

A New Streamlined Funding System for Adult Skills

This document sets out the features and arrangements for testing a new simplified funding system to be implemented in 2013/14. It is published following consultation with the Association of Colleges and the Association of Employment and Learning Providers

February 2012

Of interest to providers

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Foreword

In publishing this document we are extremely grateful to the Funding External Technical Advisory Group, for their continued support in progressing with funding simplification. The group has challenged, advised and put forward recommendations on how to create a system that is not only more simple and transparent, but is also fit for purpose. It is now important to take these proposals and test them more widely with the sector.

1. Introduction

- 1 In October 2011 we published [‘A new streamlined funding system for adult skills’ \(the October document\)](#), which set out proposals for a simplified funding system. The guiding principles of our vision for this system are fairness, transparency, recognition of the diverse needs of adults, and safeguarding the use of public funding in a proportionate way.
- 2 Although the end goal is simplification, it is not simplification for the sake of it. Our aim is to enable providers to focus more on how their offer supports employers and their local communities, instead of spending time and resource on unnecessary bureaucracy imposed by processes and systems. We have also been mindful of the trade-off between complexity and fairness.
- 3 This update describes the progress made since October 2011 towards delivering the new funding approach for adult skills funding¹ from 2013/14. The developments relate to simplifying the funding formula, funding rates and earnings methodology.

Simplification will free resources for providers to enable them to be more accountable, innovative and responsive to students and employers - to focus on outputs rather than inputs. For the first time in a decade, we will test a single funding system that will move resources to meeting the needs of the students and employers we serve and away from the internal management of complex funding rules and systems; at the same time ensuring that the public spending involved is used efficiently and equitably.

- 4 Since October we have been working very closely with the sector in an open and transparent way to further develop the proposals. At every stage we have tested each change to verify they will deliver the benefits that come with simplification.
- 5 During this time we have worked on the following key actions.
 - The Funding External Technical Advisory Group has been reformed and an independent chair from the further education sector appointed. A list of members is included as an Annex to this document. We have also established a series of sector-led working groups considering areas like the

¹ The scope is the Adult Skills Budget, which funds classroom and workplace learning, including 19+ Apprenticeships. The proposals also apply to 16-18 Apprenticeships, although the approaches to funding disadvantage and Additional Learning Support are subject to the Department for Education (DfE) and Young People’s Learning Agency (YPLA) 16-19 funding formula review.

funding of Basic Skills provision, and a Learner Information Suite (LIS) technical users group to support the development and testing of software. We are taking a new approach to working with the sector and employers on how systems are developed that meet their business needs.

- We have undertaken comprehensive modelling and analysis on the impact of a simplified funding system. The Funding External Technical Advisory Group has considered a range of funding rate scenarios for all types of provision and providers. The work of the group now means we have recommendations on all aspects of the funding system, with only two areas of work ongoing. These relate to the specific funding rates for Basic Skills and Apprenticeships.
 - Building on the consultation '[A Simplified Further Education and Skills Funding System and Methodology](#)', the entire funding system has been scoped and we now have firm recommendations for every aspect of funding policy including the proportion of funding that will be paid for achievement, the approach to testing job outcomes, and simplification of support funds.
 - The sector has set out its requirements to manage change and we now have an agreed timetable for delivering the proposed changes.
- 6 We are now in a position to confirm more details of the new simplified funding system, for the purposes of shadow working during 2011/12 and 2012/13. We will issue shadow software and funding rates, so that the sector as a whole can test our assumptions that the new system will work effectively. We want the sector to feed back issues or suggestions in order to finalise plans for the system in 2013/14.
- 7 The system we will test is built on the following features:

Features of the new simplified funding system

A single funding system

- A single funding methodology for all providers.
- Reduced data and Individualised Learner Record (ILR) reporting requirements, with an associated reduction in audit burden.
- A single set of funding rules and an end to ambiguous and subjective guidance².
- For the first time, evidence requirements will be issued alongside and associated with our funding rules.
- A continued commitment to fully fund YPLA carry over learners where they are aged 19 on 31 August in their second or subsequent funding year of studying a learning aim. These learners will be funded at the same 16-18 rates and with funding calculated using the YPLA funding methodology.

