

Wednesday 21st September 2022

Multiply – National Numeracy Programme



Cllr Philip White – Deputy Leader and Cabinet member for Economy and Skills said,

“The Multiply programme nationally is aimed at approximately 17million adults or half of the working age population who have the numeracy skills of primary age children. It will support those adults to develop numeracy skills for the future. Improving numeracy skills can help in everyday life, whether at work, managing household finances or helping children with their homework. It can also help career prospects, whatever your line of work. The county council secured £4.2million to deliver targeted courses to enable more adults

to achieve maths qualifications, improve employment chances and increase numeracy across Staffordshire’s population.”

Report Summary:

The £570m Multiply Programme aims to increase the levels of functional numeracy in the adult population across the UK. Local Authorities have the flexibility to determine what provision is needed to deliver high quality, innovative numeracy interventions that meet the needs of local people and the national aims of Multiply.

The Council has undertaken constructive engagement with local partners, including public, private and third sector organisations. There has been a positive response with a range of local organisations submitting expressions of interests and engaging in an open and competitive application process. Delegation is needed to mobilise the Multiply project quickly with provision to formally commence in October 2022 to support the delivery and achievement of outputs and impact.

Recommendation(s)

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Note the purpose of Multiply.
- b. Agree that the Director of Economy, Infrastructure & Skills, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills be given delegated authority to:
 - i. authorise the Council to enter into an agreement (Accountable Body Agreement) with the Department for Education formalising the Council's role as Lead Authority for Multiply.
 - ii. authorise the Council to enter into an individual grant funding agreement (Grant Agreement) following appraisal and prioritisation of applications for Funding with each of the identified Providers best placed to meet our strategic priorities.
 - iii. authorise that the Assistant Director for Skills & Employability be given delegated authority to approve any formal variations or extensions required to the Accountable Body Agreement or to the individual Grant Agreements based on performance or changes in Multiply Technical Guidance.



Local Members Interest
If report is relevant to ALL Members, type 'N/A' into table, otherwise insert Members Name and Electoral Division

Cabinet – Wednesday 21 September 2022

Multiply – National Numeracy Programme

Recommendation(s) of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Note the purpose of Multiply
- b. Agree that the Director of Economy, Infrastructure & Skills, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills be given delegated authority to:
 - i. authorise the Council to enter into an agreement (Accountable Body Agreement) with the Department for Education formalising the Council's role as Lead Authority for Multiply.
 - ii. authorise the Council to enter into an individual grant funding agreement (Grant Agreement) following appraisal and prioritisation of applications for Funding with each of the identified Providers best placed to meet our strategic priorities.
 - iii. authorise that the Assistant Director for Skills & Employability be given delegated authority to approve any formal variations or extensions required to the Accountable Body Agreement or to the individual Grant Agreements based on performance or changes in Multiply Guidance.

Report of the Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills

Reasons for Recommendations:

Background

1. The £570m UK Government's national numeracy programme Multiply is the first priority of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and supports the Levelling Up mission to ensure that by 2030, the number of people successfully completing high-quality skills training will have significantly increased in every area of the United Kingdom.
2. Good numeracy skills are universally important for individuals' life chances, and for the United Kingdom's economy. It is reported that 17m adults in England (half of the working age population) have everyday maths skills equivalent to those expected of a primary school child (Entry Levels).
3. People who improve their numeracy skills are more likely to be in employment, have higher wages, and better wellbeing. Gaining a maths qualification at Level 2 supports progression to higher levels of training to secure a skilled job in our economy. Businesses that develop their employees' numeracy skills can boost productivity, increase profits, and improve employee retention.
4. The broad target Learners for Multiply are adults 19+ who have not previously attained a Level 2 maths qualification and who want to brush up on the skills to help them get on in life and work.
5. The overall objective of Multiply is to increase the levels of functional numeracy in the adult population across the UK. The national success measures for Multiply are:
 - a. More adults achieving maths qualifications (up to and including Level 2)
 - b. Increase in participation in numeracy courses
 - c. Improved labour market outcomes
 - d. Increased numeracy across the population.
6. Multiply will help people to improve their ability to understand and use maths in daily life, home, and work. This could include improving household finances, helping children with homework, making more sense of the facts in media, or improving numeracy skills specific to a line of work.

