

Pendle UKSPF Project Selection report

Investment theme: People & Skills

Year 3 – 2024 to 2025

E37: Available project funds allocation - Revenue	£54,528.00
E37: Available project funds allocation - Capital	£16,267

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Intervention E37

Purpose: Skills to progress in work and to fund local skills needs

Description: Tailored support to help people in employment, who are not supported by mainstream provision to address barriers to accessing education and training courses.

Objective:

Supporting local areas to fund gaps in local skills provision to support people to progress in work, and supplement local adult skills provision e.g. by providing additional volumes; delivering provision through wider range of routes or enabling more intensive/innovative provision, both qualification based and non-qualification based. This should be supplementary to provision available through national employment and skills programmes.

Examples: none

Levelling Up Missions:

Mission 1: By 2030, pay, employment and productivity will have risen in every area of the UK, with each containing a globally competitive city, with the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.

Background: People & Skills

It was the original design of the UKSPF programme that funding for People & Skills should not be allocated prior to Year 3 of the programme unless projects were 'at risk' of their existing ESIF funding expiring prior to the commencement of Year 3. Government have since updated this guidance to say that People and Skills can be allocated prior to Year 3 of the programme. This does not have much consequence for Pendle which, like many other authorities, had already made good progress with its selected projects for its whole UKSPF programme by the time this change was announced.

A single allocation of revenue funding was placed into the E37 Intervention, for the Pendle UKSPF Investment Plan, to be allocated in Year 3 of the programme.

Government stated that minimum levels of each areas UKSPF allocation must be given over to Capital spending. In the interests of fairness and need this was split across the programme overall, in each year, with some Capital going into each of the three Themes of the programme; Community & Place, Supporting Local Business, People and Skills.

2024/25 UKSPF E37	Available spend within Intervention
Revenue allocation	£ 52,528.00
Capital allocation	£16,267.00

This split seemed sensible and fair at the time, and met with the approval of the Pendle Local Investment Group. In hindsight, as planning has progressed and it has become clearer the types of activity which will be funded under E37, the capital element appears to be misaligned. Skills providers will be required to deliver a revenue based programme of support and would have little need of the Capital. Especially given the low value of E37 overall.

Process for Shortlisting projects

In order to identify projects which could deliver for the E37 Intervention, the proposals put forward for consideration previously as part of Pendle's UKSPF planning to identify projects to fund, were returned to for review.

Under the planning process, a competitive grant round was undertaken in which organisations submitted proposals and then applications to the council for consideration for UKSPF funding. These submissions formed a closed pool of applicants which was narrowed down based on best fit to the programme. Primarily whether a project fit the requirements of the Intervention being considered against ability to meet the required outputs and outcomes, ability to fit the spend profile, either on its own or in combination with other suitable providers and considerations including value for money and whether a project was advanced enough to meet the required timescales for the programme.

A key consideration when selecting projects for the earlier Community & Place theme and Supporting Local Business theme was whether a project was ready to commence and deliver, owing to the extremely short timescales remaining in the first year of the programme.

A similar consideration is required in the selection of Year 3 projects (2024/25) in that the timescales available to a delivery partner will be short. As such successful delivery is required in a single year. Sufficient existing experience is therefore essential for success. There is little time for lead-in time, providers must have the ability to hit the ground running.

As part of the shortlisting process organisations were given the opportunity to self-identify which Interventions they thought their project best matched. From this process several organisations put forward projects they felt could be suitable for delivery of E37 but upon review it was evident that in fact only two would actually be suitable for E37 and this was further narrowed down to one single project.

There are a number of individual reasons why other projects were not suitable including unsuitability to the needs of the Intervention, inexperience of the provider in the services required to be delivered, unsuitability to the budget profile, risk of duplication of services, risk of not being able to deliver the required outcomes and outputs and poor performance of an existing programme.

