those without a level 3 qualification or higher to achieve a recognised qualification fully funded. Those who already hold a level 3 but earn below the national living wage, and those who are unemployed are also eligible for FCFJ.

The purpose of free courses for jobs is to reduce sector skills shortages, support individuals in enhancing their career prospects within their current industry and enable individuals to reskill within a new sector. Eligible courses are available in sectors such as health and social care, childcare and early years, hospitality and catering, accounting and finance, and construction. As part for the 22/23 DFE changes, non-devolved and devolved authorities can fund up to 50% of their allocation on non-national approved level 3 qualifications and develop local level 3 provision to meet local needs and priorities.

Adult Skills Fund

From 1st August 2024, the ESFA Adult Skills Fund (ASF) replaced the ESFA Adult Education Budget, simplifying the funding and accountability system and giving learning organisations more flexibility to respond to local need where they have a direct contract with ESFA.

The ASF contains two main parts:

1: Adult Skills Fund Core

All formula-funded regulated qualifications that include:

- the four legal entitlements
- Free Courses for Jobs
- Local flexibility

2: Adult Skills Fund Tailored Learning

- Non-regulated provision
- Provision currently termed as Community Learning
- Formula-funded ASF non-regulated learning
- And any new employer-facing innovative provision

Funding guidance for the 2024/25 academic year was published in April 2024, and EMCCA will need to ensure that its funding rules reflect the national changes. Key considerations will be the shift in eligibility from prior achievement to unemployed and low-waged.

Other Funding Streams

In addition to ASF there are other funding streams which will transfer to the control of the devolved authority. The current DfE grant agreement for delivery of Skills Bootcamps in EMCCA is held by the D2N2 LEP but following LEP transition to the devolved authority this contract is expected to novate to EMCCA, including Wave 5 delivery from April 2024. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (including Multiply) is also expected to revert to EMCCA from 2025.

Skills Bootcamps

Skills Bootcamps are free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks for adults aged 19 or over. They give people the opportunity to build up valuable sector-specific skills based on local employer demand and provide a direct path to a job on completion. Skills Bootcamps are primarily aimed at delivering flexible training at levels 3-5 (medium to higher level technical skills), and level 2 in some sectors. They are co-designed or shaped with employers to respond to their skills shortages.

This training is for adults who are either in work, self-employed, unemployed or returning to work after a break.

UKSPF/Multiply

Through the UKSPF people and skills investment priority, places can use their funding to help reduce the barriers some people face to employment and support them to move towards employment and education.

Multiply is currently a UKSPF funded programme for adults who don't already have a GCSE grade C/4 or higher in Maths to enable access to free courses that fit around their lives. From April 2025, UKSPF will be delegated to "EMMCA" and Multiply will no longer be funded as a direct programme.

Funding streams and programmes such as apprenticeships, offender learning and higher technical qualifications will remain funded through ESFA on behalf of DfE.

EMCCA will work proactively and collaboratively with national and strategic partners and local stakeholders to ensure that delivery of ASF is aligned with other funding streams as part of a coherent education landscape for the region focusing on supporting our residents to gain the skills needed to progress towards or into productive and sustained employment.

For example, whilst not a skills programme per se, the Flexible Fund, part of the East Midlands Investment Zone (EMIZ) funding, will also offer the opportunity to access further skills funding, as will the development of the East Midlands Freeport (EMF).

ASF provision will be an important element of EMCCA's overarching skills strategy and this document will contribute towards the development of that plan which in turn will stem from the Economic Growth Strategy for the Region. It is recognised that the ASF SSP forms a part of the wider investment and skills strategy for the region, as does the LSIP. The relationship between the key strategic documents is shown in Figure 33 below.

