



SURREY
COUNTY COUNCIL

About this document

This service specification sets out the expectations for the delivery of Adult Skills Funding for Surrey under the competitive grant award process. There is a separate process for direct award grant funded provision.

This specification describes:

1. [Background and introduction](#)
2. [Description and expectations of the service](#)
3. [Expected outcomes and benefits](#)
4. [Service Management](#)
5. [Available Funding](#)

1. Background and introduction

Why are Surrey County Council funding this service?

The Adult Skills Fund (ASF) has been devolved to Surrey County Council as part of the devolution deal agreed with the UK Government in 2024. This enables the local authority to align this funding with other programmes of work and priorities to improve outcomes for residents and help to create a local workforce that can meet the skills needs of employers.

Alongside grant funded ASF, this competitive grant round will enable new and innovative approaches to ASF delivery. This document is of interest to those who are seeking to deliver education and training provision funded by a proportion of the devolved Adult Skills Fund (ASF) for learners resident in Surrey.

Of the total devolved ASF for 2026/27, 20% will be utilised within this competitive grant exercise. This document details the requirements for those seeking to deliver. Contracts awarded from this process will initially be funded for one year (2026-27) with an option to extend.

Please note also that this specification relates to **Free Courses for Jobs (FCFJ)** therefore, the competitive grant award process and associated application form can be used for applying for this delivery.

Funding for Sector Based Work Academies has been allocated nationally.

Surrey County Council also has an overall purpose of No One Left Behind, representing a commitment to tackle inequality and ensure all residents are able to share in Surrey's economic success. Alongside legal entitlements to ASF funded provision, the Council is looking to ensure that residents of [21 key neighbourhoods](#) and priority groups (including care leavers, women, those from minority ethnic groups) are able to access opportunities.

What we aim to achieve

The overall objective of the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) is to provide training provision for adults aged 19+ to gain skills for employment, progression and personal growth. It focuses on addressing skills shortages, increasing local productivity and enabling tailored training for individuals. Through devolved funding, Surrey County Council can achieve even greater alignment with existing programmes of work, local economic needs and priority cohorts. This will

benefit Surrey residents and employers and will also contribute to reducing economic inequality across the county.

This document forms part of the Call for Proposals, to competitively award the delivery of education and training services for Surrey residents funded by the devolved ASF.

This document sets out what is expected from the Provider.

Surrey County Council is seeking proposals to deliver education and training provision that complies with, this Specification, and the Surrey County Council Adult Skills Fund.

Surrey County Council has set out the strategic ambition for ASF in the ASF Skills Strategy and Commissioning Plan. This includes:

- Ensuring local skills provision is reflective and responsive to current and future needs of Surrey businesses.
- Up-skilling residents to help address workforce needs across Surrey employers.
- Attracting working-age populations (16-64) and ensuring employment opportunities are available for all, particularly targeting those without formal qualifications and helping lower-skilled residents into high demand sectors.
- Enabling all residents to navigate and take advantage of employment support and skills/professional development provision.

Overview of the Competitive grants process

Contracts awarded from this process will initially be awarded for one year (funding year 2026 to 2027), with an option to extend.

This call for proposals is therefore open to organisations that are seeking to deliver ASF funded provision, and:

- Meet the minimum eligibility criteria
- Have an interest in Lots 1-4 to be delivered to Surrey residents

2. Description and expectations

Objective

The primary objective of ASF is to equip adults aged 19+ with the skills needed for meaningful, sustained employment and career progression. It focuses on enhancing productivity, filling local skills gaps and promoting personal growth through training, including basic English, maths and digital skills. It is also flexible and tailored to the individual.

Outcomes

ASF funded provision supports people into sustainable employment. A key focus is unemployed people and those on lower incomes. It also helps those in work to upskill or to progress into further learning.

Scope of the service

The Provider will deliver ASF Funded education and training provision for adults aged 19 and over that are resident in Surrey. Where possible, provision should also be **aligned to Surrey's [21 key neighbourhoods](#)**.