These submissions were reviewed by the Pendle UKSPF Lead alongside the Lancashire Skills Hub (who are members of our Local Partnership Group), as well as Pendle Council's Principal Localities, Communities & Policy Officer and the resulting decisions confirmed by the Head of Place.

This leaves one suitable projects remaining who is able to deliver against, and who have asked to be considered for, Intervention E37.

The remaining project recommended for selection is:

- The University of Central Lancashire (UCLan); Upskilling.

The team at UCLan deliver an existing ERDF funded programme called Upskilling Lancashire, in which they deliver funded Leadership and Management skills to employees in the workforce across Lancashire. As such they have the skills and experience to deliver such training and have the engagement experience with businesses also.

The UKSPF Lead has considered other options to this also.

During summer 2023 The Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub (part of the Lancashire LEP) offered Lancashire UKSPF district leads the opportunity for the skills hub to procure districts People and Skills needs on their behalf. This seemed like an idea worth considering given the Skills Hub know the individual skills needs of each borough, based on evidence and demand from prior programmes. They also have the contacts within training organisations. And the proposal indicated that it would achieve greater value for money by boosting the collective buying power of districts.

The identified skills needs for Pendle include:

- Leadership and Management
- digital skills eg social media for businesses,
- warehousing skills
- Upskilling in Health & Social Care.

The proposed procurement exercise to be undertaken by the Skills Hub would have constituted a fresh 'procurement' round met the requirement for competitive process. Unfortunately by late August 2023 this proposal was withdrawn by the Skills Hub due to lack of engagement from other Lancashire authorities, resulting in time wasted for Pendle.

UCLan were one of the skills providers who would have been part of the skills hub process, for Leadership and Management. The same skills provision already being considered with UCLan directly, by Pendle.

Other providers who would have been approached for the delivery of a service by the Skills Hub were private sector organisations delivering non-accredited training eg private organisations who deliver digital training such as social media training or cyber awareness etc.

The Skills Hub reconfirmed to the Pendle UKSPF Lead that they considered the UCLan offer to be one which met both the E37 criteria and a need for Pendle. The UKSPF Lead for Pendle then returned to this proposal, as originally planned. Having once more considered its content and the known skills needs identified for Pendle, this appears to be a fit for the Intervention.

UCLan are confident of meeting the targets for the limited allocation of funds, and are working with officers on a delivery plan which would best meet UKSPF and Investment Plan requirements.

About the provider; its suitability and benefits

University of Central Lancashire (UCLan)

UCLan is one of three universities within Lancashire. Located primarily in Preston but with a growing campus locally in Burnley. The university are a central pillar of the Lancashire business support and skills eco-system, having delivered multiple European funding contracts within the community over recent years.

As a result its teams are adapt at engaging with businesses, providing quality skills provision and are experienced in programme management of external funds. They already have an Upskilling team, put together for European funded programme delivery and as such are able to hit the ground running. There will be little time for lead-in.

One advantage that the university has over other, private sector, providers of “training” is that they are not skills providers. They provide “training”, whereas the university is an accredited skills provider.

The formal UKSPF output definition requires recipients to gain qualifications or licences. The level of funding placed into E37 is not enough to provide whole accredited courses to the number of people required for the Output target, but the university are well placed to deliver formal units or workshop based training and provide university certification for this.

Project description

The actual parameters for the programme of Leadership and Management training to employees for Pendle UKSPF is in development with officers of Pendle Council. This will be an adaptation of the original proposal designed as a pan-Lancashire continuation of the full European funded programme.

This programme will address the skills needs of local businesses in order to lead to greater prosperity and pride in local places. The approach can adapted to respond to Pendle’s specific circumstances.

In order to address the analysis deficit within the SME community, the programme will build upon the Upskilling Lancashire programme and maximise the expertise that has been developed.

The Upskilling Lancashire programme a present delivers the following interventions:

- Business-needs analysis
- Identifying areas for capacity building and development for the workforce
- Skills reviews
- Strategic planning
- Information and advice on accessing Levy support for education and training where applicable
- Mentoring and leadership development
- Networking opportunities

- Placements

The Pendle programme will be more limited in nature, but will adapt to respond to Pendle's specific circumstances.

