



# **Accountability Agreement Community Learning MK**



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# Executive Summary

Milton Keynes City Council (MKCC), through Community Learning MK (CLMK), will deliver an inclusive, employer-informed Adult Skills Fund (ASF) programme for 2026-27 that supports residents to develop skills, improve wellbeing and access employment opportunities while responding to local and regional economic priorities.

The programme has been designed around the priorities identified through the South Midlands Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), local labour market intelligence and Milton Keynes City Council's ambitions for inclusive growth, social mobility and economic participation. Provision will focus on sectors experiencing significant workforce demand, including digital and technology, health and social care, construction, logistics and supply chain, Early Years, business services, creative industries, and the visitor economy.

Community Learning MK will deliver a broad curriculum that combines essential skills, employability support and vocational learning. Significant investment in English, maths, ESOL and digital skills will help residents build the foundations needed to access further learning, training and employment.

Specialist vocational provision, workforce development programmes and apprenticeships will be delivered through partnership arrangements with Milton Keynes College and employers, supporting both entry into employment and progression within work.

A key focus of the programme is supporting residents who face barriers to learning and work, including those who are unemployed, economically inactive, have health conditions or disabilities, caring responsibilities or low qualifications. Through initiatives such as Connect to Work, Community Learning MK will support residents furthest from the labour market to move towards sustainable employment and greater independence.

The service also contributes to wider Council priorities by reducing educational disadvantage, supporting NEET prevention, improving health and wellbeing, and strengthening community resilience. Working closely with the Access to Education, Employment and Training Team, Community Learning MK provides a coordinated approach to learning, skills development and progression for both young people and adults.

During 2026-27, activity will be focused around four strategic themes:

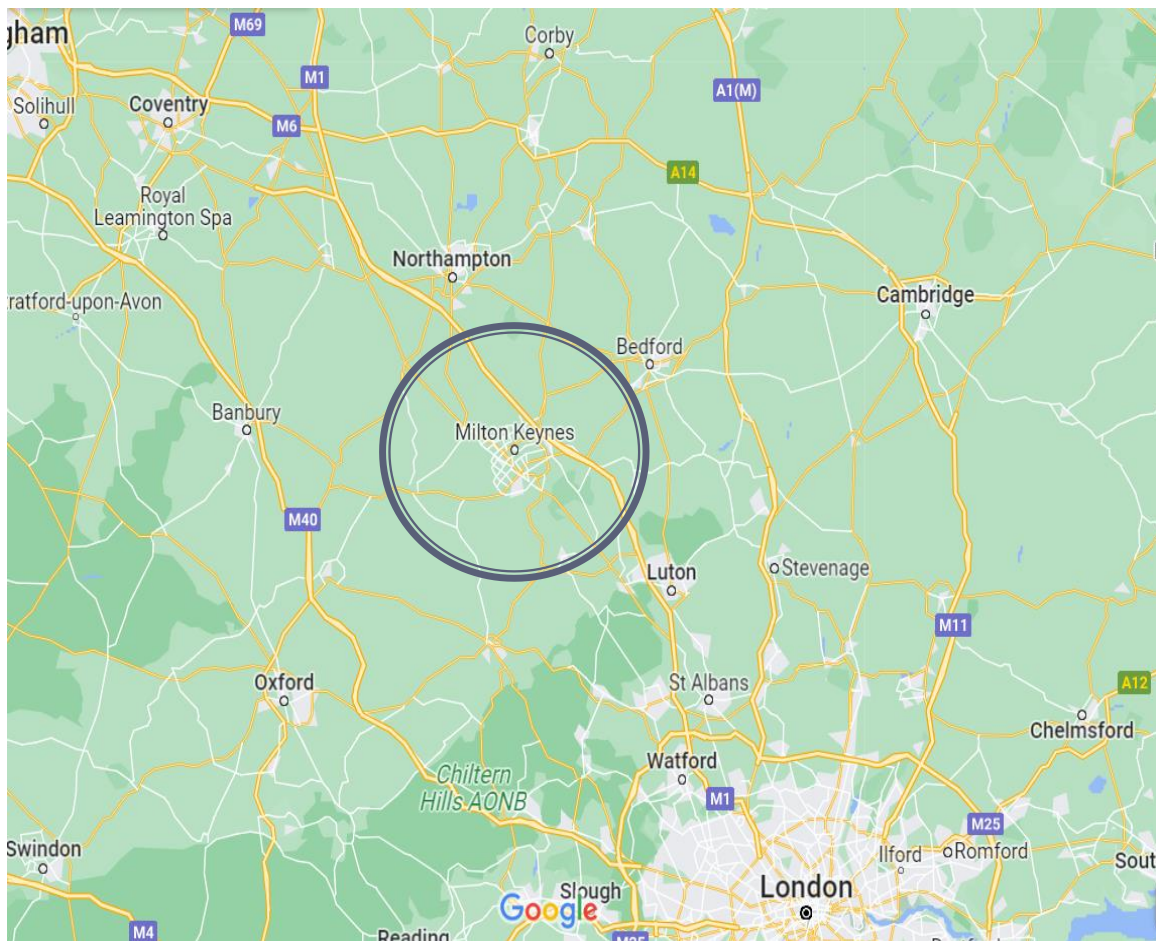
1. Supporting employment, economic participation and progression.
2. Reducing NEET and addressing educational vulnerability.
3. Improving health, wellbeing and community resilience.
4. Responding to skills needs and South Midlands LSIP priorities.