Including innovative approaches. To support the following:

- **Legal entitlements for 19+:**
- English and maths, up to and including level 2, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have not previously attained a GCSE grade A* - C or grade 4, or higher; and/or
- first full Qualification at level 2 for individuals aged 19 to 23; and/or
- first full Qualification at level 3 for individuals aged 19 to 23;
- Essential digital skills qualifications, up to and including level 1, for individuals aged 19 or over, who have digital skills assessed at below level 1.

- **Tailored learning** - non-regulated / non qualification learning to support learners with aspects such as ESOL, building confidence, progression into employment (not solely leisure courses).

- **Learning Support** – for reasonable adjustments related to the learning and capped at £19k (can include adjustments for learners with disabilities and aspects such as childcare, ICT).

- <https://findlearningaimbeta.fasst.org.uk/https://www.qualifications.education.gov.uk/Search>
- Learners will be eligible for funding for the whole of the learning aim or programme if they are eligible for funding at the start, even if the duration is for over one year.

- Learners must be **Surrey residents** (with further information on cross border arrangements)

- **Business engagement:** provision should align with the needs of local employers and where possible, evidence of how learning will lead to actual jobs is desirable.

- The provider will recruit eligible learners onto suitable provision.

The Lots for bidders to apply to are as follows:

Lot	Area of provision	Relevant Occupations / skills to be supported	Eligible qualifications	Lot value
Lot 1	Provision to respond to skills in the defence sector as defined by the Surrey LSIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT Business Analysts, Architects and System Designers • Cyber Security Professionals • Programmers and Software Development Professionals • Engineering Technicians • Engineering Professionals (not elsewhere classified). • Production Managers and Directors in Manufacturing • Mechanical Engineers • Skilled Metal, Electrical and Electronic Trades Supervisors • Electrical Engineers • Electronics Engineers • Aerospace Engineers • Data Analysts • IT Operations Technicians • IT Quality and Testing Professionals • Information Technology Professionals (not elsewhere classified). <p>*many of these roles are not isolated to defence and also spans other industries including advanced manufacturing, aerospace, digital and cyber technologies, construction and complex supply chain</p>	As per DfE approved list of qualifications and learning aims	£500,000

Lot 2	Provision to respond to skills in the construction sector as defined by the Surrey LSIP	<p>Elementary construction occupations including groundworks, plant and labouring, as well as entry level qualifications into progression pathways including careers such as quantity surveying.</p> <p>Key occupations for the transition to green skills includes electricians, plumbers and heating engineers.</p> <p>Other priority areas includes carpenters and joiners.</p> <p>Progression pathways for mid-career and professional roles including supervisory and project management roles.</p> <p>Targeted intervention is required to address diversity and inclusion factors, including the under-representation of females in construction and supporting those with additional needs and disabilities (AND) within the sector.</p>	As per DfE approved list of qualifications and learning aims	£500,000
Lot 3	Provision to respond to skills needs in the social care sector as defined by the Surrey LSIP	TBA – through further information via the LSIP	As per DfE approved list of qualifications and learning aims	£500,000
Lot 4	Provision to respond to digital and employability skills needs in the remaining Surrey LSIP Priority sectors including innovative approaches to engaging participants	TBA – through further information in the LSIP	As per DfE approved list of qualifications and learning aims	£500,000

Delivery period

The funding period is 1st August 2026 to 31st July 2027.

Client Eligibility and recruitment of participants

Eligibility for ASF:

- Aged 19+ (on 31st August in the funding year)
- A Surrey resident and ordinarily resided in the UK for the last 3 years
- Employed and earning below £25,000 per year
- Unemployed 19+ (eligible for full funding)
- Prior attainment (19-23 without a full level 2 or level 3)
- Requiring English and maths (up to level 2 where not previously achieved)
- Requiring Digital skills – essential digital skills or functional up to and including level 1

Participants for ASF Funded provision might be:

- Individuals needing basic skills
- Low-wage workers
- Unemployed adults
- Young adults (19-23) seeking their first full level 2 or 3
- Individuals in low-skilled jobs looking to progress (in work) or change careers to a priority sector.