Over the four years of the present European funded programme, Upskilling Lancashire has engaged with nearly 600 businesses across all 14 Lancashire authorities, including nearly 60 SME in Pendle (10% of the total). This number of interventions evidences demand by businesses for upskilling support within the Borough of Pendle and highlights the potential for increasing skills deficits, and in turn drops in productivity and growth potential, should this programme not receive funding.

The recent Lancashire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) highlights that 90% of Lancashire's 54,000 businesses employ fewer than 10 people. One result of this is that employers in Lancashire frequently have neither the time nor the systems in place to continuously analyse the skills required in their businesses to grow and thrive which is compounded by businesses' concerns around cost and appropriateness of provision. This in turn means that local businesses, especially SMEs, are unable to fulfil their full socioeconomic potential and in turn grow the wider economy. This programme will benefit those smaller businesses in Pendle. Equally, the support is able

The LSIP recommended that "it would help many more employers to understand their skill development needs and enable them to engage more meaningfully with further education (FE) if there was a central point that could offer signposting, advice, information and skills needs analysis." It further concluded that there is a need for external assistance carrying out needs analysis and for assistance to introduce emerging and future skills to relevant employers and facilitate thoughts on how this will impact their business and future training needs.

The result of this is that the potential of businesses has not yet been fully realised within Lancashire's communities, including Pendle. UKSPF's focus on business support and skills offers the opportunity to take further steps towards realising this potential.

Spend Profile – People & Skills, Year 3; E37

The level of funding within E37 is limited and level of outputs to be achieved relatively high. Pendle would like to invest in high quality provision, of the type which a university can provide. As the only suitable provider within the funding round, it is proposed that UCLan be the sole provider of E37.

2024/25 UKSPF E37	Available spend within Intervention
Revenue allocation	£ 52,528.00
Capital allocation	£16,267.00

The university has confirmed that it would not require the Capital allocation. As a result this could be transferred into another Intervention, benefiting the Pendle UKSPF Investment Plan and its other projects.

Meeting of Outputs and Outcomes

The university has told the UKSPF Lead that it is confident of meeting the number of outputs and outcomes requested by Pendle and the most appropriate method for delivering this is currently being worked up with officers.

Required outputs and outcomes for E37 (Pendle)

Output	Outcome
Number of people in employment engaging with the skills system (numerical value)	Number of people gaining qualifications, licences and skills (numerical value)
60	42

Value for money

Pendle Council has a duty to consider value for money in the allocation of UKSPF funding. Value for money has been considered, first in the undertaking of a competitive grant round where multiple providers were given the opportunity to put costed projects forward which would be suitable to our programme. This resulted ultimately in one suitable project.

Value for money has been considered again by working with the Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub on an exercise to undertake 'collective purchasing' of providers for multiple authorities. This collective bargaining power could have resulted in greater value for money for each authority. Unfortunately this did not work out and the skills hub withdraw its proposal to districts.

Conclusion

Overall we have considered; the ability to deliver the required services and achieve outputs and outcomes, the ability to deliver within the timeframe available and value for money. Overall the outcome is considered to be a suitable one.

The case for projects

Uclan upskilling
Relation to the Investment Plan
Selected as a project to be supported following submission of the Investment Plan. Selection of this project would compliment the Investment Plan by supporting local businesses as well as the skills needs of individuals. Additional benefits will be in the form of, for example, productivity benefits to businesses, which is complimentary to the outputs of E19.
Meets the spend profiles
Is confident that it can provide an adaptable programme which will meet the spend profile.
Matching outputs and outcomes
Is confident that, by working with the authority to determine the most appropriate delivery model, it is able to meet the required outputs and outcomes.
Credibility as a delivery partner
Excellent. They have a lot of experience of delivering externally funded programmes and managing schemes like the one proposed.
Match funding (value for money)
The provider does not bring match funding. They are only able to undertake delivery if funded. Match funding is not mandatory for UKSPF. More important is that the funds are used to deliver strong services for the borough.
Delivering in other interventions
No. but does complement the investment plan on other ways, as already described.
Inclusivity
Yes. Will be open to any employee of Pendle, in an enterprise engaged with for support. There is no geographic or sectoral barrier to which businesses will be worked with.
Is this an existing funded programme seeking UKSPF as replacement funding eg ESF or another fund
Yes. This would be replacement provision for the loss of ERDF.