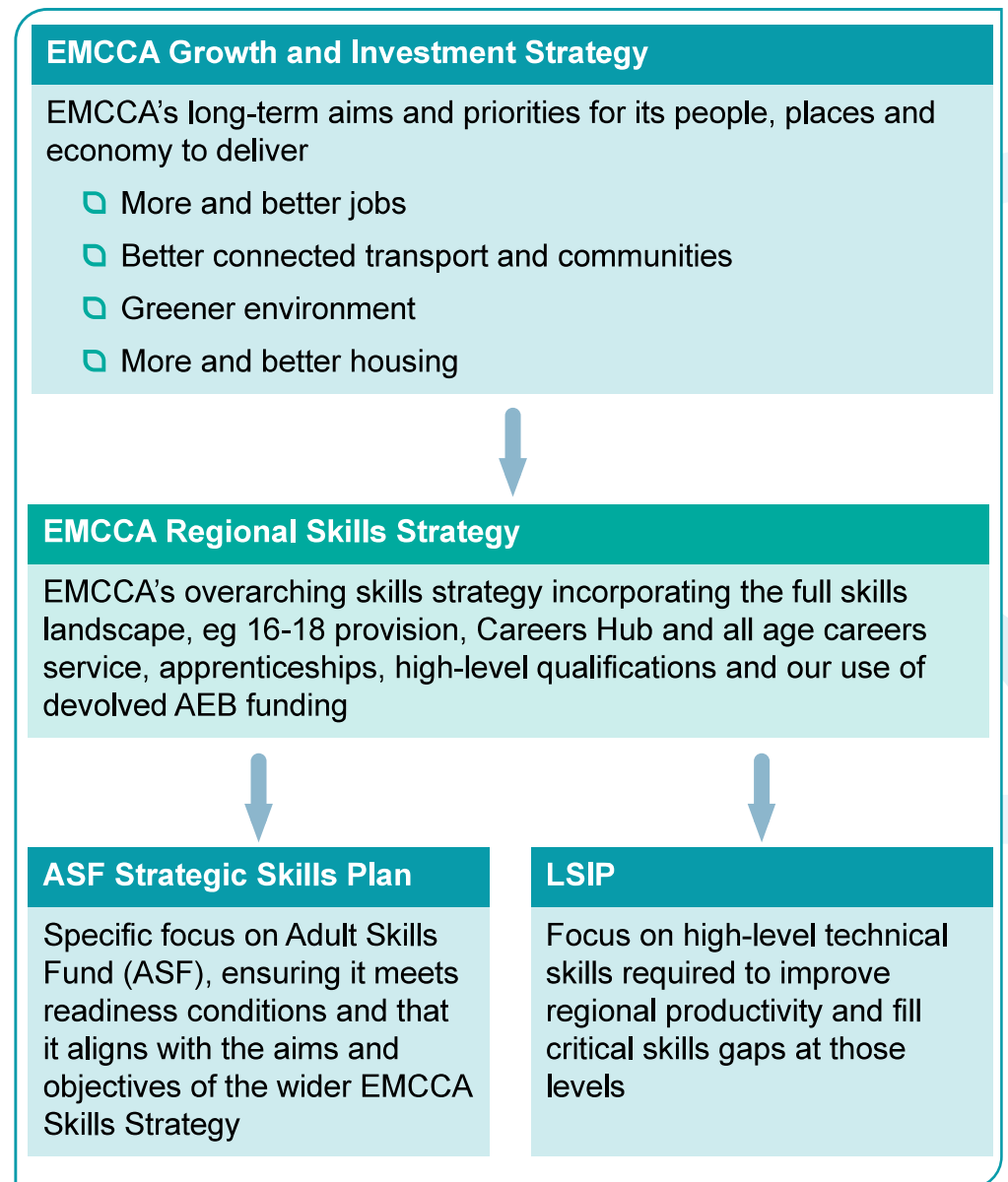


Figure 33 EMCCA Skills and Investment Strategy Overview

Section 6 – ASF Strategic Approach

Devolved ASF Flexibilities

Devolution of ASF and responsibility for other employment and skills funding streams provides an opportunity to make commissioning decisions which focus on the specific needs of our region and to ensure that we align funding streams to avoid duplication of delivery and maximise the potential to develop clear and well understood progression pathways. It will enable EMCCA to offer flexible provision to meet the needs of our residents and businesses and the agility to respond swiftly to changes in the labour market and to support residents who may need additional support to access learning or employment. This will also be facilitated through closer working with DWP and the opportunity to co-produce programmes to better meet the needs of the region.