Duration

Learners will be eligible for funding for the whole of the learning aim or programme if they are eligible for funding at the start, even if the duration is for over one year.

Providers should have suitable relationships with businesses and other organisations (e.g. employability support organisations, local DWP offices, community groups) to recruit suitable participants. This should also complement and not duplicate any provision already funded, such as Skills Bootcamps and Connect to Work.

Technical course content and delivery

All ASF provision is expected to provide wider employment skills and behavioural skills support as outlined by the Department for Education:

Wider employment skills and behaviours/Behavioural Skills Support

- Appropriate workplace communication
- Stress management
- Time management
- Decision making
- Problem solving

Against the requirements, delivery can include relevant qualifications, units or learning aims that are listed on [find a learning aim](#) or on the [DfE list of qualifications approved for funding](#).

Examples against Surrey's priority sectors are below. Generally, we would expect these to be at level 2 or below given that level 3 and above is covered through programmes such as Skills Bootcamps and Future Courses for Jobs.

Priority sector	Example content
Digital and technology (including cyber security)	Qualification search results
Life sciences and health	
Creative industries	Qualification search results
Advanced manufacturing and engineering	Qualification search results
Professional and financial services	Qualification search results
Sustainable economy and clean growth (including construction)	Qualification search results
Food and drink	Qualification search results

Engagement with business

For proposed provision aligned to the priority sectors as outlined above, we would expect to see evidence of how this responds to employer demand. This could be in the form of employer supporting statements or letters, or high vacancy levels in roles requiring the relevant qualifications. This will help to ensure that training leads to individuals securing employment where possible.

Staffing

The following are some indicative requirements for staff to deliver ASF:

- In depth and up to date knowledge of the subject matter being taught
- Experience or knowledge of the role/industry
- Professional certification in training or adult education is preferred
- Ability to adapt training content to meet the needs of different learning styles
- Ability to deliver engaging sessions using a variety of media, including online delivery where required
- Experience providing personal and career development support to learners
- Willingness to travel to ensure learners are provided with access to the most appropriate support

Providers are invited to meet the above requirements with more than one member of staff as required, as well as through input from **Engagement with business** as outlined above.

Policies and procedures

The provider will need to have the following policies in place:

- Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults Policy
- Insurance (e.g. professional indemnity, public liability, employers' liability)

- Confidentiality Policy
- Complaints Procedure

3. Additional requirements

Social Value

It is expected the service will provide Social Value throughout the contract period, above and beyond the value derived from participation in ASF. Ensuring the programme is sustainable is a key factor, therefore delivering in an accessible way to eligible residents is anticipated.

See our Social Value Policy for more information - [Social value policy - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/social-value-policy).

Environmental Sustainability

Surrey has an ambition that all our residents live in safe, clean and green communities. Having declared a Climate Emergency, SCC is committed to ensuring its operations are sustainable and has put in place emission reduction targets for Council operations to reach net zero by 2030 and become a net zero county by 2050. As our procurements will have environmental implications, the Council are looking to minimise these wherever possible.

In the Council's [Environmentally Sustainable Procurement Policy](#), four interconnected focus areas are considered:

- Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation;
- Prevention of Pollution;
- Sustainable Resource Use and Consumption; and
- Protection and Restoration of Biodiversity.

In relation to the above focus areas and in the provision of ASF, the Service Provider will:

- Aim to reduce carbon emissions in their operations;
- Be transparent in their activities regarding carbon emissions and other relevant environmental aspects of the contract, reporting these where able;
- Consider other negative environmental impacts and ways to mitigate against these in every action they take; and
- Continue to innovate and find opportunities to carry out their work in a way that benefits the natural environment.

