

Adult and Community Learning:

Subcontractor Policy 2025-2026

Contents

1. SCOPE	2
2. POLICY STATEMENT	2
3. RATIONALE FOR SUBCONTRACTING	2
4. DEFINITIONS	3
4.1 Lead provider	3
4.2 Learner	3
4.3 Sub-contractor	3
4.4 Competence	4
4.5 Contract	4
4.7 UK Register of Learning Providers (UKRLP) All	4
5. SELECTING AND APPOINTING SUBCONTRACTORS	4
5.1 In selecting subcontractors the City council will consider the following:	4
5.2 Due diligence	4
6. SUBCONTRACTOR QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS	5
6.1 Sub-contracted activity	5
7. RENUMERATION / FEES AND CHARGES	6
7.1 Distributing income between Subcontractors and the City Council	6
8. PRINCIPLES	7
9. EXTENT & LIMITATIONS	8
10. RESPONSIBILITIES	8
10.1 Strategic Manager Adult and Community Learning – Delivery	8
10.2 Quality, Funding and Compliance Team	8
10.3 Subcontractors and their employees	8
11. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS	9
11.1 Training	10
12. POLICY, COMMUNICATION AND REVIEW	10

1. SCOPE

This policy applies to all subcontracting activity that is supported by funds from the Department of Education (DfE), or their successor organisations or other funding body for the delivery of Adult & Community Learning. The aims of this policy are to provide existing and potential subcontractors with information about Stoke-on-Trent City Council's Adult & Community Learning Service's reasons for subcontracting, how we select our potential delivery partners, fees and charges, the services we provide and our terms for payment

2. POLICY STATEMENT

As part of Stoke-on-Trent City Council's Strategy to provide high quality learning experiences to learners and to bridge identified skills and provision gaps, a proportion of the City Council's delivery will be undertaken by sub-contracted providers.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council will at all times undertake fair and transparent procurement activities, conduct robust due diligence procedures on potential subcontractors and to ensure the highest quality of learning delivery is made available, demonstrating value for money and a positive impact on communities and learners' lives. The funding that is retained by the council will be relative to the costs of the services provided.

The delivery of the Adult and Community Learning services is to be carried out in a safe manner without risk to the Health, Safety and Welfare of the Sub-Contractors, City Council Employees, Learners or Visitors.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the delivery of education and training by the sub-contractor adheres to the City Council's Equality and Diversity Policy and any legislation relating to that policy.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council will take all reasonable steps to safeguard learners and vulnerable adults by expecting sub-contractors to conform to the standards established by the City Council's Safeguarding Policy although the City Council recognises that this does not absolve its legal responsibilities or obligations of Safeguarding.

3. RATIONALE FOR SUBCONTRACTING

The aims and objectives of Stoke on Trent City Councils learning provision both reflects and contributes to Stoke on Trent corporate strategy "Our City, Our Wellbeing". This is the city councils' vision, aims and objectives for the next 4 years. "Our City, Our Wellbeing" sets out the long-term ambition and aspirations for the City and includes:

- **Supporting Family Life:** working with the NHS, community groups and others to help families ensure a better start in life for their children through improved housing, education, increased income, and community support.
- **Reclaiming our streets and public spaces:** help residents regain pride in our streets and public places by taking a strict approach towards those who want to harm our local environment through anti-social actions, graffiti and vandalism or illegal rubbish dumping.
- **Addressing hardship and poverty:** support those who have the least, help them find better jobs and higher wages, maximise welfare benefits, deal with debt, and make sure they have a decent home.
- **Ensuring decent homes for all:** use our influence and strong partnerships to solve ongoing problems like fuel poverty, dampness, and mould, and to help people achieve their housing goals, including owning a home.

- **Supporting people to live independently:** support people with physical and learning disabilities, long-term mental health conditions and those who are frail to live in our communities rather than in institutional care.

Within the strategy there are 7 priorities

- Healthier - Creating a healthier standard of living for all our citizens
- Wealthier - Reducing hardship and enabling greater shared prosperity
- Safer - Building empowered communities, safe from the threat of harm
- Greener- Conserving our environment and living more sustainably
- Cleaner - Working together to clean up our city and our communities
- Fairer- Tackling inequality and improving life chances for everyone
- Skilled – Providing opportunities for people to improve their skills and education

Adult and Community Learning contributes to this vision by improving the quality and accessibility to education and skills levels for all residents. This then contributes to movement towards further education and / or into sustainable, secure employment.