Together, these priorities position Community Learning MK as a key contributor to workforce development, social mobility, inclusive growth and improved life chances for Milton Keynes residents.

## Milton Keynes

Milton Keynes is one of the UK's fastest growing cities, with a population of approximately 287,000 and projected growth continuing to 2050. This growth creates significant opportunities for residents and employers, whilst also increasing demand for a skilled, adaptable and inclusive workforce.

Whilst qualification levels remain above the national average, significant inequalities remain, particularly in the most deprived communities where residents are substantially more likely to have low or no qualifications. The city is increasingly diverse, with 177 languages spoken in schools and growing demand for English language provision.

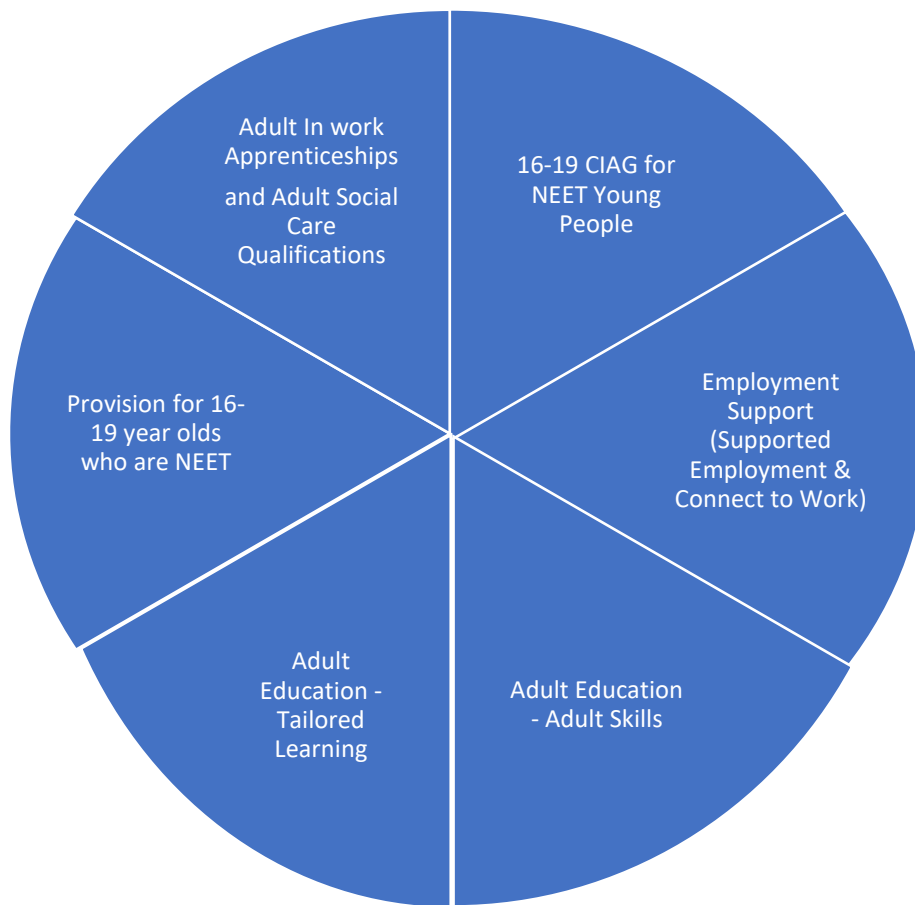


## What is the CLMK mission?

CLMK aims to provide purposeful and inspirational education and employment support to empower people to live a better life. This offer is a range of opportunities that develop and improve individuals and communities with high-quality learning and support into employment to ensure a fair, hardworking, and more equal Milton Keynes for all.

CLMK has a clear, strategic vision, designed to meet national, regional, and local needs, developed in consultation with key stakeholders. The overall aim is to improve the life and work chances for the people of Milton Keynes through education and employment support.

**This chart illustrates the services within Community Learning and Employment Support:**



## **CLMK's Curriculum for 26 -27**

### **Adult Education**

#### **Education and Employment as a Life-Enhancing Tool**

Community Learning MK views education and employment as life-enhancing tools. Learning supports personal development, wellbeing, social inclusion and economic participation. Through upskilling, reskilling and confidence building, residents can progress into further learning, employment, volunteering and greater independence.

Local labour market intelligence demonstrates sustained and growing demand across several priority sectors. These include digital and technology occupations such as software development, IT support, cybersecurity, data analysis and AI-enabled roles; health and social care, where shortages persist for carers, support workers and wider care roles; construction and skilled trades, underpinned by the city's continued development and regeneration programmes; logistics and supply chain roles reflecting Milton Keynes' strategic national location; customer-facing employment across retail, hospitality and the

visitor economy; and growing demand for creative and digital content skills supporting business growth and tourism.