Over time EMCCA expects to make full use of the freedoms and flexibilities afforded as part of devolved ASF funding in terms of funding rules, rates and eligibility criteria. However, our focus for the first year of operation has to be on maintaining the stability of existing provision. We expect that further changes will occur over time, through working strategically with the learning organisation base and other key partners and stakeholders to ensure that they are evidence based.

The devolved Adult Skills Fund will enable us to:

- Focus on the needs of place particularly communities of need, ensuring that funded provision aligns with progression pathways addressing skills gaps specific to our area.
- Support the growth of our regional economy to impact positively on national productivity and performance.
- Deliver a more responsive and accessible adult skills offer for residents and employers.

- Utilise skills funding to promote social mobility to allow people to achieve their potential.
- Develop deeper, sustainable relationships with learning organisations to develop provision which meets the needs of the locality.
- Ensure that our ASF provision works in tandem with other funding streams to avoid duplication, ensure value for money and maximise opportunities available to residents and businesses alike.
- Build on existing collaborative ways of working between all post-16 skills and education stakeholders to bring together planning of the wider skills and post-16 skills system across EMCCA.
- Focus on demonstrating and evidencing the impact of ASF on learner outcomes.

As previously stated, in the early phase of devolution, our intention is to maintain a stable learning organisation base to ensure that access to high quality learning and skills is secure and that the throughput of a skilled labour force continues to serve the economy. The intelligence gained by EMCCA through this early phase will then be used to inform future commissioning decisions over the medium and longer term.

To ensure continued stability in the system we have established the following commissioning principles:

Continue to fund the four statutory legal entitlements for eligible adult learners. These entitlements are set out in the Apprenticeships, Skills and Children Learning Act 2009.

In line with the DFE ASF funding rules for 2025-26, we will provide full funding for eligible learners.

Prioritise those who are facing additional barriers to enter or progress into employment.

We will work with our learning organisation base to understand the barriers faced by residents in accessing work and enable a strategic, efficient community learning offer which encourages and supports learners onto appropriate provision. This will be particularly relevant in light of the increasing volume of economically inactive residents.

Maintain consistent rules and funding availabilities for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

EMCCA recognises the difficulties faced by learners with LLDD in both accessing provision and transitioning into employment.

Make provision for the development of innovative ways of working.

Whilst it is clear the majority of the ASF will be used to meet statutory entitlements, the devolution of the funding also affords opportunities to test and pilot new approaches to delivery. In order to respond to identified need, EMCCA will set aside funding for small scale pilot activity, for example (but not limited to): delivery of qualifications which are desired by local employers but not approved on the Learning Aim Reference Service (LARS), trialling unit delivery at L3 or L4 supporting progression to qualifications available under FCFJ, Bootcamps or HTQs. We expect to work closely with the sector on this using their expertise to develop ideas and potential solutions to overcome existing barriers.

Health and Well-being

The most prevalent reason for economic inactivity in the working age population within EMCCA is long-term sickness, compounded by the longer-term impact of Covid on the mental well-being of the resident population. ASF delivery to these groups of people can be used to affect a positive impact on learner's well-being. Learners accessing ASF-funded programmes have reported that they felt

significant increases in their life satisfaction and happiness, and reductions in anxiety levels.¹⁰ EMCCA will therefore continue to support achievement of those wider outcomes, such as improving learner confidence, mental health and wellbeing in recognition of the importance of health and wellbeing to chances of getting and sustaining employment.

Alignment with national programmes

We are mindful that ASF comprises a significant element of adult funding but in commissioning activity we will consider the wider skills landscape and other programmes which will remain under the management of DfE and ESFA: National Careers Service, Apprenticeships, Higher Education (including Lifelong Learning Entitlement), and Offender Learning. Our EMCCA Skills Strategy will also include consideration of the wider skills environment including pre-and post-16 careers provision, 16-18 education provision, apprenticeships and high-level skills in transforming EMCCA economy. The strategy will also incorporate where appropriate, those elements of skills funding administered by other government departments, e.g. some elements of skills for Net Zero managed by the Midlands Net Zero Hub, and funding for skills make available through place-based initiatives such as Towns Fund.