Adult and Community Learning recognises it cannot do this on its own, to be successful it needs to involve partners and stakeholders who bring additional skills, strengths and benefits to the curriculum. Part of this partnership working involves subcontracting services to assist in delivery of its service. Subcontracting takes place to enable:

- Specialist / niche courses to be delivered outside the adult and community education core curriculum;
- To provide better access to facilities;
- The scope of provision to be diverse enough to meet market demand, enhance and enrich the experiences of our learners of all characteristics;
- To provide access to education and support for disadvantaged groups
- Delivery to take place in a wider range of locations / venues across the City;
- Community support and integration to be championed;
- individuals within the City that would not wish to engage with the City Council or other official education centres are able to access provision;
- To support individuals who share protected characteristics where there may be gaps

and

- We contribute to the growth, development and expertise of the organisations we subcontract with;
- Consider value for money

4.DEFINITIONS

4.1 Lead provider

A lead provider is an organisation or employer that has a direct contractual relationship with the DfE. In this instance Stoke-on-Trent City Council is the 'lead provider'. As 'lead provider' the City council is responsible for the quality and performance of all provision delivered.

4.2 Learner

Any third-party including students, apprentices, or similar to whom a service is delivered.

4.3 Sub-contractor

In this policy, sub-contractor (also known as the Provider) means a separate legal entity or individual (not an employee), selected, and awarded a legal agreement by Stoke-on-Trent City Council to work with the City council to deliver education and training to learners.

4.4 Competence

In this policy, competence means the acquisition of sufficient skills, knowledge and experience of current best practice to fulfil the role as detailed in the Sub-Contractor Agreement.

4.5 Contract

A Contract or Agreement is where a lead provider has entered into a contract with a third party to carry out all or part of the services that are funded by the Department of Education.

4.7 UK Register of Learning Providers (UKRLP) All organisations wishing to become a subcontractor with Stoke-on-Trent City Council must register on the UK Register of Learning Providers (UKRLP) and hold a valid UK Provider Reference Number (UKPRN).

5. SELECTING AND APPOINTING SUBCONTRACTORS

5.1 In selecting subcontractors the City council will consider the following:

- Specialism: subcontractors may offer a unique and or niche provisions;
- Geographic location: we will always endeavour to support local providers;
- Quality measure: this will include previous delivery quality and success rates; inclusive where applicable of an Ofsted grading;
- Responsiveness: to meeting the needs of learners;
- The presence of Safeguarding and Prevent Agendas and policies;
- Reputation: subcontractors may be referred to us by other organisations as able to meet a need i.e. OFSTED report;
- Evidential and successful history of delivering education and training;
- Ability to be flexible and delivery face to face/ on line or blended learning;

5.2 Due diligence

Stoke-on-Trent City Council will undertake a full due diligence check on potential subcontractors prior to awarding them a contract to deliver education and training services. Information will be requested as part of the tender process and further due diligence checks will be completed prior to a contract being issued. These checks are required to meet meets DfE funding rules and Ofsted standards and will include information such as (is not limited to these examples): Copies of annual financial accounts;

- Financial health checks;
- Details of the teaching / delivery staff;
- Details of awarding body accreditation;
- Details of policies and procedures;
- Details of insurance policies including Employer, Public and Professional Indemnity Insurance;
- Details of the directors and the ownership of the organisation;
- Details of the organisation's UK Provider Reference Number (UKPRN);
- Trade references;
- DBS / Vetting and Barring Service approval for delivery / contact staff;
- Details of Ofsted Inspections either direct or indirectly;
- Details of other quality standards held e.g. ISO / IIP;

- Details of registration with the Information Commissioners Office;
- Details of safeguarding policies and procedures;
- Details of other organisational policies and procedures;
- Details of the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) policies, procedures and processes;
- Details of Organisational Staffs Right to Work in the UK and DBS checks;
- External Assurance where the subcontracted value exceeds £100,000 (DfE funding rules);

6.SUBCONTRACTOR QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS

6.1 Sub-contracted activity

Subcontractor activity is a fundamental part of the Adult and Community Learning provision. The quality of the provision will be monitored and managed through the quality assurance processes and procedures, are amended in order to fully encompass all sub-contracted activity.