A simple funding formula

- The funding formula will be simplified with a set of fixed funding rates that incorporate programme weighting factors.
- Disadvantage uplift will be calculated using the learner's home postcode, and will apply to all adult skills provision.
- The approach to area cost uplift will be retained, based on delivery location.

² This has been informed by our 'whole provider view' of bureaucracy, one of the other strands of work to extend simplification.

Simplified funding rates

- Funding rates will be expressed in pounds – we will remove the concept of Standard Learner Number (SLN) and there will be no more hidden wiring in Provider Factors.
- A single set of listed funding rates for all learning aims, regardless of the mode of delivery, and which is intended to stimulate innovation and freedom in delivery.
- A significant reduction and consolidation of the number of different funding rates – removing the tens of thousands of different rate variables that currently exist.
- Will support the introduction of further education loans in 2013/14 and a new transparency in what contribution Government makes to skills training.

A single earnings methodology

- Uses in-year delivery to calculate earnings in a similar way to how workplace learning is currently funded.
- The maximum value of learning paid per learner in a single funding year will be capped.
- An appropriate level of achievement funding to stimulate and encourage achievement of the learning aim/framework.
- For eligible learners³, providers will be paid half the achievement funding if the learner leaves learning and enters work.

Payment process

- A single payment process will apply to the Adult Skills Budget, depending on provider type.

Support funds

- All support needs of students will be met through Additional Learning Support funding, with a new single definition regardless of provider type, and through the enhanced Discretionary Learner Support Fund.
- There will be only one model for claiming Additional Learning Support funding, depending on provider type (that is grant-funded or funded under contract for services), thus removing the two different systems that currently exist.

- 8 An updated version of the LIS software will be published in 2011/12. It will contain the ability to see the impact of the new funding system via a new report. In 2012/13 we will continue this theme as LIS will have further functionality added as specified by the Funding External Technical Advisory Group. This software will shadow the existing Demand Led Funding (DLF) system and show how the new funding system will work⁴. Providers will continue to be paid based on the current methodologies in 2012/13. We are keen to receive feedback both in 2011/12 and 2012/13 about the shadow working, so we are able to fine tune the system and to check it is operating as we intended.
- 9 The changes outlined will form part of the *information authority's* consultation process for the 2013/14 ILR, which aims to reduce data burden on providers.

³ That is, unemployed learners on active benefits (and currently those on wider benefits) where skills training will help them into work.

⁴ There are however implications on some parts of the system in how they relate to 16-18 Apprenticeship funding. These are subject to the outcome of the DfE and YPLA 16-19 funding formula review.

2. A Simple Funding Formula

- 10 A simple funding formula will cover the entirety of the Adult Skills Budget. This will give greater transparency of the funding rates.

$$\text{Funding} = \text{rate } (\pounds) [x \text{ disadvantage uplift} x \text{ area cost uplift}]^5$$

- 11 In the October document we set out our intention to retain both the disadvantage and area cost uplifts as part of the simplified funding formula. We can now confirm this is the approach we have included in the new system.
- 12 The disadvantage uplift will be based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2010 and will provide additional funding for learners living in the 27 per cent most deprived lower-layer super output areas (SOAs) of the country. Disadvantage uplift will now apply to all learners, so it will be extended to the whole of the Adult Skills Budget⁶.
- 13 Currently though, in classroom learning the calculation of the disadvantage uplift is based on the learner's home postcode, the characteristics of the learner or if the learner is studying a Basic Skills programme – whichever yields the greater uplift. In order to simplify the approach to disadvantage funding it will now be calculated using only the learner's home postcode. This removes the process and hierarchy of uplifts previously applied for the characteristics of the learner and Basic Skills. The new system will move the support needs and funds identified through the characteristics of the learner into the newly-defined Additional Learning Support fund. The proportion of disadvantage uplift funding currently associated with Basic Skills will be consolidated into the simplified funding rates for this type of provision⁷.
- 14 The area costs uplift reflects the higher costs of delivering provision in different parts of the country, particularly London and the South East. It will be consistently applied based on delivery location.

