



## **Greater Manchester Combined Authority**

### **Amendments to Adult Education Budget: Funding & Performance Management Rules due to Covid-19 Pandemic**

**For the 2019 to 2020 funding year  
(1<sup>st</sup> August 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020)**

*Of interest to all providers, delivering GMCA AEB funded  
provision*



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## **Background**

1. We all recognise that, in light of the global coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic, these are uniquely challenging times with potentially devastating impact on residents, communities and businesses, including those delivering education, training, employment support and other related programmes.

## **The Principles**

2. The GMCA is adopting amendments to its Adult Education Budget: Funding and Performance Management Rules 2019 to 2020 in response to the current COVID-19 pandemic (the “**Event**”). These amendments are designed to support our residents, businesses and communities of Greater Manchester as emerging needs arise.
3. The period of these amendments from the GMCA to you as a Provider will commence on 1st April 2020 and will continue for the remainder of the current academic year to 31 July 2020. These amendments may be considered for the 2020–2021 academic year, subject to future confirmation.

## **Whom GMCA will Fund**

4. In addition to residents included in paragraphs 2.15 to 2.38 of the GMCA AEB Funding and Performance Management Rules version 2, the devolved AEB can now be used to fully fund the following residents **for learning programmes completed by 31 July 2020**:
  - Unemployed and economically inactive residents seeking to gain skills in key sector areas as listed in paragraph 5;
  - Residents who are employed and who meet the GMCA AEB low wage threshold, currently working in key sector areas as listed in paragraph 5 but not employed in key sector roles, seeking in-work progression into key sector roles;
  - Furloughed workers that are now in receipt of a low-wage due to a reduction in their salary, up to the GMCA low wage threshold as stated in paragraphs 2.34 and 2.35 of the GMCA AEB Funding and Performance Management Rules version 2;
  - Furloughed workers looking to retrain from sectors affected by the impact of COVID-19 into sectors that will become a priority post COVID-19 as a new career pathway;
  - We will fully fund/co-fund as per the criteria stated in the existing Funding and Performance Management Rules, learning in the workplace on

employer premises where the delivery conforms with the current PHE guidance relating to COVID-19 for social distancing;

- We will continue to fund the current GMCA flexibilities with particular focus on offering all GM residents the opportunity to gain their first full level 2 qualification as stated in paragraphs 2.73 to 2.76 of the GMCA AEB Funding and Performance Management Rules version 2 and expanding access to level 3 units as stated in paragraphs 2.81 to 2.83 to further promote in-work progression.
5. Key sector workers are defined as those working in the following sector areas and are listed [here](#):
- Health and social care;
  - Education and childcare;
  - Key public services;
  - Local and national government;
  - Food and other necessary goods;
  - Public safety and national security;
  - Transport;
  - And Utilities, communication and financial services.
6. GMCA will take a pro-active approach to the flexible use of learner support funding to ensure residents are fully supported to continue their learning programmes. Providers may wish to re-visit the use of their AEB funding relating to Learning Support and Hardship as stated in paragraphs 2.102 to 2.110 in the GMCA AEB Funding and Performance Management Rules version 2.

### **Evidence and Data Collection**

7. Providers will be expected to continue to submit data on the ILR, and additional Devolved Area Monitoring (DAM) codes will be issued to identify these learners on the ILR and to understand the activities that providers are delivering and its impact. Further information will be released when this be implemented.

### **Performance Management**

8. Current performance management processes during the period of the Event will be suspended. These will be revised using pragmatic measures to continue to monitor and measure delivery, which will be agreed in discussion with you.

## COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions for GMCA AEB Providers

Question	Answer
<b>Enrolments and Paperwork</b>	
1. What will GMCA accept in relation to online enrolment forms during the period of COVID-19, otherwise known as "The Event"?	<p>Providers must make every effort to gather the same information as they would under normal circumstances as required for the Individualised Learner Record (ILR). If providers are unable to gather all the information required to add the learner and learning aim on to the ILR, then the provider must make a commitment to capture this as soon as possible.</p> <p>Although payments will not be paid through the ILR, it is important that the GMCA capture the full details of any learning that takes place during 'The Event'.</p>
2. Can providers accept electronic signatures during the period of "The Event"?	<p>Electronic signatures are acceptable at this time, but need to be dated and clearly labelled that these were accepted due to COVID-19 for future auditing purposes.</p>
3. What does GMCA recommend for a Learning Agreement during the period of "The Event"?	<p>If traditional Learning Agreements cannot be completed during the period of "The Event", then there must be alternative documentation held on the learner file for auditing purposes. For example:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An email between the learner and provider outlining an agreement regarding the provision they will attend;</li> <li>2. An electronic Learning Agreement;</li> <li>3. A documented telephone conversation with the learner, and agreement inputted on their behalf.</li> </ol> <p>Any alternative Learning Agreement must be clearly labelled as being accepted due to restrictions relating to "The Event".</p> <p>Please note the list above is not exhaustive, and the GMCA will be as flexible as possible. Any alternative methods for recording Learning Agreements can be looked at on a case by case basis.</p>
4. Due to COVID-19, providers are finding it difficult to have fully completed enrolment forms and Learning Agreements for learners who start learning aims	<p>The GMCA is aware of the current difficulties for providers to capture all the relevant information from learners due to restrictions around COVID-19, and will be as flexible as possible in these circumstances.</p>

	during lockdown. Can we have assurances that this will be taken into consideration in future compliance visits?	<p>If providers are unable to capture all relevant information from learners, then this needs to be highlighted, dated and include a caveat that this was due to COVID-19.</p> <p>As a suggestion, providers may want to amend paperwork and add a tickbox that it is being completed during COVID-19, so this is easily identifiable during future audit visits.</p>
	<b><u>Courses and Qualifications</u></b>	
5.	We have delayed our next Functional Skills cohort to September 2020, because of COVID-19. Can we have growth or an increased allocation in the next academic year to cater for these delayed starts?	There are no plans for providers to have increased allocations for functional skills qualifications, as there has not been an increase to the GMCA Devolved Adult Education Budget. It would be best practice to start learners on learning aims as soon as possible, and not wait until the new academic year. If you are unable to start learners on any learning aims, we would expect providers to refer these learners to another provider as per the place-based approach so that they can start their learning in a timely manner, and are not disadvantaged.
6.	How will learners on Functional Skills programmes complete their courses, especially regarding exams - how will these be carried out?	The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) is in the process of releasing guidance on how functional skills, and some other vocational qualifications, will be graded during COVID-19. Please refer to this guidance on their website, and your Awarding Body, for further details.
7.	Can we fund more Licence to Practise in key sector areas, i.e. supply chains and distribution, HGV licence?	At present there are no plans to expand the current Licence to Practise flexibility further than what has already been stated in the GMCA Adult Education Budget: Funding & Performance Management Rules 2019-20.
	<b><u>Returning Learners</u></b>	
8.	If providers are unable to complete learners by their planned end date because of COVID-19, what should the provider do?	<p>If the provider is not currently delivering training to the learner during the period of "The Event", then they should put them on a "Break in Learning" and inform their Strategy &amp; Partnership Manager of the reason why they are currently unable to continue to deliver training.</p> <p>If the provider is continuing to engage with the learner, then the provider should keep the learner on the ILR and go over the planned end date.</p> <p>If a learner has not been engaging with the provider during the period of "The Event",</p>

		<p>then the provider needs to contact the learner and confirm whether they intend to return. If they do intend to return to complete their learning aim after the period of "The Event", then the provider should put the learner on a "Break in Learning". If the learner does not intend to return and complete their training, then the provider must withdraw them from the learning aim.</p> <p>Providers will be required to use a specific DAM / LDM (TBC) for learners who have a BiL or Withdrawal due to 'The Event'. Further details are to follow.</p>
9.	Achievement rates may be affected due to COVID-19. Can providers have assurance that they will not be penalised for this when allocating funding for the 2021/22 academic year?	When deciding future allocations for providers, the GMCA will not penalise providers if they have a reduced number of learners or achievements because of "The Event".
	<b><u>GMCA Flexibilities</u></b>	
10.	What is the GMCA's stance on supporting furloughed learners during COVID-19?	At present the normal funding rules apply, however the GMCA is currently working on an addendum to GMCA Adult Education Budget: Funding & Performance Management Rules 2019-20, to provide further support to GM residents who have been affected by COVID-19.
11.	The Letter of Comfort makes reference to supporting the wider community through 'alternative, or in addition to your delivery services'. Is the GMCA planning to introduce further GM flexibilities to facilitate this?	The GMCA is currently working on an addendum to the GMCA Adult Education Budget: Funding & Performance Management Rules 2019-20, and is also developing a consultation which will provide further clarity on how providers can support their wider community. As always, we encourage providers to support the wider GM community response to COVID-19 if they are able to, as per the Letter of Comfort.
	<b><u>Finances</u></b>	
12.	Will there be a further growth opportunity or re-allocation of funding from providers who are under-performing, to support with changes in the training and skills landscape as a result of COVID-19?	The GMCA are currently reviewing any additional funds which may be made available and information will be circulated as quickly as possible. This will need to take in to account the new financial approach which has been agreed, to support GMCA Devolved AEB grant and procured providers during the period of "The Event".
13.	Will providers receive the same allocation for the 2020/2021 academic year?	The allocations for the 2020/21 academic year are currently going through GMCA's internal governance structure. Approval is being requested during May 2020, with providers being notified as soon as possible when these have been agreed.

