



# EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

<b>REPORT OF:</b>	Executive Member for Adults and Health
<b>LEAD OFFICERS:</b>	Director for Adults and Health
<b>DATE:</b>	11/08/2022

<b>PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED:</b>	Neighbourhoods, Wellbeing and Prevention
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	(All Wards);
<b>KEY DECISION:</b>	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>

**SUBJECT: EB Multiply - Government Initiative**

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Multiply is a national Government initiative to support the development of numeracy skills across the Borough using a variety of innovative approaches.

Part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) which is Government funding intended to reduce inequalities between communities, as part of the Government's wider "levelling up" agenda, Multiply was agreed as the first priority of the UKSPF. In addition to UKSPF, it also supports the wider aims of Lancashire's Local Skills Improvement Plan, recognising that 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 (GCSE Grades A\*-C) or equivalent also unlocks the door to progress to higher levels of free training to secure a skilled job in the local economy. Improved numeracy also matters to businesses right across the country – small and big. Businesses that develop their employees' numeracy skills can boost productivity, increase profits, and improve employee retention.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:

- Notes and supports the priorities and aims of the Multiply initiative over the 3 financial years – 2022-2023; 2023-2024; 2024-2025.
- Agrees the Investment Plan for BwD (Appendix 1) which has been prepared for submission to the DfE.
- Delegates authority to the Strategic Director of Adults & Health in consultation with Executive member for Adults Services & Prevention to select providers and award service contracts

## 3. BACKGROUND

There are significant areas of Blackburn with Darwen which have very low levels of qualifications amongst adults of working-age. With regard to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Adult Skills sub domain, BwD is ranked 4<sup>th</sup> highest of unitary authorities with their proportion (37.36) of Lower

Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the most deprived 10% nationally. The target group for this activity is adults aged 19+ who have not previously achieved a GCSE Grade 4/C or higher maths qualification.

Numeracy is universally important for individuals' life chances, and for the United Kingdom's economy as a whole. 17m adults in England - half of the working-age population - have everyday maths skills roughly equivalent to those expected of a primary school child (Entry Levels).

Locally, Multiply has the potential to reach a wide range of the hardest to reach and engage over the next three years; helping them to improve their functional numeracy skills. This will support 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.

Developing functional literacy will help people improve their ability to understand and use maths in daily life, home, and work. Whether that be improving household finances, helping children with homework, making more sense of the facts in the media, or improving numeracy skills specific to a line of work. To achieve that, Multiply will offer a range of options such as free personal tutoring, digital training and flexible courses that fit around people's lives and are tailored to specific needs, circumstances, sectors and industries.

The following outcomes provide the main focus of the initiative and partners participating locally will need to ensure that their offer supports the achievement of these outcomes.

### **Indicative Outcomes**

- Increased number of adults achieving maths qualifications up to, and including, Level 2
- Increased number of adults participating in maths qualifications and courses up to, and including, Level 2
- Increased number of adults participating, acquiring and evidencing skills through non-qualification provision
- Improved labour market outcomes
- Increased adult numeracy (by supporting learners to improve their understanding and use of maths in their daily lives, at home and at work)

Local consultation has highlighted that in Blackburn with Darwen, these are the main areas of focus to be developed within the Investment Plan.

- Engagement
- One to One Support
- Non-Accredited Courses/Workshops
- Qualifications/Accredited Courses
- Employer/Employee Engagement
- Meaningful participation that boosts people's ability to understand and use maths in their daily life, such as:
  - Improving household finances
  - Helping children with homework
  - Making more sense of the facts in the media
  - Improving numeracy skills specific to a line of work

The Multiply provision in Blackburn with Darwen will provide progression pathways leading to Level 2 qualifications for individuals with a wide range of needs. This includes those people who are currently the furthest away from being ready to undertake any qualification.

Working with a variety of partners, providers and grassroots organisations who have the appropriate links as well as experience and understanding of local level of need the offer will support individuals with very basic levels of numeracy to develop their confidence with numbers, understanding how and why they are used in everyday life.

Employer engagement will also be key to supporting employers and employees to ensure they have the relevant sector-specific numeracy skills, which in turn can help improve staff retention and productivity.