3. Simplified Funding Rates

Funding rates for learning aims

- 15 In the October document we published an illustrative four-row by five-column matrix of funding rates for learning aims. This was to show the proposed structure and size of the rates matrix, which would replace the current position where we have thousands of individually set rates, including cases of different rates for the same learning aims depending on the way they are delivered.
- 16 We have received a number of very helpful comments on the proposed matrix, particularly with regard to the proposal to fund all Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) diplomas at the same funding rate.

⁵ Uses in-year ILR data, where it applies. This removes the complicated lagged Provider Factor currently used in colleges' classroom learning.

⁶ The approach to disadvantage funding for 16-18 Apprenticeships is subject to the outcome of the DfE and YPLA 16-19 funding formula review.

⁷ Disadvantage funding for learners who live in the most deprived areas using the postcode method will be additional to these funding rates.

- 17 As a result of these comments, we have undertaken a significant amount of additional modelling to assess how we reflect the wider volume of achievement of these qualifications. As a result of this work, we now propose a matrix that has eight rows, categorised by QCF learning aim type and linked to the credit value of the learning aim(s); and five columns to reflect the existing classroom programme weighting factors (PWF) used by both ourselves and the YPLA⁸. We will also continue to include the 1.92 weighting used for some provision delivered by certain providers who have to provide certain specialist resources.
- 18 For each of these rows we have set funding rates based on the sector norm in 2010/11 to mitigate as far as possible the impact on individual providers and types of provision⁹. At a national level this is cost-neutral and for the vast majority of providers the funding impact will be less than five per cent. We are working with the Funding External Technical Advisory Group to identify the reasons why the new funding rates are having a greater impact on some providers and how these could be mitigated. The main issues we are looking at that might cause greater variability include:
- currently most funding rates are based on guided learning hours (glh) that have been recommended by awarding organisations. The proposal is to base funding rates on the credit value of QCF learning aims¹⁰. We believe this is more appropriate as credit is part of the regulatory arrangements for the QCF; whereas glh are currently not subject to regulation¹¹. Some providers have been claiming funding (particularly for unlisted provision) that far exceeds the regulated credit value for some learning aims
 - some similar learning aims have either been assigned significantly different glh by different awarding organisations or by ourselves and in other cases the ratio of glh to learning underpinning the award of credit appears either significantly high¹² or, in some cases, appears disproportionate with regard to the credit value assigned
 - some learning aims with very low credit values receive significant increases in funding using this approach.
- 19 The learning aim funding rates we publish in the rates matrix will be the rate paid for those entitled to full funding. Where learners and/or employers are expected to contribute towards the costs of learning, the amount Government contributes will be reduced in line with the national fee assumption of 50 per cent of the unweighted rate. This will set the rate the Government will pay for learning; the amount of contribution the provider seeks from the learner and/or employer is for

⁸ Once the position is clear on PWFs for 16-19 we will consider whether there is a need to align with the 16-19 sector, but only where it makes sense to do so.

⁹ The funding rates for relevant learning aims have been increased to compensate for the removal of the short-course modifier from the funding formula.

¹⁰ Within the QCF credit is an award made to a learner in recognition of the achievement of the designated learning outcomes of a unit and credit value the number of credits that will be awarded where the learner has achieved the learning outcomes of the unit. Credit and credit value combine both input and output measures. Within the QCF, a qualification is the award to the learner for the achievement of a specified number of credits. Here 'learning aim' can refer to both qualifications and/or units.

This will remove the current requirement to record and evidence glh.

¹¹ Although we are aware that this is subject to change pending further Ofqual consultation.

¹² Leading to inflated credit values in some sectors and in some learning aims.

them to determine. The rates for workplace learning may be further reduced in line with our policy on large employers, which will be confirmed as part of the annual skills investment process.