14.	Will grant providers be subject to "claw back" of funds if classroom numbers at the end of year and final term are down?	Grant providers will not be subject to a clawback of funds if classroom numbers are down at the end of the current academic year. The GMCA asks providers to apply the principles of the contract variation, which was set out in response to the current COVID-19 pandemic.
15.	How will end of year reconciliations take place?	Further details regarding end of year reconciliations will be outlined within the contract variation and associated cost template which will be released by GMCA shortly.
16.	What evidence of costs are required for the open book accounting, and what evidence should we ask our supply chain for?	As above, further details regarding the approach for open-book accounting will be outlined within the contract variation and associated cost template which will be released by GMCA shortly.
17.	How will payments from April onwards be calculated?	The GMCA will be making payments to Procured Contract holders as per the monthly profiles submitted by providers in their latest re-forecasted delivery and financial schedules. Grant Contract holders will be paid as per the original profiled payments schedule.
	<b>Subcontractors</b>	
18.	How should Prime Providers pay their subcontractors during the period of "The Event"?	As per the GMCA Letter of Comfort, one of the principles which has shaped GMCA's approach in response to the current COVID-19 pandemic, is that prime providers will use GMCA's funding to cover the protection of supply chain partners, as per the Government Procurement Policy Note 2-20. The detail of the GMCA Letter of Comfort and subsequent variations should be passed down the supply chain.  Providers need to discuss payments with their subcontractors individually as these will vary on a case by case basis. If you need further advice, please speak to your Strategy and Partnership Manager in the first instance.
19.	What is the process for subcontractors where it is known that they will significantly underperform/not deliver for the rest of the year?	If the prime provider is aware that a subcontractor will be unable to deliver any training due to the COVID-19 pandemic, then they will need to apply the principles of the contract variation and look at ensuring the financial viability of their subcontractor through a cost-payment model.
20.	What is the process for subcontractors who are unable to deliver training at present because of	If a subcontractor wants to flex their current delivery plan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, then the prime provider needs to speak to their Strategy & Partnership Manager in the first instance before any changes are agreed.

	COVID-19, but want to flex their delivery so they can?	
21.	If a subcontractor is underspending and is closed due to COVID-19, can the Prime Provider use the subcontracted allocation?	The Prime Provider needs to ensure their supply chain remains financially stable during the period of "The Event". If a Prime Provider and Subcontractor want to redistribute any allocation, they should speak to their Strategy & Partnership manager in the first instance.
	<b>Individualised Learner Record (ILR)</b>	
22.	Are there any relaxations to the ILR data requirements?	No. There are no relaxations to the ILR data requirements, and providers will still need to collect the ILR minimum requirements as usual.
23.	Do we still need to do the full-funding calculation for low-wage earners (DAM010) as there is still not a fix?	Yes. At the moment the fix is still in progress, so the manual calculation for low-wage earners still needs to be completed by providers. This will be notified to providers as soon as this has been finalised. The ILR is not used solely to collect information for payments, so all of the data entered by providers needs to be correct.
24.	What is the process for payment of achievements when these are being impacted on due to COVID-19- e.g. Waiting on independent assessment?	The GMCA is aware that this is an issue, and will be requesting further information from providers on achievements that should have been completed this academic year, which have been affected by COVID-19. This will be captured to ensure there will not be double-funding of achievements in a future academic year.