4. Service management

Key performance indicators

The following outlines the key performance indicators for ASF:

- Total number of learners supported
- Learners progressing to employment outcomes
- Learners progressing to employment outcomes in priority sectors
- Learners progressing to further learning
- Learners showing increased confidence and work readiness
- Achievement rates (and type) – completion of learning aims
- Learners gaining basic digital skills
- Learners gaining first level 2
- Learners gaining English, Maths or digital Skills (with level)

- Learners progressing in work

How we will track, measure and manage performance

The performance of the service will be measured by the ASF Team at SCC. The Project Team will function as client manager and performance manage the service throughout the funding period. Performance will be measured through a series of functions, including but not limited to:

- Monthly performance data submissions including evidence of start and completion of ASF training, and progression
- Evidence of eligibility to be funded through ASF
- Quarterly review meetings, and additional performance review meetings as required
- The provider will need to submit Learner data (ILR) and to complete the Learner's qualification on or before the planned end date in the data submitted in the ILR

Privacy notices which comply with the requirements of Data Protection Legislation must be issued to data subjects if processing any of their Personal Data, including reference to both Surrey County Council and Department for Education privacy notices.

Reporting

Learner data will be submitted directly to DfE via the Individualised Learning Record (ILR). Additionally, the service will be required to adopt a common data reporting system, provided by SCC during the mobilisation of providers. All data will be handled in accordance with GDPR protocol. SCC and DfE will not receive identifiable data, unless pre-agreed with the service and participant.

5. Funding

Surrey County Council will pay the provider the funding set out, with further information in Schedule 2 of the Grant Agreement. Providers should refer to the Funding rates by band as below and the [Funding Rates and formula](#) published by the government which SCC will adopt (rates for 2026/27 to be published in late Spring 2026).

ASF funding rates by band

Adult skills funding band	Base	Low	Medium	High	Specialist
hourly adult skills funding rate	£6.00	£7.20	£8.40	£9.60	£12.00
Funding Band	Hourly Rate	Typical Subject Areas			
Base	£6.00	General provision			
Low	£7.20	Public Services, Child Development			
Medium	£8.40	Health & Social Care, Science			
High	£9.60	Engineering, Construction			
Specialist	£12.00	Agriculture, Horticulture			

Payment profile

Payments will be based on actuals and paid a month in arrears. As per existing DfE / DWP arrangements, providers will submit three funding claims setting out actual delivery to date and, where appropriate, providing a forecast for the remainder of the funding year. This will be reviewed against the actual spend when providers submit their final funding claim against the ILR and Earning Adjustment Statement (EAS) data they provide.

Providers must submit funding claims as follows:

- February: mid-year forecast funding claim
- April: year-end forecast funding claim
- October: final funding claim

SCC will continue to implement existing arrangements by using the mid-year funding claim (February) to compare the amount of funding providers have used against the contract value and reconcile the funding agreement. If the mid-year funding claim shows providers expect to be significantly below their contract value, SCC may adjust the payments from April 2027 to reduce reconciliation following the final funding claim.

This will be discussed with providers before reducing allocations.

The Skills Team will use Proactis to make ASF payments. Proactis is SCC's electronic invoicing solution and provides suppliers with an easy-to-use dashboard relating to procurement activity, including payment of invoices. Further information can be found [here](#).

ILR Return	2026/27 payment	Notes
RO1	September 2026	Subject to returns
RO2	October 2026	
RO3	November 2026	
RO4	December 2026	
RO5	January 2027	
RO6	February 2027	
RO7	March 2027	
RO8	April 2027	
RO9	May 2027	
RO10	June 2027	
RO11	July 2027	
RO12	August 2027	
RO13	TBC	
RO14	TBC – October	

Providers should set out how they will deliver against the requirements in this specification. This should:

- Be targeted at adults who have barriers to engagement in adult education and/or require development of skills, knowledge, behaviours and confidence towards employability.

- Whilst we are not being prescriptive about volumes of engagement with specific cohorts, we would expect provider delivery, outreach, partnerships and subcontracting plans to demonstrate a programme of widening participation and engaging with disadvantaged groups in addition to supporting case studies.
- This should complement existing delivery such as Skills Bootcamps and Connect to Work and demonstrate join up with other providers.