

Appendix 1: CEO Letter

Northern Gateway Enterprise Centre
Saltergate
Chesterfield
S40 1UT

Date: May 2024

Dear Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP

Adult Skills Fund Devolution Readiness 2025/26

I am pleased to be able to confirm to you my belief that the East Midlands Combined County Authority will be ready to take on responsibility for ASF (formerly AEB) functions from the academic year 2025/26 onwards.

As requested, I now enclose our ASF Strategic Skills Plan (SSP). This sets out how we expect to maintain stability in the system in the 1st year and improve the exercise of the statutory functions in the East Midlands County Combined Authority area by identifying our key priorities and objectives and how we will use the devolved functions to achieve those objectives. The SSP will evolve over the next 12-month period and be developed into a wider EMCCA Strategic Skills Strategy. We will work collaboratively with strategic partners and local stakeholders to align the ASF with our other skills investments, funding streams and skills activity. We will continue to build on the ASF SSP to make it an engaging and informative piece for publication on our website, for all stakeholders to understand our current and future position on ASF, and for learning organisations to have clarity on how to work with us and our expectations, supported by the relevant policy and procedural documents.

I also enclose our self-assessment evidence checklist which demonstrates progress to date and that we will be ready to deliver the functions to our residents from the academic year 2025/26. We have included in that checklist current documentation that is utilised in the administration of our devolved functions for the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA). We will keep DfE informed as to how these matters progress.

On that note, we look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible regarding the revised Data Sharing Agreement so that we can access the most up to date "data pack" which we will use to further build on our knowledge of the provider base, and so inform our decisions to ensure the providers in our area deliver provision that meets the current and future skills needs of the EMCCA area, whilst maintaining stability in the provider base.

Our commitment to the successful implementation and operation of the devolved ASF and delegated FCFJ functions is supported by additional roles we will create to manage this important component of the East Midlands Devolution Deal. A senior Programme manager is already in place, with additional roles to be recruited to support the ongoing operational requirements of a devolved ASF function. I can confirm that all relevant departments and colleagues within the new EMCCA area understand their responsibilities in relation to administering a devolved ASF and are committed to ensuring all processes and procedures are compliant with the appropriate legal regulations.

The self-assessment evidence includes our proposed governance structure for the implementation of the devolved ASF. An ASF Implementation Strategy Group is already established consisting of members of the EMCCA's Skills Team alongside colleagues in the four constituent local authority areas.

Our 2 constituent local authorities are key strategic partners in increasing the impact of the devolved ASF. They have a key leadership role in place-shaping and the investment of public funds, alongside specific responsibilities in Education and Training. We are working closely with these local authorities utilising their expertise and experience to ensure ASF delivery meets local needs.

EMCCA has established effective working relationships with existing devolved and other Combined Authorities who are in a similar position to us in terms of ASF Devolution timelines, as well as those who are established. This collaboration is to develop a network within which we can share best practice and lessons learned so that we have a transparent and, where applicable, consistent approach to support the effective roll out of ASF devolution.

We are committed to evolution not revolution and are looking forward to working closely with all relevant stakeholders to target investment where we know we need it most. We want to make the strong connection between economic growth and inclusive growth, providing our residents with the skills, education and confidence to benefit from the opportunities which can be realised from ASF devolution.

I look forward to hearing from you in the very near future.

Yours sincerely