**COVID-19: Provider Flexibilities**

**Background:**

Through the COVID-19 pandemic, the WMCA recognises that there are emerging needs to support residents to upskill/reskill to find alternative employment following redundancy or respond to new ways of working (e.g. homeworking), and for residents to maintain their own personalised health and well-being through self-isolation and social distancing.

We propose to respond to the challenges of the pandemic through developing a COVID-19 Response covering two core themed activities **Education for Health & Well Being** and **Education for Work**.

**Education for Health & Well Being** focuses purely on personalised health and well-being activity to support residents in the challenges that social-isolation and social distancing can create. Given the community nature of this provision the WMCA will work with its college’s and local authorities in developing this offer. This offer will be funded as part of their current grant allocation.

**Education for Work** will provide opportunities for individuals to upskill/re-skill who are unemployed currently or just lost their job as a result of the pandemic and will also provide opportunities for those in work to adapt to new ways of working through upskilling e.g. digital, team leading. This offer will be made available through ITP, colleges and local authorities. This delivery will form part of current contract allocations.

The table below illustrates the types of offer that we’re likely to see to respond to COVID-19:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Theme** | **Examples of provision to be offered** |
| Education for Health & Well Being (all eligible residents)  Delivered by Colleges & Local Authorities | * Understanding nutrition and health * Improving health through exercise * Awareness of mental health * Digital inclusion * Well-being: Stress and Stress Management |
| Education for Work (employed & unemployed)  Delivered by ITPs, Colleges & Local Authorities | * Employability support including CV writing, IAG * Job matching * Maths and English * Retail * Security * Digital skills for home working e.g. 365 essentials * Team leading * Counselling skills * Understanding technology enabled care * Health and care related programmes |

**Relaxations**

It is relatively straight forward for the WMCA to request that its College and Local Authorities deliver the training outlined as they operate under grant agreements. There are challenges however to enable independent training providers (ITPs) to diversify into this area based on contract for services agreements.

To open this opportunity up to ITP’s, the WMCA is proposing a number of relaxations in our contract agreements and certain funding rules. We will make use of regulation 72 of the Public Contract Regulations 2015. This regulation permits the authority to make material modifications to existing contracts without a further procurement exercise where the need to modify arises from circumstances which a diligent authority could not have foreseen e.g. COVID-19.

Therefore, the following relaxations will apply related to the delivery of COVID-19 response:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Programme** | **Relaxation** |
| AEB | Enable providers operating under contracts for services to deliver additional SSA’s outside of current agreed delivery plan. |
| Enable providers operating under contract for services to work across geographical areas outside current delivery plan. |
| Enable providers operating under contract for services to deliver to both unemployed and employed individuals in delivery plans i.e. Lot 1 and Lot 2 delivery. |
| Pause performance management point 2 (April) reconciliation of contracts for services. |

**Frequently asked question**

**How do I get involved?**

In appendix 1 you will find a template for you to complete which will capture your adult offer, your capability to deliver and the funding amounts which will be ringfenced for this delivery.

**Do I need to have experience to deliver in other SSA’s?**

Yes. We expect you to draw upon knowledge and capability to deliver in other sectors outside of your delivery plan. For example, you may deliver Health & Social Care provision as part of your apprenticeship offer. This would provide a degree of assurance to the WMCA that you have the infrastructure to support this delivery.

**How will this be funded?**

This offer will fall under your current WMCA agreements and therefore can be funded within your current maximum contract value. The WMCA’s current funding rules will apply.

**Do I have to have an online presence to deliver COVID-19 response provision?**

Yes, the WMCA is following government advice related to social distancing. All proposals to deliver COVID-19 response provision but be delivered online. Providers will need to evidence that they have on-line delivery capabilities. There are exceptions that can be considered e.g. key workers falling under current government guidelines.

**What types of provision are you looking for?**

We’re looking for a clear adult offer responding the needs of residents, broadly in line with the table above although this isn’t exhausted. Providers should make it clear within their offer in the need that they’re responding to which formulises the intent in the curriculum.

Providers should also ensure that they have direct claims status to ensure residents achievement can be certified and consider how assessment can take place for those programmes reliant on testing and invigilation conditions e.g. Maths and English.

**Is there anything that the WMCA isn’t looking for?**

We are open to provider submissions on what they can deliver in this challenging climate. It is important to us that we continue to protect the public purse through this pandemic and important that we all act responsibly during this period.

As we have communicated at previous events prior to devolution there were a number of certificate and awards qualifications delivered at scale e.g. employability and infection control with little impact especially when delivered as stand-alone qualifications. We will continue to monitor the use of these qualifications which through on-line learning can be delivered at much lower cost than the published LARS funded rate. Therefore, it is important that providers do not assume that the WMCA will pay LARS funded rates.

**What about Health and Social Care?**

Understandably, there is interest in Health and Social Care provision and there is a clear need to prepare individuals for work in this area given the current COVID-19 outbreak. The WMCA in responding to this urgent demand is putting a call to it providers who have expertise to deliver an accelerated on-line learning programme consisting of:

* Food Safety e-learning
* Health and Safety e-learning
* Equality and Diversity
* Safeguarding Children
* Infection prevention and control
* Manuel Handling

Given the pressure on time we expect that this delivery will be non-accredited short and sharp online delivery, consisting a total of 12 hrs of on-line delivery at a rate of £101 per learner. To support progression into work through this model the WMCA will also consider job outcome payment proposals from providers.

**How will my submission be evaluated?**

Responses will be evaluated individually on a case by case basis Where we have questions, we will come back to you to seek clarification. We do want to move quickly to enable you to move forward with your response.

**Why can’t ITP’s deliver Education for Well-Being?**

The WMCA is keen to maintain community learning amongst its community learning provider base, and personalised health and well-being fits within the ethos of community learning and we’re not wanting to displace this activity with the wider provider base.

**Should I stop what I’m doing in terms of my current delivery plan?**

No. Please continue delivering your agreed plan. However, we appreciate that due to COVID-19 you may be experiencing recruitment issues that will in turn create headroom in your agreements for you to deliver COVID-19 response provision.

**Is this an opportunity for growth funding?**

No. At this moment in time providers may be experiencing issues in delivering their current delivery plan. For ITP’s we are pausing the performance management point 2 to enable providers to establish this offer. Through the relaxations we are providing, we expect providers to act responsibly and in the spirit of what we are trying to achieve. Therefore, it’s important to set out a clear need to support the intent in your offer.

**Does this apply to sub-contractors?**

Yes, for current declared approved sub-contractors. Contract holders must ensure that the sub-contractor has the on-line presence and capability to deliver the offer. This will not be available to any sub-contractors who may be part of a supply chain who have an Ofsted 4, or have had a monitor visit related to Adult Skills and have been found to be making insufficient progress.

**Do I have to deliver this?**

No. It’s up to the provider to decide if they wish to establish an COVID-19 response offer. We do appreciate that due to COVID-19 you may be experiencing recruitment issues that will in turn create headroom in your agreements for you to deliver COVID-19 response provision

**What are the timelines?**

We are asking that providers submit their responses by the 13th April 2020 in the instance. We appreciate in this fast-moving situation providers may wish to submit further requests and we will accept these through your nominated compliance officer. Providers can submit responses earlier and we will seek to respond as quickly as possible. COVID-19 Response is a short-term offer and is limited to the April to June period. We will review the position to extend beyond June based on government COVID-19 advice.

**How will the WMCA know that I’m delivering COVID-19 response?**

We will provide DAM code to enable you to flag learners as COVID-19 beneficiaries.