This policy positions sub-contracted provision as a core part of Adult and Community Learning activity to enable continuous improvements in the quality of education for Adult and Community Learning and its sub- contractors. This will be achieved through the sharing of effective practice across the supply chain, for example through the Self-Assessment Report process.

As a minimum Adult and Community Learning will carry out the following Quality Assurance measures with sub- contractors;

Desk top checks and due diligence visit;

- An annual due diligence review for new and existing providers;
- Quarterly / Termly contract monitoring visits (as applicable);
- A minimum of 1 learning walk, more if required. Providers may or may not be notified of this visit.
- Random sample of learner work each year to ensure all quality standards are met
- A Review of advice & guidance, assessment and teaching and learning practice. This will be a minimum of 1 per academic year, additional observations will be conducted if teaching standards are not deemed adequate and improvement is required;

Adult and Community Learning will provide a programme for each visit as follows;

- Standard visit agenda;
- Short Notice visit agenda;
- Annual survey of learners;
- Annual survey of employers where applicable;
- Annual audit of MIS data including enrolment forms and attendance records;
- Annual review of learner documents including tracking records, reviews and ILPs;
- Quarterly review of the sub-contractor success rates, self-assessment process and Quality Improvement Development Plan (QIDP);

The City Councils Adult and Community Learning service may require the sub-contractor to undergo the following quality improvement measures:

- Additional standard or short notice visits;
- Additional survey of learner or employer views;

- Session or tutor/ assessor observations;
- Staff CPD;
- Consultancy from Adult and Community Learning or another external consultant;

7.RENUMERATION / FEES AND CHARGES

Stoke-on-City Council will pay the sub-contractor a percentage of the funding that it is paid to the City Council by the DfE, (value as detailed in the tender process) a management fee will be deducted from this value by Stoke-on-Trent City Council. A management fee of 15% will be charged for non-accredited learning and 20% for accredited courses. The 20% fee for accredited courses may be reduced to 15% if the Service provider is registering the learners and conducting the IQA. This will be discussed with individual Service Providers as part of the contract negotiations.

If the subcontractor delivers an identified and unrectified poor-quality service and / or submits a high percentage of paperwork with errors / omissions Stoke-on-Trent City Council reserves the right to either increase the management fee to cover this additional work, or in extreme circumstances permanently withhold funding.

The management fee value retained is the amount required to fund the cost of effective open and competitive tendering, selection of provision and ongoing management of subcontracted provision. It covers the support that is necessary to ensure quality of teaching, learning, assessment and high success rates and learner satisfaction. The breakdown of these costs is detailed below;

Element /Activity-Proportion of cost as % 2025-2026

Procurement 7%

Contract Management 13%

Quality 27%

Finance and data support 27%

Management /Administrative support 19%

Legal 7%

7.1 Distributing income between Subcontractors and the City Council

We have provided further information about costs in the table below, this details the specific activities involved that generate costs and the justification for them.

Payment to Sub-Contractors will be to an agreed timetable and will be detailed in individual contracts of service with the sub-contractor. Invoices will be paid within 30 days.