In response to this demand, MKCC, alongside MK College Adult Education, proposes to deliver a broad ASF curriculum spanning Levels 1–3, with clear progression routes into employment, apprenticeships and higher-level learning. Foundational provision, including English, maths, ESOL, employability, Early Years, retail, hospitality and community-based sector entry courses, will be delivered directly by MKCC. Specialist and technical provision at Level 2 or 3 will be delivered through subcontracted arrangements with MK College but managed by MKCC.

A strong emphasis is placed on foundational skills. Significant ASF investment in English, maths and ESOL ensures residents furthest from the labour market can build confidence, progress into priority sectors and sustain employment.

Community Learning MK recognises that addressing skills shortages is not solely about supporting people into work; it is also about supporting those already in employment to progress, upskill and remain economically active.

Alongside community learning and employability provision, the service supports workforce development through apprenticeships and in-work learning opportunities. This includes supporting employers to develop the skills of their existing workforce, improve productivity and create progression opportunities for employees.

Recognising the changing nature of work, Community Learning MK will continue to develop flexible delivery models that support residents who work variable hours, shift patterns or atypical working arrangements. This includes blended learning, community-based provision, online learning and flexible timetabling to ensure that employment does not become a barrier to participation in learning.

By supporting both new entrants to the labour market and those already in work, Community Learning MK contributes to workforce development, skills retention and career progression across Milton Keynes.

The delivery plan is fully costed within the Council's £1,040,634 ASF allocation, supported by a £168,000 Preparatory Funding allocation to enable curriculum co-design, workforce recruitment, employer engagement, specialist equipment purchase and targeted learner recruitment ahead of September 2026 delivery.

Overall, the strategy positions MKCC to respond effectively to current and emerging skills needs, strengthen employability, support employers, and build the governance and delivery capability required for future devolved control of adult skills funding.

## **Strategic Context and Rationale**

### **A Locally Led Skills System**

Milton Keynes City Council is committed to developing a more responsive and locally focused adult skills system that reflects the needs of residents, employers and the wider Milton Keynes economy.