7. At local level, this means Multiply will offer a range of options for individuals to develop their numeracy skills through 1-2-1 personal tutoring, digital training, flexible courses that fit around people's lives which are tailored to specific needs, circumstances, sectors and industries. This will include courses delivered online, at work, in the evenings, part-time or intensive over a brief period.
8. The Department for Education (DfE) will launch a national Multiply digital platform later in 2022 to give all adults the opportunity to learn at their own place and pace and will include learning content, a diagnostic tool to assess skills levels and an online tuition offer. The platform will act as a "front door" and will direct/signpost users to local provision. It is intended to complement the local offer and not duplicate.
9. The Multiply prospectus provides a menu of numeracy interventions that the DfE has produced based on the growing evidence base on barriers that hold people back from addressing their numeracy skills and what works in tackling poor adult numeracy. The menu gives local authorities flexibility to determine what provision is needed that meet the needs of local people. Some interventions lead to the attainment of a qualification, but non-qualification provision can be developed where appropriate.
 - a. Courses designed to increase confidence with numbers for those needing the first steps towards formal numeracy qualifications.
 - b. Courses designed to help people use numeracy to manage their money.
 - c. Innovative numeracy programmes delivered together with employers, including courses designed to cover specific numeracy skills required in the workplace.
 - d. Courses aimed at people who can't apply for certain jobs because of lack of numeracy skills and/or to encourage people to upskill in numeracy in order to access a certain job/career.
 - e. New intensive and flexible numeracy courses targeted at people without Level 2 maths, leading to a Functional Skills Qualification.
 - f. Courses for parents wanting to increase their numeracy skills in order to help their children and help with their own progression.
 - g. Numeracy courses aimed at prisoners, those recently released from prison or on temporary licence.
 - h. Numeracy courses aimed at those 19 or over that are leaving care or have just left the care system.
 - i. Numeracy activities, courses or provision developed in partnership with community organisations and other partners aimed at engaging the hardest to reach learners, for example, those not in the labour market or other groups identified locally as in need.

- j. Additional relevant maths modules embedded into other vocational courses.
- 10. Interventions should not displace, replace and/or duplicate any existing adult numeracy provision, for example, activity funded through the Adult Education Budget (AEB) statutory entitlement for maths qualifications or Community Learning provision.
- 11. Some local areas may need to build workforce capacity to deliver Multiply, for example, recruitment campaigns to target key teachers, invest in dedicated training and support for existing staff or support numeracy champions and tutors. Workforce capacity and development should be embedded into the interventions.

Evidence of local need

- 12. In Staffordshire it is estimated that 6.2% of the working age (16-64) population have no formal qualifications, equivalent to 32,000 adults. Alongside this 21.1% of the working age population are currently without Level 2+ qualifications, equivalent to 109,500 adults.
- 13. Staffordshire also has pockets of deprivation with high unemployment, where currently there are over 16,300 work-related universal credit claimants across Staffordshire (March 2022). It is found that many of these claimants would benefit from improved work ready skills including better numeracy to access the record number of job vacancies currently available and raise employment levels for a more inclusive local economy.
- 14. Improved numeracy also matters to our businesses where employers that develop their employees' numeracy skills can boost productivity, increase profits, and improve employee retention. The latest Government commissioned Employer Skills Survey (ESS) showed that over a third (37%) of employers with skill-shortage vacancies identified basic numeracy skills as difficult to obtain from applicants.
- 15. In addition of those employers with skills gaps in the existing workforce a quarter (24%) felt that basic numeracy skills needed improving. Staffordshire also has generally higher demand for STEM skills including numeracy due to our strong manufacturing base and associated industries which are a priority for growth locally.

16. In Staffordshire latest DfE participation and achievement data provides an indication of current learner demand, with the overall trend showing a gradual decline in maths participation and achievements over the last five years of available data. Between 2014-15 and 2018-19 Staffordshire has seen a 51% decline in maths participation compared to 42% decline nationally and a 50% decline in maths achievements compared to 37% decline nationally.
17. This decline in participation and achievements would indicate that more needs to be done to support and encourage residents to choose to improve their numeracy skills. By increasing numeracy provision, the Multiply programme can provide greater opportunity to learn and develop essential skills that are universally important for individual's life chances.