- 20 The learning aim rates matrix that will now be trialled during shadow working is set out below:

21

Learning aim type (credits)	Programme Weighting Factor (PWF)				
	1.0	1.12	1.3	1.6	1.72
Award (1-6)	£188	£211	£245	£301	£324
Award (7-12)	£387	£433	£503	£619	£666
Certificate (13-24)	£724	£811	£941	£1,159	£1,246
Certificate (25-36)	£1,265	£1,417	£1,645	£2,025	£2,176
Diploma (37-48)	£1,987	£2,225	£2,583	£3,179	£3,417
Diploma (49-72)	£2,573	£2,882	£3,345	£4,117	£4,425
Diploma (73-132)	£4,170	£4,670	£5,421	£6,671	£7,172
Diploma (133+)	£6,602	£7,395	£8,583	£10,564	£11,356

Notes:

These funding rates do not take into account the outcome of the ongoing unit funding trials. We are aware that a number of units and other learning aims with very low credit values appear to receive significant increases in funding. These are being reviewed as part of the evaluation of these trials and we will update the sector on the approach to funding very small learning aims during shadow running.

Basic Skills and Apprenticeship funding rates are currently being assessed against the funding rates set out here and we will publish our conclusions on funding rates for these areas later as detailed elsewhere in this document. The 1.92 weighting will continue to be used for some provision delivered by certain providers.

- 22 Credit values have been used to assign funding rates for units in the QCF. For learning aims not in the QCF a funding rate has been assigned that is the closest match to their 2010/11 rate.
- 23 We have also assigned listed funding rates for learning aims that are currently unlisted, although work is still ongoing to set rates for Basic Skills provision¹³. We are also being mindful that funding rates for Basic Skills need to align with the changes in the qualifications for this provision. The automatic disadvantage uplift for Basic Skills learners of 1.12 will be consolidated into the funding rates.
- 24 We will confirm no later than May 2012 how Basic Skills funding rates fit into the simplified rates matrix.

¹³ The 1.4 PWF for Entry Level numeracy provision will be consolidated into the funding rate.

Funding rates for Apprenticeships

- 25 The October document set out our intention to fund Apprenticeship provision at framework rather than component learning aim level. Following advice from the Funding External Technical Advisory Group we are reviewing this.
- 26 We are continuing to consult and develop our approach to simplify Apprenticeship funding and align it to the principles for funding learning aims across the rest of the Adult Skills Budget. As a result we now expect to be able to publish the principles and rates for funding Apprenticeships no later than May 2012.
- 27 For 2012/13 we will continue to fund Apprenticeships based on their current rates. However, in 2011/12 we will, jointly with the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), review a small number of Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE) frameworks where there is evidence that the current rate does not reflect the costs of delivering the revised framework. The review will include IT & Telecoms and Electrotechnical Apprenticeships. Any proposed changes as a result of this review will be discussed with the Funding External Technical Advisory Group and confirmed by the end of March 2012.

4. A Single Earnings Methodology

- 28 A single earnings methodology will be used to calculate a provider's funding. This will significantly reduce the administration costs and data burdens on providers.
- 29 The features of the earnings methodology are:
- a qualifying threshold for funding starts, the same as currently used
 - on-programme instalments earned over the planned months for the learning aim/framework
 - all learning aims/frameworks have a proportion of their value held back to be earned only on achievement of the learning aim/framework or job outcome (the achievement or job outcome funding)
 - if the learner achieves the learning aim/framework earlier than planned, then the whole of the funding will be earned, including the achievement funding. For grant-funded providers, this will happen at year-end reconciliation, and for providers funded under a contract for services, this is earned in the following month after data has been received that records the achievement.
- 30 It is not expected that learners will be required to repeat learning and so duplicate achievement. We will work with the Funding External Technical Advisory Group to ensure that processes are developed that assess and recognise a learner's achievement and prior experience, so that the funding earned reflects the outcome achieved with the provider.
- 31 The period of shadow working will enable colleges to prepare for the change of moving from an annualised earnings methodology for their classroom delivery to one based on in-year delivery.