Through the Adult Skills Fund (ASF), Community Learning MK (CLMK) will deliver provision that is shaped by local labour market intelligence, employer engagement and the priorities identified through the South Midlands Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). This approach enables the Council to respond to local skills shortages, support economic growth and ensure that residents can access learning that leads to meaningful progression and employment opportunities.

### **Inclusive Growth and Opportunity**

A central aim of the strategy is to ensure that all residents can benefit from Milton Keynes' economic success.

Whilst Milton Keynes has a highly skilled workforce overall, significant inequalities remain. Residents who are unemployed, economically inactive, have low qualifications, limited English language skills, disabilities, health conditions or caring responsibilities can face additional barriers to learning and employment.

Community Learning MK will provide accessible entry routes into learning, with particular emphasis on English, maths, ESOL, digital skills, employability and sector-based provision. These programmes will help residents build confidence and skills, progress into further learning and access employment opportunities in priority sectors.

This approach supports Milton Keynes City Council's wider ambitions to reduce inequalities, improve social mobility and increase participation in education, employment and training.

### **Responding to Labour Market Demand**

The curriculum has been designed in response to local and regional labour market intelligence, employer engagement and evidence from the South Midlands LSIP.

Priority areas include:

- Digital and Technology
- Health and Social Care
- Construction and Green Skills
- Logistics and Supply Chain
- Early Years and Education
- Professional and Business Services
- Creative Industries

- Retail, Hospitality, Customer Service and Tourism

These sectors continue to experience workforce demand and are expected to play an important role in the future growth of Milton Keynes and the wider South Midlands economy.

### **Progression and Employability**

The curriculum is designed to provide clear progression pathways from community-based and foundation learning into accredited qualifications, vocational training, apprenticeships and sustainable employment. Through programmes such as Connect to Work, employability support and Information, Advice and Guidance, the service will help residents overcome barriers to participation and move closer to the labour market.

At every stage, the focus will be on supporting learners to develop the skills, confidence and resilience needed to thrive in learning, work and everyday life.

### **Preparing for Future Devolution**

The ASF programme also provides an opportunity to strengthen Milton Keynes City Council's capability in skills commissioning, partnership management, quality assurance, performance monitoring and employer engagement.

By developing this local infrastructure and expertise, the Council will be better positioned to manage future devolved adult skills responsibilities and create a more integrated skills system aligned to the needs of Milton Keynes residents, employers and communities.

### **Contributing to the Youth Guarantee and Prevention of NEET**

Community Learning MK will support Milton Keynes City Council's wider participation responsibilities and contribute to emerging Youth Guarantee priorities.

Local evidence demonstrates that many of the factors associated with educational vulnerability are also associated with increased risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET).

The service will work alongside colleagues from the Access to Education, Employment and Training Team and wider partners to ensure young adults can access appropriate learning opportunities and clear progression pathways. This includes support for those who may not meet statutory intervention thresholds but who nevertheless display characteristics associated with future disengagement.

Community Learning MK will continue to provide opportunities that build confidence, develop employability skills and support progression into learning, training and employment.

The 16-19 CIAG team deliver impartial careers information advice and guidance (CIAG) for young people in Milton Keynes aged 16-19 who are not in education, employment or training. All Personal Advisers within the team hold a professional qualification Level 4 to 6 in CIAG.

The team sit within Children's Services as part of Community Learning MK, within the Access to Education, Employment and Training team.

The offer to young people includes:

- 1 to 1 careers information and guidance interviews
- A comprehensive action plan to support their decision making and future pathways.
- Information and advice regarding their Post 16 options in education, employment and training (EET)
- Support with the application process for EET.
- This includes Apprenticeships, Further Education, Employment with Training, Skills programmes, Re-engagement programmes, volunteering and work experience.
- Help with interview technique and CV writing.
- Searching for and applying to employment with training opportunities
- Consulting with other professionals and advocating on their behalf.

Support is offered to young people who are:

- Not in education, training or employment (NEET) 16-18 years including vulnerable groups such as those with poor mental health/illness/parents and carers.
- Identified as at risk of NEET Post 16 from Year 11 upwards.
- In care and NEET or at risk of NEET
- Care experienced and NEET.
- Working with MK Youth Justice team and NEET
- Diagnosed with learning disabilities or difficulties with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP).