#### 4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

Underperformance on the initiative would result in any underspend below 100% being recovered by DfE (usually by reduction of the amount of funding given to the Council in the next funding tranche – which might be at the mid-year point or at the end of a full funding year).

#### 5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

N/A – Multiply is Part of UKSPF and Levelling Up agenda and was agreed by Government as the first priority of UKSPF.

#### 6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Maximum grant allocation of £851,021 over the 3 years is subject to achievement of expected outcomes based on the submitted plan. Underperformance would result in subsequent allocations being reduced to recover underspends from the previous period which in turn may require adjustments to the scale of the activity it is possible to provide. Further, any net underspend below 100% will be recovered by the DfE each year by reducing the ring-fenced grant for the next financial year by the same amount (or if there is underspend in the first half of a year by reduction of the amount for the second half of the year).

Members will note that the funding allocation for 2022/23 is broadly similar to Years 2 and 3 yet the time available to defray the spending and achieve the outputs necessary is reduced given Government has yet to approve the Council's investment plan. This will need to be managed in conjunction with the DfE to ensure the Council maximises the amount of funding spent in the Borough.

Local Authority	Total Funding Allocation (£)	Funding Allocation 2022-23 (£)	Funding Allocation 2023-24 (£)	Funding Allocation 2024-25 (£)
Blackburn with Darwen	851,021	257,285	296,868	296,868

The government's funding of Multiply is a 3 year programme: the government expects local authorities to ensure that suitable legacy arrangements will be in place for interventions funded through Multiply, since there is no commitment of future funding from the government for Multiply beyond the 2024-25 financial year.

## 7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council is required to submit its first Investment Plan to the DfE by 30 June 2022 and updated investment plans will need to be submitted to and approved by the DfE prior to the start of each financial year before payments for years 2 and 3 will be made.

Funding for Multiply will be provided as a ring-fenced grant under s.31, Local Government Act 2003, and funding must only be used to deliver agreed Multiply interventions in accordance with our approved Investment Plan. Interventions delivered with Multiply funding need to be additional and differentiated from that which is already fully funded through the Adult Education Budget legal entitlement and should not displace that provision.

Funding allocation statements (as set out above in Section 6. Financial Implications) are indicative only; they are not legally binding and do not create any legal obligation against the Secretary of State for Education.

The Council must consider its Public Sector Equality Duty in any provision we develop through Multiply.

Grant agreements for receipt of these funds will provide full details of the government's required arrangements for these funds (in addition to the guidance already provided). The Procurement and Commissioning team will need to scrutinise the Memorandum of Understanding and grant determination letter each year which will set out Fund requirements and obligations, and provide advice to ensure that the Council is aware of and complies with all the obligations/conditions imposed as a condition of receipt of this grant allocation.

## 8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Resource for the initiative comes via the funding allocation, although some support will be provided through existing capacity.

On completion of the three years of the programme there is an expectation that there are "suitable legacy arrangements in place for interventions funded through Multiply". We anticipate that a range of interventions developed and delivered as part of the 3 year project will become custom and practice and will therefore continue as part of the services provided by the various organisations. This will include any delivery offered by the Adult Learning Service, where numeracy skills development will be embedded in a wide range of programmes.

For the qualification based programmes post Multiply it will be possible to make use of the AEB allocation in order to further develop and deliver qualifications.

A proportion of the expected income will be used to enhance current in-house teams as part of the Adult Learning Service, to ensure that we have sufficient capacity to deliver the additional interventions as outlined in the Investment Plan.

## 9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

**Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.**

Option 1  Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2  In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA link here)*

Option 3  In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA attachment)*

## 10. CONSULTATIONS

Due to the short timescales for submission of the Investment Plan, an information sharing partner event was held to enable internal and external partners to shape the offer and inform the plan.

The partner organisations invited to the event represent people with a wide range of needs, including those with protected characteristics. In addressing potential equality implications, the Investment Plan will include how the development and implementation of the initiative will consider the accessibility of the offer.

This will include the communication of information about Multiply and associated activities available to everyone, including those with protected characteristics.

## 11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered.

The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

## 12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

<b>VERSION:</b>	<b>1</b>
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<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>Karen Wignall</b>
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<b>DATE:</b>	08/06/2022
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<b>BACKGROUND PAPER:</b>	This file contains the Multiply Investment Prospectus
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