Achievement and job outcome funding

- 32 The existing approaches to funding achievement in classroom and workplace learning are very different. In merging these two methodologies we have sought an approach that supports achievement of the learning aim/framework, taking into account that learners are different and have different learning starting points, capacity and capability.
- 33 For the purposes of shadow working we have set the level of achievement funding at 20 per cent of the learning aim/framework rate. We will review this again before implementing the final funding system in 2013/14.
- 34 Subject to review of 2012/13 piloting, job outcome funding will be integrated into the core funding methodology in 2013/14. For eligible learners, that is, unemployed learners on active benefits (and currently those on wider benefits) where skills training will help them enter work, providers will be paid half of the achievement funding if the learner leaves and enters work without achieving their learning aim.

Piloting job outcomes in 2012/13

- 35 Job outcome funding will be piloted in 2012/13 using the existing funding models, with 10 per cent job outcome funding where a learner leaves and enters work without achievement of the learning aim. This is straightforward in workplace learning, however, in classroom learning the funding will be factored into the year-end reconciliation. The 2012/13 DLF calculation is being modified to recognise jobs outcomes for eligible learners and further details will be provided in the 2012/13 Funding Rules at the end of March 2012.
- 36 The definition of a job outcome in the case of learners on active benefits will be that the learner makes a declaration to the provider that they have left unemployment benefits to enter work. This mirrors directly the declaration made to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). In the case of those on wider benefits the declaration will be that they have entered work. The definition of an eligible job will be that *'the learner must remain in employment for 16 hours or more per week for more than four continuous weeks'*. Again, this is the measure used by DWP to determine a formal break in unemployment. We do not wish to introduce new or conflicting definitions from that used as the measure of removal of those from active benefits. We will however test this definition through the pilot for any unintended consequences.

Funding cap

- 37 Currently a funding cap applies in classroom learning, which is set at 1.75 SLN¹⁴ per learner per year.
- 38 We plan to retain the concept of a funding cap, and will apply it to the whole of the Adult Skills Budget. We are looking at how this could be applied to Apprenticeships as a mechanism to control against framework delivery in a significantly shorter period of time than that recommended by framework developers.

¹⁴ Equivalent to an unweighted funding rate of £4,576 in 2011/12.

- 39 As part of simplifying the funding system, this funding cap in future will be expressed in pounds, rather than SLNs. An annual funding cap of £4,400 (applied to the unweighted rate) per learner will be piloted during 2012/13 shadow working. The level of an annual funding cap for Apprenticeships is still being considered as part of the work set out above.

5. Payment Process

- 40 A single payment process will apply to the Adult Skills Budget, depending on provider type.
- 41 Grant-funded providers will continue to receive payments of their Adult Skills Budget allocation on profile and will be subject to end-year reconciliation¹⁵. Providers funded under a contract for services will continue to be paid based on in-year delivery as reported in their ILR returns, paid monthly in arrears.

6. Support Funds

Additional Learning Support

- 42 A new single definition of Additional Learning Support is being developed, which brings together the current Additional Learning Support (classroom and workplace learning) definitions as well as the disadvantage uplift based on the characteristics of the learner. The proposed definition is:
- 43 *'Additional Learning Support funding is intended to enable providers to work flexibly and provide support for the learning needs of their individual learners to achieve their learning goals. It also provides funding for colleges and training organisations to meet the costs of reasonable adjustments as set out in the Equality Act 2010.'*
- 44 The funding is intended to be flexible and is there to help support learners who have a range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- 45 To simplify the different arrangements that currently apply in classroom and workplace learning, in future there will be a single approach to funding Additional Learning Support across all provision, depending on provider type¹⁶.
- For grant-funded providers funding will be based on profile payments of an agreed allocation with no end-year reconciliation.
 - Providers funded under a contract for services will claim a fixed monthly rate against their maximum contract value, and the current option of claiming exceptional learning support will also continue. As part of the work on funding rates, the actual rates to be used will be reviewed and will be confirmed at the end of March 2013 for 2013/14.