The overall aim of the team is progress young people who are not participating into a sustained and positive destination through the provision of quality careers advice and guidance. To complete timely and consistent tracking of young people once they have left compulsory full-time education. This allows for early identification of those who need support and supplies the information to produce accurate monthly returns to DFE for the NEET and not known figure for Milton Keynes (16-18) and the annual statutory returns the team complete.

### **Inclusive Learning and SEND**

Community Learning MK remains committed to ensuring learning is accessible to all residents.

During 2026-27, the service will use available funding and resources to further strengthen inclusive practice and support implementation of national SEND reforms. This will include

developing staff capability, improving accessibility and ensuring learners with additional needs are able to participate fully and progress successfully.

The service will continue to view inclusion not as a specialist offer but as a principle embedded throughout curriculum design, learner support and progression planning.

### **How We Will Measure Success**

The impact of Community Learning MK will be assessed through a combination of participation, achievement and progression measures.

Particular emphasis will be placed on:

- positive progression into further learning;
- progression into employment, volunteering and training;
- learner achievement and retention;
- participation by priority and disadvantaged groups;
- development of English, mathematics and digital skills;
- progression of learners with SEND;
- strengthened employer engagement and partnership activity.

Success will ultimately be defined by the extent to which residents improve their skills, opportunities and life chances through engagement with Community Learning MK.

### **Strategic Alignment within Children's Services**

Community Learning MK forms part of Milton Keynes City Council's wider Children's Services and Skills system and works closely with services responsible for participation, educational inclusion, employability and progression.

This integrated approach enables the service to support residents across all stages of learning and employment, including:

- Family Learning
- Adult Education
- Employability and Connect to Work
- Information, Advice and Guidance
- NEET Prevention and Participation
- SEND and Inclusive Learning
- Access to Education, Employment and Training (AEET)
- Youth Support and wider Children's Services teams

The alignment of these services supports a coordinated approach to reducing educational disadvantage, preventing disengagement, improving progression and strengthening pathways into learning and employment.

## **Strategic Priorities for 2026-27**

### **Strategic Theme 1: Supporting Employment, Economic Participation and Progression**

Community Learning MK will play a leading role in supporting Milton Keynes residents to move towards employment, economic participation and greater independence.

Despite continued economic growth in Milton Keynes, many residents remain economically inactive due to disability, long-term health conditions, caring responsibilities, poor mental health, low confidence, social isolation or a range of complex barriers that make entering employment difficult. Community Learning MK provides an important pathway for these residents by supporting them to build confidence, develop skills, improve wellbeing and prepare for sustainable employment.

During 2026-27 Milton Keynes City Council will deliver the Connect to Work programme through Community Learning MK as part of a regional partnership including Milton Keynes, Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, Luton, North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire Councils.

Connect to Work is a Department for Work and Pensions funded programme that forms part of the Government's Get Britain Working agenda. The programme is designed to support economically inactive people into sustainable paid employment through evidence-based models of Supported Employment. The programme aims nationally to support disabled people, individuals with health conditions and people experiencing complex barriers to employment.

The programme adopts both the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) and Supported Employment Quality Framework (SEQF) models, ensuring that support is tailored to individual need through assessment and vocational profiling. This person-centred approach reflects Community Learning MK's wider commitment to progressing residents towards meaningful and sustainable employment outcomes.

Alongside people with disabilities and health conditions, Connect to Work provides support to a number of priority groups including carers and former carers, care experienced young people, people experiencing homelessness, refugees, military veterans and their families, victims of domestic abuse, victims of modern slavery, individuals with significant substance misuse histories and people involved in or at risk of serious violence.

Community Learning MK will align its curriculum, employability support and progression pathways with Connect to Work to ensure residents can access coordinated support that removes barriers to employment and enables progression towards sustainable economic participation.

#### **Success will be demonstrated through:**

- Increased participation from economically inactive residents,
- progression into supported employment pathways

- improved confidence and employability.
- Increased numbers of residents moving into paid work and sustaining employment.
- Increased participation in apprenticeship and workforce development pathways.
- Increased positive progression into employment.
- Improved learner destination outcomes.

