



2018-0017792POAM

Rt Hon Anne Milton MP
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The Lord Bird MBE
By email: birdja@parliament.uk

Dear Lord Bird

A/M 2018

Thank you very much for your email of 12 April, addressed to the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the School System, about lifelong learning and adult education funding. I am replying as the minister responsible for this policy area.

I recognise that reforming the skills system, so that more people of all ages and backgrounds are given opportunities to develop the skills and experience they need, is one of the most important challenges we now face in this country. I am very grateful for the work being done by organisations such as the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) to deliver adult education and foster a culture of lifelong learning. As we continue to develop the skills agenda so that we have the skills and expertise our economy and workforce need for the future, it is vital that people affected by these decisions carry on engaging with us to make sure that the system works for everyone. I therefore welcome the feedback you have provided about this issue on behalf of the WEA.

As you will be aware, transitional arrangements are being put in place for national providers that meet certain criteria, to make sure of stability of provision following the devolution of the Adult Education Budget (AEB). This transitional period of national funding will avoid destabilising provision for vulnerable learners, as well as allowing time for the Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and the Greater London Authority (GLA) to better understand the specialist nature of the provision being delivered.

Under the transition arrangements, eligible providers will be funded nationally for a period of two years following the devolution of the AEB. In order to qualify, providers must:

- be eligible for a residential uplift for their learning provision;
- receive more than two thirds of their income from the AEB, and
- target their provision predominantly at the most disadvantaged in society.

Providers must meet all of these criteria to qualify. The WEA is not eligible for funding under the transitional arrangements, as it does not offer specialist residential provision. As I am sure you will appreciate, we are unable to exclude some providers with a regional or national reach, such as the WEA, and not others who exhibit similar characteristics.

I should explain that, for the 2018-2019 academic year, the AEB will continue to be managed and administered by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). I can confirm that the WEA is in scope to receive an allocation and it has been notified of the amount of funding available to it. Following devolution in 2019-20, providers that currently deliver AEB provision nationally, but which fall outside of the criteria for a two-year period of national funding, will continue to receive funding for the learners residing in non-devolved areas from the ESFA. It will then be for the MCAs and GLA to decide to which providers they award funding in their respective areas.

Devolution presents an excellent opportunity for providers to develop their provision to meet local needs. It is important that providers such as WEA make contact with the MCAs and the GLA to start developing a working relationship and demonstrate the ways in which they can contribute to meeting skills needs locally. Officials from the department will work with providers, MCAs and the GLA to make sure these conversations take place at the appropriate times.

I hope this assures you of my commitment to making sure that the devolution of the AEB is a success.

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Do let me know if I can help
Rt Hon