¹⁵ Payments for their 16-18 Apprenticeship delivery are subject to the outcome of the DfE and YPLA 16-19 funding formula review.

¹⁶ The arrangements for funding Additional Learning Support for 16-18 Apprenticeships are subject to the outcome of the DfE and YPLA 16-19 funding formula review.

Learner Support

- 46 We have already set out plans for rationalising a number of the current schemes within the enhanced Discretionary Learner Support Fund in 2012/13, by removing the current ring fencing between budget lines and merging the current Residential Bursary Fund with the Residential Support Scheme. We will continue with work to streamline so as to reduce the burden of bureaucracy still further.
- 47 We are also looking into widening access to these learner support funds by other providers.

7. Arrangements for Shadow Working

- 48 We are committed to testing the full impact of features we have set out for the new funding system. Not only will we work with the sector through a number of technical workshops starting April 2012, we will for the first time run a national funding conference to provide an opportunity for providers to share experiences and provide feedback. We will write to the sector in the coming weeks with the arrangements for the technical workshops and first national funding conference.
- 49 By the end of March 2012 we will release an update of the LIS software which will contain the shadow funding calculation along with the shadow learning aim rates. This will enable providers to gain an insight into possible effects on funding. A user guide will be published alongside this software release which will contain guidance as to areas that providers should be looking at and commenting on in their feedback, including the mechanism by which to feed back.
- 50 It is intended that, by the end of May 2012, we will confirm funding rates for Basic Skills learning aims and Apprenticeships.
- 51 In July 2012 we will issue an updated shadow funding calculation and rates matrix for use on 2012/13 data.

8. Timetable

52 The table below sets out the overall timetable of the proposed changes:

What	By When
<p>LIS release with shadow funding calculation, learning aim rates matrix and reports for use on 2011/12 data.</p> <p>Shadow funding calculation 2011/12 User Guide published.</p> <p>2012/13 DLF funding rates confirmed.</p> <p>2012/13 Funding Rules published.</p>	<p>March 2012</p>
<p>Provider testing and trialling of new software and rates.</p> <p>Technical workshops.</p> <p>First national funding conference.</p> <p>Provider feedback.</p>	<p>April through to July 2012</p> <p>July 2012</p>
<p>Confirmation of how Basic Skills funding rates fit into the simplified rates matrix.</p> <p>Principles for funding Apprenticeship published.</p> <p>Shadow Apprenticeship rates confirmed.</p>	<p>May 2012</p>
<p>Updated shadow funding calculation and rates matrix finalised for use on 2012/13 data.</p> <p>Shadow funding calculation 2012/13 User Guide published.</p>	<p>July 2012</p>
<p>Providers use LIS reports to compare funding earned and plan for implementation of the new funding system in 2013/14, in consultation with their relationship teams.</p> <p>Provider feedback.</p>	<p>August 2012 through to July 2013</p>
<p>2013/14 Funding Rules and evidence requirements published.</p> <p>2013/14 simplified funding rates confirmed.</p>	<p>January 2013</p>
<p>New simplified funding system implemented.</p>	<p>August 2013</p>

Annex

Members of the Funding External Technical Advisory Group

The membership comprises of:

David Lawrence – Easton College (Chair)
Andrew Martin – West Nottinghamshire College
Chris McLean – North Hertfordshire College
Chris Payne – Newcastle College Group
David Pullein – Leeds College of Building
John Callaghan – North East Worcestershire College
Andy Palmer – BT Group
Jill Whittaker – HIT Training Limited
Keith Donnelly – Carillion Training Services, Carillion PLC
Mark Corden – People Incorporated Limited
Steven West – Babcock International Group PLC
Teresa Frith/Julian Gravatt – Association of Colleges
Stewart Segal/Terry Fennell – Association of Employment and Learning Providers
Tim Ward – Third Sector National Learning Alliance
Peter Garrod – HOLEX
Keith Smith – Skills Funding Agency
Sarah Benioff – National Apprenticeship Service

In addition, representatives from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, the Data Service, *information authority* and YPLA attend these meetings, supported by Skills Funding Agency staff.

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