Distributing income between the Subcontractor and the City Council 2025-2026			
Event /Activity	Description	Cost £	Justification for expenditure
Procurement	Commissioning Processes Including:- curriculum planning / development of tender paperwork / authorisation / evaluation	£236	Compliance with DfE funding rules / Stoke on Trent City councils procurement rules / Public Contracts Regulations 2015
	Due Diligence checks	£118	Compliance with DfE funding rules / Stoke on Trent City Councils procurement code.
Contract Management	Allocation of a Contract Manager	£0	Allocation of a dedicated contact for subcontractors
Funding rule compliance	Compliance with DfE funding rules	£197	Compliance, understanding of DfE funding rules / OFSTED framework,
	Individual subcontractor Contract Monitoring including:- Termly Monitoring / review of performance to targets / quality of teaching and learning /outcomes for learners / On going development updating of forms and guidance	£354	Compliance, understanding of DfE funding rules / OFSTED framework, / contract monitoring and best practise/support for tutors /Relationships and support for subcontractors
	Compliance with funding rules / guidance	£38	Ensuring accuracy and compliance with ILR specification /funding guidance
	Monitoring of subcontractor standard requirements	£39	Consistent and regular monitoring of DfE funding rules as they are updated. Sharing this with subcontractors
Quality Management and Services	Quality attendance at monitoring visits	£378	Compliance with DfE funding Rules relating to the quality of subcontractor provision. Compliance with OFSTED Inspection framework
	Quality Support with lesson plans, Scheme of work	£294	Ensuring quality of subcontractor courses contributing to DfE funding requirements and OFSTED framework
	Lesson Reviews and follow up paperwork.	£168	Ensuring Quality of teaching and learning / learner outcomes
	RARPA Audit	£252	Ensuring quality of subcontractor courses and learner outcomes
	Learning Walks	£126	Maintaining standards of teaching, attendance, safeguarding and health and safety
	Other quality activities including:- SAR/QUIP/learner feedback	£0	Improve the quality of subcontractors and Stoke on Trent City Council/ contribute to the City council strategy "Our City, Our Wellbeing"
Tutor training and development	Tutor training and development / mandatory council training	£84	Improving the quality of teaching and learner outcomes
	CPD events throughout the year	£0	On going Improving the quality of teaching and learner outcomes
Finance and data support	Budgeting / Reporting	£190	Overall monitoring of ACL budgets/ expenditure within the wider finance department and Adult & Community Learning
	Inputting / Uploading data including enrolment forms and associated forms (registers, learner survey).	£661	Compliance with DfE funding rules to evidence enrolment and course completion
	Data provision / preparation for claims and monitoring	£378	Generating data for Monitoring visits and reporting.
	Processing of purchase orders and invoices	£118	Compliance with funding rules. Payment of subcontractors for activity completed within 30 days
Management / Administrative support	Processing on going management of courses on the booking system /register learner interest in a course / coding	£242	Compliance with DfE funding to enable a learner to be registered /uploaded to DfE
	Marketing (if requested) Time to make accessible documents for website	£0	Marketing of subcontractor programmes through Stoke on Trent councils websites
	Enrolment of learners at a subcontractor venue (daytime/evening/weekend)	£0	Stoke on Trent City Councils staff support to learners when completing the enrolment process
	Senior Management responsibility i.e. ACL leadership and management including H&S / Safeguarding etc.	£258	Overall management / leadership of Adult and Community Learning / Reasons for subcontracting. Compliance with DfE funding rules and senior Management responsibility to meet legislation.
Website management	Management of Council ACL website and on going updating of National career service website with course information	£420	Compliance with funding rules and information for learners and subcontractors.
Legal	Preparation and Issuing of contracts	£349	Compliance with DfE funding rules and Stoke on Trent City councils procurement code/ Each subcontractor to have an individual contract for services

8.PRINCIPLES

This policy applies to all sub-contractors and their staff. The policy identifies both internal and external stakeholders and their role in relation to policies, procedures and standards expected by Stoke-on-Trent City Council whilst delivering education and training programmes on our behalf.

9. EXTENT & LIMITATIONS

- Sub-Contractors achieve a minimum standard to be considered a suitable partner and able to work with Stoke on Trent City Council;
- The delivery of education and training meets City Council, awarding body and DfE standards;
- Learners and employers benefit through the delivery of high-quality education and training programmes;
- This policy is a working document and will be updated and amended as required in order to respond to external factors;

10. RESPONSIBILITIES

10.1 Strategic Manager Adult and Community Learning – Delivery

The Strategic Manager, Education Standards & Partnerships has the overall responsibility for matters, involving the Subcontracting Policy. This responsibility includes ensuring that audit and quality compliance matters are seen as an important priority for Stoke-on-Trent City Council, addressed through comprehensive policies and procedures. The Strategic Manager for Education Standards & Partnerships is responsible for implementation and delivery of subcontracted provision, ensuring that it is appropriately resourced within the overall financial position of the City Council.

