



DfE Investigation Outcome report

Provider: East Durham College

Background

The Department for Education (DfE or “the Department”) investigated concerns relating to the Adult Education Budget (AEB) and associated Learning Support funding claimed by and paid to East Durham College (EDC or “the college”). The concerns involved the accuracy of:

- college funding claims, and
- college records supporting funding claims.

Outcomes of the investigation

DfE examined EDC documents and records for the funding years 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24. The investigation identified that some records that EDC relied on to support its funding claims did not meet the requirements of the AEB programme funding rules, and that some EDC data submitted to DfE was inaccurate.

The following breaches of the DfE funded adult education budget funding and performance management rules and education and skills funding contract were identified. Rules and contract clauses cited below are those that were in effect at the time of the issues identified, and may not be current.

Framework	Breach	Issue
ESFA funded adult education budget: funding and performance management rules 2021 to 2022 Adult education budget: funding and performance management rules 2022 to 2023 , and 2023 to 2024 .	2021 to 2022 – P47 Rule 203 (203.2 and 203.3). AEB Learning Support evidential requirements. 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024 – Learning Support. “You must: ...keep all evidence of the assessment of the needs, planned and actual delivery.”	Unsupported claims for Learning Support. The college did not provide: • evidence of learner assessment to identify any learning difficulties and / or disabilities; • evidence of what reasonable adjustment(s) were needed; and • evidence of planned or actual delivery of such adjustments.

Framework	Breach	Issue
Adult education budget: funding and performance management rules: 2023 to 2024	2022-23 Starting, Participating and Achieving. “You can only claim ESFA funded AEB when directly related learning starts.”	A funding claim was made although no learning had been delivered.
Education and skills funding contract 2023 to 2024. NOTE: This is an unpublished college contract. This clause is published in the Accountability agreement 2024 to 2025 (colleges) .	5.1.2 “The College undertakes to the Department to submit accurate data.”	There was a discrepancy between college data submissions made to DfE and learner evidence pack records.
ESFA funded adult education budget: funding and performance management rules 2021 to 2022 Adult education budget: funding and performance management rules 2022 to 2023 , and 2023 to 2024 .	2021 to 2022 – P24 rule 89 and P25 rule 94.10. 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024 – Evidence Pack section. “The evidence pack must contain evidence to support the funding claimed and must be available to us if we need it.” The evidence pack must confirm: “that learning is taking or has taken place ... and records are available.”	A funding claim was made but the evidence pack did not include evidence of learning.

Framework	Breach	Issue
ESFA funded adult education budget: funding and performance management rules 2021 to 2022 Adult education budget: funding and performance management rules 2022 to 2023	2021 to 2022 –P20 Rule 67. 2022 to 2023 – Qualifying days for funding. “A learner must be in learning for a minimum number of days between their learning start date and learning planned end date before you can earn funding.”	The college claimed funding for learners who did not satisfy the qualifying period.

Action

Corrective action has been taken:

- The DfE identified funding errors totalling £3,273.62. This comprised overclaims of £3,143.41 and an underclaim of £130.21.
- The college has fully corrected the errors found.
- The college reviewed the investigation findings and has implemented improvements to its procedures across all issues raised, making additional funding corrections where necessary.

Prevention

Upon the conclusion of the investigation, DfE undertook a prevention analysis exercise to establish what could have been done to prevent the breaches that were identified in the investigation.

Issue	Prevention
Unsupported claims for Learning Support. The college did not provide: • evidence of learner assessment to identify any learning difficulties and / or disabilities; • evidence of what reasonable adjustment(s) were needed; and • evidence of planned or actual delivery of such adjustments.	Colleges should have detailed and up to date knowledge of how to deliver and administer Learning Support. The college should ensure Learning Support data returns and funding claims made to DfE comply with the contract and funding rules requirements.

Issue	Prevention
A funding claim was made although no learning had been delivered.	Colleges should have robust data quality assurance processes in place to ensure that only learners in receipt of compliant programme delivery are included in data returns and funding claims.
There was a discrepancy between college data submissions made to DfE and learner evidence pack records.	Colleges should ensure consistency between their records of education and training delivery and the compiled returns of programme delivery data submitted to DfE.
A funding claim was made but the evidence pack did not include evidence of learning.	College staff should have knowledge of funding eligibility requirements, and specifically of how to compile compliant learner evidence packs.
The college claimed funding for learners who did not satisfy the qualifying period.	Colleges should have effective controls in place to ensure that funding eligibility criteria are met in full.
General Cross-Cutting Issue.	College senior managers and governance boards should have effective oversight and control including checks / audit to ensure that all data returns supplied to DfE are accurate and supported by compliant evidence packs.