

# WEA Accountability Agreement – 2024/25

wea.org.uk



Adult Learning  
Within Reach





## Purpose

Our charitable mission is to bring adult education within reach of everyone who needs it, fighting inequality and promoting social justice.

**54%** of our learners come from a disadvantaged postcode

**49%** started on income related benefits

**50%** had no or low qualifications

## Our charitable mission

**The WEA is a leading education charity with a legacy that stretches back over 120 years. We empower adults by bringing great teaching to local communities across England and Scotland, reaching tens of thousands of learners each year.**

The WEA is here to bring education to individuals for the benefit of the community. We believe every adult should have access to education and its benefits right on their doorstep. Currently, the opportunity for a better future is too often made inaccessible for reasons including cost, location and a lack of information. We are committed to removing any barriers so that individuals can improve their own life chances and have a positive impact on their communities and society as a whole.

We are different from further education colleges. We reach into communities where learners live and work to deliver learning in surroundings they are familiar with and comfortable in. Our smaller class sizes mean learners get more personal care, attention and support and we teach to a person, not to a qualification or an award. We achieve this by working in partnership with over 100 community-based venues and local networks across the UK and with like-minded partners internationally.

**To read our Creating Opportunities: the WEA Strategy in full, visit [wea.org.uk/resources/wea-strategy](http://wea.org.uk/resources/wea-strategy)**



**90%**

of the UK workforce (30 million) will need to re-skill by 2030.

(CBI/McKinsey, 2021)

**11 MILLION**

of people in the UK lack essential digital skills.

(Lloyds, 2021)

**4** in **5**

adults in the UK have a low level of numeracy.

(National Numeracy, 2022)

**7.1 million**

adults in the UK have very poor literacy.

(National Literacy Trust, 2022)

**5** in **1**

members of the UK labour market (an estimated 6.2 million workers) in the last year experienced severely insecure work.

(The Work Foundation, 2022)

**1** in **3**

members of the workforce in England are aged 50 or over. (Ageing for Better, 2022)

**Over 7 Million**

working age adults in the UK do not have a level 2 (GCSE or equivalent) qualification

(ONS, 2021)

**43%**

(1.7 million) of unemployed 16–64 year olds say they would like to be in work.

(Learning and Work Institute, 2022)

**62%**

of UK unemployed adults are long term unemployed.

(OECD, 2022)

**250,000**

more over-50s are economically inactive since the pandemic.

(ONS, 2022)

**43%**

of unemployed people have poor mental health.

(Health Foundation, 2021)

FOUR IN **TEN**

working-age adults with no qualifications are living in poverty, compared to 1 in 10 with a degree or more.

(JRF, 2022)

**26%**

of adults don't speak to their neighbours or members of the community on a regular/monthly basis.

(UK Gov, 2021)

**6%**

of adults say they feel lonely often or always.

(ONS, 2022)

Because we need to reach learners who have often struggled with core subjects such as maths and English and have often left school with no or low qualifications and a lasting knock to their confidence. We also need to reach into communities where lack of fulfilment is the experience of generation after generation in the UK, as well as those integrating into our society from other countries as refugees and asylum-seekers who have no or little experience of formal education.

Because we listen to the needs of communities, employers and unions, we can match local and national skills priorities to support the workforce with employees with teamworking skills, flexibility and problem solving, or a knowledge of critical sectors such as health and social care, customer service, for example, as well as those who need advanced technical skills or a knowledge of the sciences.



Because we listen to the interests, passions and skills needs of our learners, when we make our choices as to what we teach, and how we network with our series of community organisations and local employers to facilitate their desired learning outcomes.



**We can't imagine a time when the WEA could be more needed than today as the UK adjusts to living with COVID-19 and recovers from the economic and social impact of lockdowns and the war in Ukraine. The need for adult learning which is within reach, within every community, couldn't be greater.**



### **We are here for those adults.**

Our classes help develop skills for life, skills for jobs and skills to cope with social isolation and improve physical and mental health. We want to give everyone opportunity, and make sure no one is left behind. To do this, we need to be agile, responsive, and imaginative in the way we use the funds entrusted to us. The WEA receives and manages substantial public and charitable funding, from newly devolved combined authorities, from central government and via a range of other sources. We currently deliver to learners in all regions of England.