Programme Management

18. Staffordshire County Council has received an indicative £4.2m to deliver a range of new, bold and innovative bespoke numeracy programmes locally. These programmes are to be delivered across the Spending Review period 2022-23 to 2024-25. A confirmation of allocation, grant agreement and first payments will follow in September 2022 once the Council's Multiply Investment Plan has been appraised and approved by DfE.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
£1,266,380.71	£1,461,208.50	£1,461,208.50	£4,188,797.71

19. A Council Multiply Programme Board has been established. The purpose of the board is to manage the Multiply programme on behalf of the Council to ensure the requirements placed upon the Council as Lead Authority are fully met. A term of reference for the board is approved. The board will oversee the development of the Investment Plan, appraisal of Expressions of Interest, the application process and regularly review and report on impact and performance.
20. The board is chaired by the Head of Adult Learning & Skills and includes officers from the following teams: Skills & Employability, Finance, Legal, Communications, Audit, Central Through Care Team and District Strategic Delivery. The board has a reporting link to the Council's Economic Recovery Cabinet and Informal Cabinet.

Invitation & Engagement

21. The Council launched Multiply at local level through a publication on its webpage [Multiply Programme - Staffordshire County Council](#). The publication provided an overview of the purpose of the National Multiply programme and how local organisations could get involved. The website promoted an online Staffordshire Multiply Briefing Event held on 5th May 2022.
22. The briefing event invite was circulated widely with approximately 70+ representatives in attendance consisting of public, private and third sector organisations local to Staffordshire. The Council invited Expressions of Interests (EOI) to deliver Multiply interventions. The event provided opportunities for open discussion and question and answer and secured positive feedback from attendees. The Multiply PowerPoint delivered at the event was published on the Council's website and circulated further to 247 individuals.
23. The Council established a Staffordshire Multiply External Working Group consisting of Colleges, Independent Training Providers and third sector. Attendees have contributed to the content of the Multiply Investment plan and will continue to meet termly to review progress and inform the decision-making process.
24. Meetings with the DWP Strategic Partnership Manager/s have been undertaken to ascertain the learning needs of service users and further attendance at collaborative stakeholder groups, including representation from lower tier authorities; Staffordshire Economic Growth Directors Group, Countywide Employment & Skills Task Group and Staffordshire Partnership for Employment & Skills.
25. Further dialogue was undertaken with Strategic District Managers gaining further insight about local needs, aspirations and current projects that are complementary to the Multiply programme. Additional information gained from the managers supported the completion of the Community Impact Assessment for the Multiply programme.
26. We developed an Employer Survey via the Council's Communications department [Shape the numeracy skills of the future - Staffordshire County Council - Citizen Space](#) and Numeracy Survey for local residents Numeracy survey [Numeracy survey - Staffordshire County Council - Citizen Space](#) to gather information on skills gaps and preferred methods of learning.

Expressions of Interest

27. In total, the Council received 22 EOI's by its closing date of 6th June 2022. Applicants were from FE Colleges, Independent Training Providers, Private sector, third sector and a university.
28. The EOIs were appraised and moderated against the criteria intent of Multiply by 4 Skills & Employability Officers. Of the 20 EOIs, 6 were not progressed further as they did not meet the national aims of Multiply and/or the proposed provision aligned strongly with Community Learning which is funded via the Adult Education Budget.
29. The remaining 16 EOIs included the full range of Multiply interventions across the 8 districts of Staffordshire and proposed a range of delivery methods: workshops, tasters, 1-2-1 support, hybrid, online face-to-face, delivered in the workplace, bitesize and intense courses.

Investment Plan

30. The moderated EOIs contributed to the development of the Staffordshire Multiply indicative investment plan which was submitted to the DfE on 30th June 2022. The investment plan can be located in Appendix 1 and 2.
31. It was a requirement that the investment plan must pay due regard and coordinate where possible with wider skills and employment interventions in local areas, for example through Skills Advisory Panels and where possible interventions funded through the broader UKSPF to avoid duplication of provision through Multiply and ensure effective wrap-around support is available where applicable. The Council engaged in dialogue with district and borough leads and shared the indicative EOIs by district and Provider.
32. The Council has flexibility to determine what provision is needed to deliver high quality, innovative numeracy interventions that meet the needs of local people and the national aims of Multiply and must demonstrate value for money. There are no set rates for engagement or resources, however, there is a 10% limit on the value of funding that can be spent on administrative costs. Analysis and appraisal of the EOIs identified additional set up costs required for delivery in year one, for example, purchasing digital

equipment to extend the reach and to enhance the learning experience and awarding body set up costs.

33. Multiply is a ring-fenced section 31 grant requiring local areas to demonstrate in their Investment Plans how they will use the funding, and the amount of their maximum funding allocation they wish to drawdown on which will then be specified in a grant determination letter. The Council submitted an indicative investment plan requesting the full amount of funding per year to deliver across all interventions.