Governance

EMCCA's management of devolved ASF funding will evolve over time, under the direction of the elected Mayor. As the devolved skills landscape is established, we will develop further freedoms and flexibilities in response to the needs of our economy in line with financial management and planning regulations specific to Combined Authorities. Future targeting of funds will be underpinned by an evidence base which reflects labour market needs and assesses the impact of current provision.

¹⁰ <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/london-learner-survey>

Section 7 – Principles of Commissioning

Core Commissioning Principles

The devolution of the ASF budget to EMCCA affords the opportunity to focus on a wider range of outcomes than qualifications alone. We are clear the budget is a key element in the drive to improve economic prosperity for the region, by reducing inequality and promoting social mobility to allow people to achieve their potential, especially in communities that are most disadvantaged. To achieve this, our commissioning approach will focus not only on achievement of qualifications, but on the wider outcomes achieved by learners (entering employment, in-work progression and progressing to higher levels of learning).

We will consider the recommendations of the LSIP, conduct ongoing labour market analysis and draw on the local knowledge of our learning organisations to ensure availability of a high-quality adult skills offer, focused on achieving outcomes directly linked to local skills needs.

The core set of commissioning principles will:

- ❑ Seek to align the Adult Skills Fund expenditure with communities of need, and /or that will see the greatest impact from investment in skills.
- ❑ Place learner outcomes (including securing good jobs/ employment, in-work progression and progression to higher levels of learning) at the heart of commissioning.
- ❑ Ensure that evidence of progress and achievement for learners at the beginning of their learning journey (i.e. learners funded by Tailored Learning) is robust, reflects strategic priorities and offers coherent progression to higher level learning and a route towards employment.

- ❑ Ensure that commissioned ASF provision is aligned with provision available under other funding streams to form cohesive progression pathways for learners.
- ❑ Ensure contracting processes are transparent and fair, facilitating the involvement of the broadest range of suppliers, including subcontracting and consortia building, where appropriate.
- ❑ Seek to utilise learning from our existing evidence base, together with ongoing analysis and consultation with stakeholders, employers, learning organisations and learners to identify areas where investment of funds would benefit all.
- ❑ Seek to develop deeper relationships with all types of learning organisations, to understand their offer and their potential to improve skills delivery and outcomes across EMCCA.
- ❑ Sit within a wider framework of skills development, overseen by the EMCCA Employment and Skills Advisory Board.
- ❑ Enable the trialling and development of innovative approaches to fund investment to meet local need.
- ❑ Support the core readiness conditions of the Adult Skills Fund contained within the devolution deal and provide stability in the system.
- ❑ Utilise existing Combined Authority networks to develop a shared understanding of good practice, performance management and management information requirements. Seek to align approaches where learning organisations have multiple delivery contracts.

Funding Arrangements

Funding for ASF and FCFJ will be allocated through two routes (subject to DFE MOU and allocations confirmed).

Route 1 – Grant Funded Allocations	Route 2 – Contract for Services
<p>We will ‘roll-over’ Grant Agreements with learning organisations who hold an existing Grant Agreement with DFE and meet all of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Are wholly or mainly funded by the public purse. ❑ Have an established face to face place-based approach that supports EMCCA’s strategic ambitions and deliver significant volumes of activity within EMCCA. ❑ Established delivery centre or FE college campus within the EMCCA boundary. <p>Subject to affordability, and DFE data, in recognition of the change in allocation values and learning organisation behaviour over time, and to maintain stability in the system, we will grant fund these learning organisations by applying the proportion of their 2023-24 allocation that was spent on EMCCA resident learners to the 2025-26 allocation.</p> <p>Grant funding agreements will initially last for one year (AY 2025/26) with the option for EMCCA to extend for a further two years.</p>	<p>The remaining ASF funds will be procured via an open and competitive procurement process.</p> <p>The majority of these funds will be procured through a commissioning round focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Delivery of legal entitlements. ❑ Supporting unemployed and economically inactive to progress into good jobs. ❑ Supporting in-work progression of those on low wages. ❑ Enabling employed adults to progress in the workplace. ❑ Testing and/or piloting innovative ways of addressing skills gaps or trialling new learning methods. <p>Contracts for Services will be issued for one year (AY 2025/26) with the option to extend for further years. The extension will be subject to learning organisation performance, skills policy and funding availability.</p>