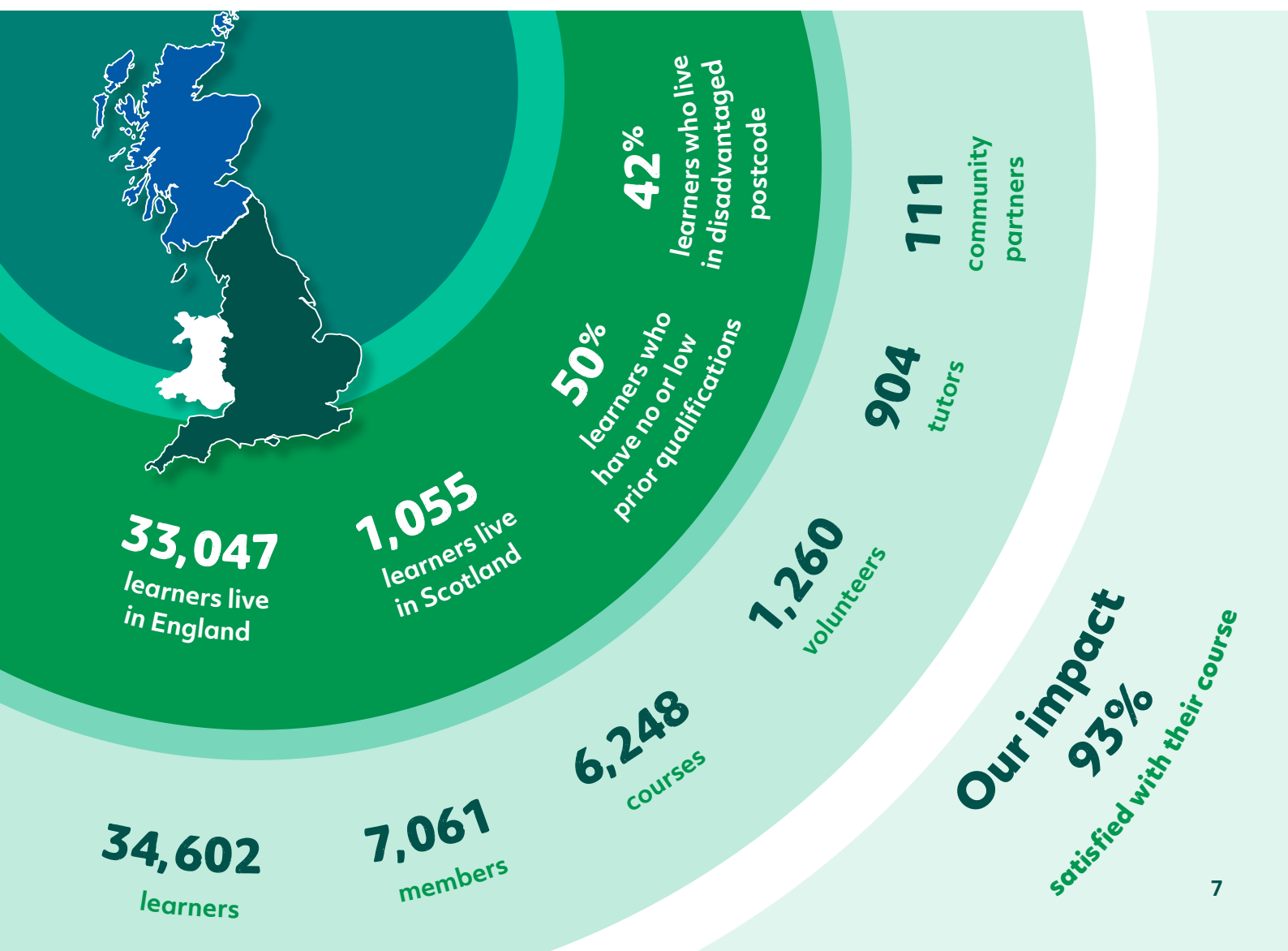
The WEA receives and manages substantial public and charitable funding, from newly devolved combined authorities, from central government and via a range of other sources. The priorities of our funders are changing. The UK Government is committed to lifelong learning and investing in education, but its focus is significantly on higher level skills for jobs, to the exclusion of anything else for reducing investment in other important outcomes.