## **Strategic Theme 2: Reducing NEET and Addressing Educational Vulnerability**

Community Learning MK will support delivery of Milton Keynes' NEET reduction ambitions through targeted learning, careers guidance, progression support and partnership working with the Access to Education, Employment and Training Team.

### **Success will be demonstrated through:**

- Improved progression outcomes for vulnerable learners.
- Increased participation by young adults and priority groups.
- Stronger progression routes into learning, training and employment.
- Increased collaborative working with youth and participation services.

## **Strategic Theme 3: Improving Health, Wellbeing and Community Resilience**

Community Learning MK recognises that learning has a significant impact on health, wellbeing and independence.

Many learners enter provision experiencing barriers including social isolation, low confidence, poor mental health, caring responsibilities or reduced participation in community life. Through supportive and inclusive learning, the service helps residents improve confidence, connect with others, develop resilience and build aspirations for the future. [\[Neet to next | PowerPoint\]](#)

The service will continue to provide learning opportunities that contribute to personal wellbeing, family resilience and stronger communities. This includes family learning, digital inclusion, essential skills, community-based learning and provision that supports independent living and social participation.

By improving wellbeing and reducing isolation, Community Learning MK supports broader Council priorities around prevention, inclusion and community cohesion.

### **Success will be demonstrated through:**

- Improved learner wellbeing outcomes.
- Increased confidence and self-reported resilience.
- Improved retention and engagement.
- Increased participation by residents experiencing social isolation or disadvantage.

## **Strategic Theme 4: Responding to Skills Needs and the South Midlands LSIP**

Community Learning MK will continue to ensure that its curriculum responds to local, regional and national skills priorities.

The service has considered the priorities identified through the South Midlands Local Skills Improvement Plan together with Milton Keynes labour market intelligence and the national skills priorities identified by the Department for Education. These priorities include health and care, digital and technology, construction, professional and business services, and emerging green skills.

The service will continue to develop partnerships with employers, further education providers and employment support services to ensure residents have clear and accessible pathways into priority sectors. Community Learning MK will also support employers to develop their existing workforce through apprenticeships, upskilling and progression opportunities. Particular attention will be given to creating flexible learning opportunities for employees working shift patterns, non-standard hours and part-time roles, ensuring that workforce development opportunities are accessible to all learners regardless of working arrangements.

Particular focus will be placed on strengthening English, mathematics and digital skills, recognising these as foundational skills that enable progression into learning and employment.

### **Success will be demonstrated through:**

- Increased progression into priority sector pathways.
- Growth in English, mathematics and digital participation.
- Enhanced employer engagement.
- Improved alignment between community learning provision and local skills needs.

### **Strategic Statement**

Taken together, these four themes position Community Learning MK not simply as a provider of adult learning, but as a key contributor to Milton Keynes' ambitions for inclusive growth, social mobility, educational resilience and workforce development.

- Inclusive economic growth.
- Reduced educational vulnerability.
- NEET prevention and Youth Guarantee ambitions.
- Improved health and wellbeing.
- Workforce development.
- Social mobility.
- Stronger and more resilient communities.

## **Our Commitment**

Everyone should be able to live their best life, feel comfortable being themselves and free from discrimination regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity or disability. We will work to recognise the challenges people face, raise awareness and challenge inequalities where they exist. We will continue to raise aspirations and create opportunities for people to succeed, prosper and thrive.

## **Governance Approval**

This Annual Accountability Statement has been reviewed and approved through Milton Keynes City Council's governance arrangements.

The Council confirms that:

- the priorities set out within this statement reflect local, regional and national skills needs;
- the statement has been developed with reference to the South Midlands Local Skills Improvement Plan, labour market intelligence and stakeholder engagement;
- Community Learning MK's Adult Skills Fund provision will be delivered in accordance with Department for Education funding requirements; and
- appropriate oversight arrangements are in place to monitor performance, outcomes and the effective use of public funding.

Approved on behalf of Milton Keynes City Council:

| <b>Position</b>                                          | <b>Name</b>      |
|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Director of Children's Services                          | Mac Heath        |
| Strategic Lead - Community Learning & Employment Support | Gayle Fothergill |