Tailored learning:

- ❑ We are committed to outreach into disadvantaged communities and breaking down the barriers adults can face in accessing ‘traditional’ modes of provision. We will continue to invest in tailored learning through our grant providers, protecting the funding proportion allocated (subject to affordability) to tailored learning in EMCCA. In the first few years of delivery, we will work with learning organisations to better understand, measure and therefore champion this function within the Adult Skills Fund.
- ❑ We will evaluate ASF including tailored learning in year 2 of devolution to measure the outcomes and impact of provision, and this will inform the approach to future development of tailored learning.

Irrespective of route:

- ❑ Learning organisations will develop an Annual Delivery Plan for year 1, including expected volumes of learners by Sector Subject Area, level and type of provision and local authority area, profiled delivery volumes across the year, outcomes and all planned subcontracting arrangements.
- ❑ Learning organisations with a significant contract value will be expected to co-develop an Accountability Agreement with the County Combined Authority that demonstrates their commitment to EMCCA's strategic aims or to ensure that this is covered in their Annual Accountability Statement produced for DfE.
- ❑ We will introduce a performance management framework to ensure funding is spent in line with delivery plans, performance/reconciliation points, and will enable EMCCA to monitor under and over-performance.
- ❑ Growth requests will be available for year 2, subject to funding availability and learning organisation performance.
- ❑ EMCCA will follow DfE funding rules and will review annually and develop these rules to meet the needs of its residents.
- ❑ At the end of funding year, we will apply a 3% reconciliation tolerance. Where your delivery of EMCCA funded ASF is at least 97% of your EMCCA funded ASF allocation line, we will not make an end-of-year adjustment and you will not have to pay back any unspent funds.
- ❑ Over-delivery payments are not guaranteed and are subject to the mix and balance of provision delivered, funding availability, and advanced approval from EMCCA.
- ❑ A Responsiveness and Innovation pot will be retained for commissioning specific initiatives from August 2025, ensuring that East Midlands skills delivery remains flexible and can respond to economic shocks and opportunities as they arise.

Cross-border Learners

It is understood that DfE intends to publish further guidance on how combined authorities should approach the issue of cross-border learners, and further development will be undertaken throughout the implementation process in 24/25.

The learners in question are those learners living close to the EMCCA boundary whose nearest (and usual) place of learning is across the border, and this works both for learners resident in EMCCA whose place of learning is outside, and non-residents whose nearest place of learning is within EMCCA. This could be addressed by creating reciprocal agreements with all of the following authorities which share

a border with EMCCA (NB: existing CAs have created mutual 'buffer zones' allowing learners to move between authorities):

- ❑ Greater Manchester
- ❑ West Yorkshire
- ❑ South Yorkshire
- ❑ Greater Lincolnshire

In addition, Staffordshire and Leicestershire will not have devolved funding but learners may still cross the border to access provision in EMCCA.

Out-of-Area Grant-funded Learning Organisations

Current grant-funded learning organisations who do not meet the criteria listed under Route 1 will not receive continued funding for their subcontracted provision to EMCCA residents. This funding will be reallocated into the procurement allocation, recognising that such funding is ultimately delivered by independent learning organisations through subcontract arrangements.

Current grant-funded learning organisations from outside of the EMCCA region will not automatically receive a grant through the devolved ASF allocations process, but will have the opportunity to secure a contract for service through the competitive procurement process. Data indicates that this approach will have minimal impact on the learning organisation base, given the relative proportion of funded delivery in EMCCA compared to their overall allocations.