10.2 Quality, Funding and Compliance Team

The Quality, Funding and Compliance Team are responsible for the application of the Subcontracting Policy. They must maintain close liaison with key staff in these matters. The Quality, Funding and Compliance Team is also responsible for ensuring that delivery partners and sub-contractors are compliant, competent and adequately resourced to satisfy the requirements of internal and external audit, quality standards and the requirements of the different external regulatory bodies. Sub-contractors must comply with the City Council's Policies including safety standards, and meet their statutory obligations with regards to health, safety and wellbeing, ensuring that any accident, incident or near miss arising is reported in line with the City Councils procedures.

10.3 Subcontractors and their employees

All sub-contractors and their employees have a responsibility to fulfil the requirements of the agreement relating to all City Council policies including Health, Safety & Wellbeing, Safeguarding, Equality and Diversity, Prevent and audit and quality compliance.

The sub-contractor is responsible for:

- Providing the information requested by the City Council as a part of the due diligence process;
- Providing information to the City Council about how its activities will affect City Council learners, and others for whom the City Council has a responsibility prior to any work being undertaken;
- Providing the City Council documentation to enable the City Council to make a judgement as to the suitability to enter into a sub-contract agreement. The documentation is to be updated on a timely basis and at the request of the City Council for the duration of the agreement;

- Ensuring that learners are eligible for funding in accordance with DfE Funding Rules 2025-2026 and any subsequent amendments;
- Informing the City Council to any changes of:
 - Ownership of the organisation;
 - The management structure of the organisation;
 - Loss of centre accreditation / direct claim status;
 - Status in relation to winding up orders;
 - If there is evidence of irregular financial or delivery activity;
- Details of any accidents / dangerous occurrences affecting learners or a learning environment;
- Details of any safeguarding or prevent issues;
- Details of any criminal offences of learners prior to any learning taking place;
- Their registration onto UKRLP;
- Compliance with the current Department of Education rules and regulations;
- Submission of enrolments, registers and completion;
- Submission of enrolments, registers and completion documentary evidence in a timely and with minimal errors or omissions;
- Contribute to SAR & QIP as required

11.IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

To ensure the subcontracted provision not only meets the standards set out in the Education Inspection Framework and meets expectations of the learner and the employer, Stoke on Trent City Council will at all times contribute to improving a subcontractor's quality of teaching and learning by undertaking:

- Monitoring of provision by making announced and unaccounted visits to the premises where delivery is taking place to satisfy quality audit requirements;
- Observation of teaching, learning and assessment where delivery is taking place;
- Monitoring of attendance evidence, IAG, accreditation and achievement;
- Learner Paperwork, including Initial Assessment documentation, Individualised Learning Plans and Progress Reviews;
- To verify learner authenticity;
- Review meetings;
- Data analysis;
- Health and Safety, audit and quality trail including enrolment, progression and destination;
- Compliments and complaints procedure and review;
- Internal verification;

Stoke-on-Trent City Council will provide to the subcontractor:

- All required documentation to complete and satisfy the requirements of quality assurance, audit and inspection;
- Learner access to Additional Learner Support and Bursary funds where applicable;
- Sample paperwork, including Initial Assessment documentation, Individualised Learning Plans and Progress Reviews upon request;
- Data relating to the sub-contractor' learners;
- Remuneration for services provided based on information supplied by the subcontractor;
- Remuneration will be based on an agreed management fee, where the subcontractor provides inaccurate documentation which exceeds an agreed

percentage the City Council has the right to increase the management fee (please refer to section 7 Remuneration and fees above);

- Subcontractors are responsible for ensuring that they co-operate with Stoke-on-Trent City Council (and its representatives) to ensure compliance with this policy.

11.1 Training

The subcontractor must ensure that all employees linked to the subcontracted service have appropriate qualifications and experience to carry out their role. Notification of Continual Professional Development (CPD) needs to be provided at the start of the agreement and then on a regular basis thereafter.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council may invite subcontractors to attend CPD training events and inform subcontractors of any mandatory training that may be required.

12.POLICY, COMMUNICATION AND REVIEW

Policies including this document, changes to policies and the consequences of those changes are discussed at termly meetings with providers.

This policy is made available to potential subcontractors as part of the commissioning process and is included in the “tender pack”.

The policy is made available to view on the Stoke-on-Trent City Council Website <https://www.stoke.gov.uk>. This policy will be reviewed after any change to statutory requirements, organisational or management change, DfE guidance or otherwise after 1 year.

This policy will next be reviewed in June 2026.