Recommendation

The recommendation is that the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) is selected for delivery of Pendle E37

Appendix 1. Projects considered not suitable for Pendle UKSPF E37

Intervention ticked:

E33	E34	E35	E37
	X		X

Project

Reason for unsuitability:

Its purpose is to target the low level mental health needs of employees (in employment already). It had relevance post-covid when individuals returned to work after the societal upheaval of the pandemic. Healthy workforce, healthy business. The programme is a good idea but in practice it has not worked well in Lancashire and take up from business has been slow and difficult, including in Pendle. The view of the Skills Hub is that it can be considered tried and tested but did not work.

The in-work nature of the project means that it is not suitable for E34 whose purpose is to support people furthest from the labour market

it is suited to E37 but is believed not to have worked well in practice. Additionally there has been performance issues with the programme, giving rise to doubt over its ability to achieve the required results.

Intervention ticked:

E33	E34	E35	E37
X	X	X	X

Project

Reason for unsuitability:

The Skills Hub noted that this provider are an experienced provider and are satisfied with them as an organisation for us to work with for E33, E34 and E35. They already carry out activities to support economic inactivity, for which there is a need in Pendle.

However this could result in duplication/competition with activity from the proposed Selnet/Active Lancashire Step Change programme which this provider is already a sub-contractor for and which has already been selected for support within the Investment Plan and is being considered for further support in Year 3. Their application reads as a request to continue these same activities of Step Change, as well as other funded programmes they deliver on behalf of such as Invest in Youth, which would duplicate existing provision at the YES Hub.

The E37 aspect of their proposal was focussed on one specific sub-sector of business, which would not provide an inclusive programme of support to all enterprise types and sizes. Whether this one-fit approach could be adapted to all sectors or whether they have the experience to do so, or the engagement contacts to hit the ground running with a more generalised offer was not made clear but likely indicates their experience in a niche market.

Intervention ticked:

E33	E34	E35	E37
X	X	X	X

Project:**Reason for unsuitability:**

The Skills Hub consider that these sorts of co-ordinator roles do have a value in promoting provision and connecting individuals to available support.

However, it is thought to be incompatible with the requirements of the programme in that sign posting and co-ordinating will not itself deliver the required outputs and outcomes. Where the sign-posting is to other UKSPF funded programmes in Pendle this would result in a duplication of outputs reported. Also, this provider already has infrastructure in place for referrals to their own courses so there would be no need to duplicate this through UKSFP funding. There might also be some overlap in the 16-24 age category with existing provision at the YES.

Intervention ticked:

E33	E34	E35	E37
X	X	X	X

Project:**Reason for unsuitability:**

The Skills Hub are not familiar with this provider as a provider of skills based programmes and would question whether they have delivered the type of support we require before? How this project fits to the particular brief / requirements, What impact has this support had already? and What outputs and outcomes have they met previously?

The officer from the Policy and Localities team notes that the proposal seems to be on generic advice and not linked to employment support. The Skills Hub questioned how the same generic proposals for the support would ultimately result in the required skills outcomes. Examples include debt advice, mental health well being, cohesion, developing self-efficacy.

The proposal appears to seek to support people with a need to find employment, rather than supporting those in-work and there is no demonstrated experience of an ability to engage with enterprises in the work place.

Some providers try to make a project fit, rather than self-excluding themselves if the project does not fit. Which has the effect of trying to shoe horn a project into categories it is not meeting. It was thought this was the case here.