Out-of-Area Learners

The Combined Authority will only have responsibility and funding to support learners resident within the EMCCA region. Learners travelling into EMCCA from other regions will require the learning organisation to have a national contract or grant agreement with ESFA. This is not withstanding any agreements which may be developed with contiguous CAs (see paragraph on cross-border learners above).



Section 8 – Matrix ASF Priorities and Outcomes

EMCCA Strategic Priority	Objectives	ASF Specific Action	Outcome / Impact	Measures
Match skills to economic need to increase productivity and wellbeing	<p>Increase number of people with basic employability skills (L2 &3)</p> <p>Supply skills for key sectors – decrease skills shortages</p> <p>Develop a pipeline of skills for priority sectors including manufacturing & engineering, construction, nuclear, hydrogen, and net zero/emerging technologies driving economic change</p> <p>Increase the number of people with skills in sectors which support the local economy (transport & logistics, visitor economy, health & social care and early years)</p> <p>Maintain focus on transferable and digital skills to support inclusion and workplace progression</p> <p>Increase flexible methods of delivery</p>	<p>Ensure that ASF delivery forms part of progression pathways to deliver skills requirements to employers and allow individuals to access opportunities for progression</p> <p>Provide people with L2 & L3 qualifications which are relevant to local labour markets</p> <p>Ensure learning organisations facilitate progression through the provision of careers support to deliver excellent information, advice and guidance</p> <p>Commission pilots with flexible models of delivery</p>	<p>Businesses in EMCCA can access people with the right skills to help their business flourish</p> <p>Individuals are able to access training which contributes to an increase in living standards and career prospects</p>	<p>Prevalence of skills gaps and shortages</p> <p>Number of qualifiers by level and subject</p> <p>Achievement rates by level and subject</p> <p>Sustained positive destination rates</p> <p>Pay outcomes</p> <p>Progression to apprenticeships</p> <p>Adoption of green technologies by EMCCA businesses and increase in zero-carbon skills attainment</p>

EMCCA Strategic Priority	Objectives	ASF Specific Action	Outcome / Impact	Measures
<p>Reduce inequality and promote social mobility to allow people to achieve their potential</p> <p>Improve healthy life expectancy and reduce inequalities, especially in communities and groups who are most disadvantaged</p>	<p>Increase participation and skills levels from disadvantaged communities and groups</p> <p>Extend the reach of learning opportunities to a broader range of underrepresented groups</p> <p>Build confidence of lower-skilled learners to engage and progress in learning</p>	<p>Continue to support tailored learning which enables individuals to progress in life skills and ultimately towards employment</p> <p>Provide foundation skills that support people to thrive and progress in society</p>	<p>People can access learning which opens up new opportunities to participate within the economy</p> <p>Skills development and enhanced life opportunities for the economically inactive</p>	<p>Participation in learning by disadvantaged groups</p> <p>Participation in tailored learning</p> <p>Learner perceptions of impact of learning on their confidence and capability</p> <p>Work with learning organisations to develop progression measures for people remaining in learning</p>
<p>Support the unemployed and economically inactive to gain and sustain employment</p>	<p>Connect unemployment support with support with skills development, working with jobcentres</p>	<p>Provide people with English, maths and digital skills needed for employment</p> <p>Commissioning sector-based work academies with clear line of sight to a job</p> <p>Commission progression focussed employability skills programmes with flexible delivery to build confidence of participants</p>	<p>Reduced unemployment/economic inactivity</p>	<p>Participation of unemployed in Adult Skills Fund-funded provision</p> <p>Progression from learning into employment</p> <p>Sustained positive outcome rates for benefit learners</p> <p>Unemployment/economic inactivity rates</p>
<p>Unlock progression opportunities and career adaptability through skills, particularly for those on low wages and with insecure work</p>	<p>Improve career prospects of residents</p> <p>Connect people to new job opportunities through increased skills</p>	<p>Commission in-work training programmes to support progression</p> <p>Commission programmes which address skills gaps and link to sectors of opportunity within EMCCA</p>	<p>Reduced number of people in insecure and low-paid work</p>	<p>Evidence of career progression among people in low-paid employment</p> <p>Sustained positive outcome rates for low-wage and wider employed learners</p>