Competitive Applications

34. The Council implemented an open and competitive application process to deliver numeracy interventions and received thirteen (13) applications by its closing date of 27th July 2022. The breakdown of the project applicants consisted of: FE Colleges, Independent Training Providers and third sector organisations.
35. The total project values of bids were for £5.46m, approximately £1.69m in excess of the £3.77m funding available for the delivery of Multiply over the three-year period.
36. Applications received included all Multiply interventions as set out in the Multiply prospectus and were spread across all Staffordshire districts.
37. Interventions a, c and f were the most targeted interventions and had the greatest financial ask and number of learners.
38. Staffordshire Moorlands, Newcastle and Cannock Chase were the most targeted areas.

Review Process

39. The Council commissioned the services of a third party, Stantec UK to provide advice and guidance on the review of criteria 1 Strategic Fit and criteria 2 Deliverability, Effectiveness, and Efficiency. Factors also considered included:
- a. whether the level of spend and output delivery is achievable across the 3-year timeframe
 - b. whether the applicant has a clear and credible route to securing beneficiaries
 - c. if the project duplicates existing delivery
 - d. are the risks identified, credible and properly mitigated

- e. proposed projects demonstrate good value for money

Prioritisation of Numeracy Interventions

- 40. Stantec UK Multiply shortlisting was undertaken by taking account of the application scores and the following principles were applied:
 - a. strategic fit, that schemes are complimentary to wider skills and employment provision in Staffordshire and contribution to local need is articulated in relevant local plans and with evidence of local support (50% weighting)
 - b. project demand/engagement, prioritising schemes with strong evidence of demand (5% weighting)
 - c. project deliverability, achievability between October 2022 and March 2025, milestones, spends, outputs and delivery innovation (15% weighting)
 - d. risk management, quality assurance and monitoring (15%)
 - e. value for money, looking at cost per learner ratio for each scheme (10% weighting)
 - f. project affordability and scalability, providing opportunities for schemes to be scaled up or down (5% weighting)
- 41. Applications were prioritised and ranked by applying weighting against the strategic fit and technical criteria as outlined above. Recommendations were presented to the Multiply Board on 24th August 2022.

Resource & value for money implications

- 42. The Council have undertaken financial checks for all applications using Experian. (www.experian.co.uk)

Legal Implications

- 43. All successful applicants will be required to enter into a formal legal agreement (Grant Agreement) with the Council in its capacity as Lead Authority for the Multiply programme expenditure. The Grant Agreement has been finalised by the Council's Multiply Legal representative and will reflect the terms of the Accountable Body Agreement entered into between the Council and the DfE.
- 44. At the application stage organisations declared whether their bid would amount to a subsidy to aid determining if the 'minimal financial assistance' element of the Subsidy Control Regime would apply.

Timescale

45. The DfE will appraise and approve Staffordshire's investment plan throughout July and August 2022 and issue a Grant Agreement in September 2022.
46. The Council will issue Grant Agreements early October 2022 to the successful applicants, with delivery commencing mid October 2022.
47. Due to the tight timescale, there is a need to mobilise the project swiftly, to provide full opportunity to deliver the required outputs, which will be reviewed annually.

Climate Change Implications

48. The Multiply provision provides an opportunity to share and raise awareness of climate change and the Councils priorities; Carbon Reduction, Air Quality, Natural Environment, Waste and Behavioral Change to our residents through natural accruing opportunities during the delivery of the Multiply Programme. This will also include opportunities to plan for and to embed the UN Sustainable Development Goals to increase participants understanding and knowledge about climate change to enable them to make informed decisions for the future.
49. To contribute to the reduction in carbon emissions Multiply will be delivered using a range of online and hybrid models to reduce travel. Where face-to-face delivery is undertaken, we will timetable provision to enable the use of public transport and active travel, for example, walking and cycling. This will also have the added benefit of improving health and physical fitness of participants.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Multiply Investment Plan
- Appendix 2 – Multiply Investment Plan Q2
- Appendix 3 – Multiply Community Impact Assessment

Contact Details

Assistant Director: Anthony Baines, Assistant Director Skills & Employability

Report Author: Amanda Darlington
Job Title: Head of Adult Learning & Skills

Telephone No.: 07800 626586

E-Mail Address: amanda.darlington@staffordshire.gov.uk