The critical role of more basic skills training, or the role other subjects play in building confidence, supporting mental health and enticing adults back into education, is not well understood. We are confident that our curriculum will help us navigate the next three years. And, we are determined to ensure that we provide value for money, making every penny go as far as we can, so that as many people as possible benefit from the life-changing learning we provide.

We can't imagine a time when the WEA could be more needed than today as the UK redefines its position on the global stage post Brexit, adjusts to living with Covid-19, recovers from the economic and social impact of lockdowns and responds to the war in Ukraine. The need for adult learning which is within reach, within every community, nationally and internationally couldn't be greater.



# Approach to developing the Annual Accountability statement

We have sought to engage with all LSIPs (including early engagement with both the LSIP Trailblazers and the British Chambers of Commerce (the Employer Representative Body for each of the Trailblazers)) in our approach to developing our curriculum. We have joined strategic planning sessions with our Local Authority, Combined Mayoral Authority and Greater London Authority partners. We continue to work closely with our employers, employer groups and trade unions on its shape and design. Given the breadth of our work, we extend this out extensively to work with other partners, including community and faith groups, other charities and a wide range of third sector organisations.

Our regional teams are experts at working with partners on identifying a broad range of education need in their areas. This granular approach not only considers labour market information and vacancies, but also job trends, future needs, local skills and education strategies and industry/sectoral research. We also consider key demographics and deprivation data to better target our curriculum to need.

We carefully consider pathways and how we can support the in and out flow of learner through progression to other providers and services.

Among other duties, our regional and national governance will play a critical role in challenging our regional teams' planning assumptions during curriculum planning. Non-executive Advisory Groups in each region will provide support and challenge to the executive teams to ensure the ongoing alignment of the curriculum to identified need throughout the year. The Advisory Groups together play an important role in ensuring that WEA's Board of Trustees have a clear line of sight into the learner experience, the quality of provision, and the delivery of programmes aligned to our charitable mission in each locality where WEA operates.







## Contribution to national, regional, local priorities

From our regional needs assessments, our teams create a curriculum plan aligned to our three strategic curriculum objectives: learning for life, work and communities, with learning for work principally focused on local skills priorities, with a sectoral focus in Health, Social Care, Education, Digital, Languages, and includes Mathematics, English, and Employability learning.



Our Head of Curriculum aggregates local plans and considers an appropriate national online skills offer to create a responsive curriculum aligned to priorities, including larger Level 3 technical qualifications in priority sector areas. It is noted that we will not always have full alignment to all priority areas (local and national), given areas of existing expertise and need, as well as access costs and existing competition in areas such as Manufacturing and Engineering. We do, however, maintain a constant review of this.



# Curriculum Priorities

## Priority 1: Learning for life

We believe that open access to adult education creates a more equal and just society and improves outcomes for our learners in terms of health, wellbeing and independence. It helps individuals meet challenges such as social isolation, lack of confidence and low self-esteem.

We will design and deliver a curriculum that will engage adults to develop essential skills, improve their everyday life and the knowledge and confidence to achieve their personal goals and connect with their community.

### In the next three years you will see that the WEA is:

- ▶ Using a granular understanding of need that targets local issues and produces a curriculum which is responsive. This will maximise our impact and improve the lives of learners
- ▶ Working closely with new and existing partners to build on our successes and increase our reach to learners and communities
- ▶ Making our learning even more accessible, when and how our learners need it



For most of my life I was told by others I would not amount to anything. The WEA helped me turned myself around and I now run my own charity and act as an advisor to others

**Jo**  
WEA learner





**My course built my confidence and prepared me for my role as a support worker for adults with mental and physical disabilities**

**Fatima**  
WEA learner



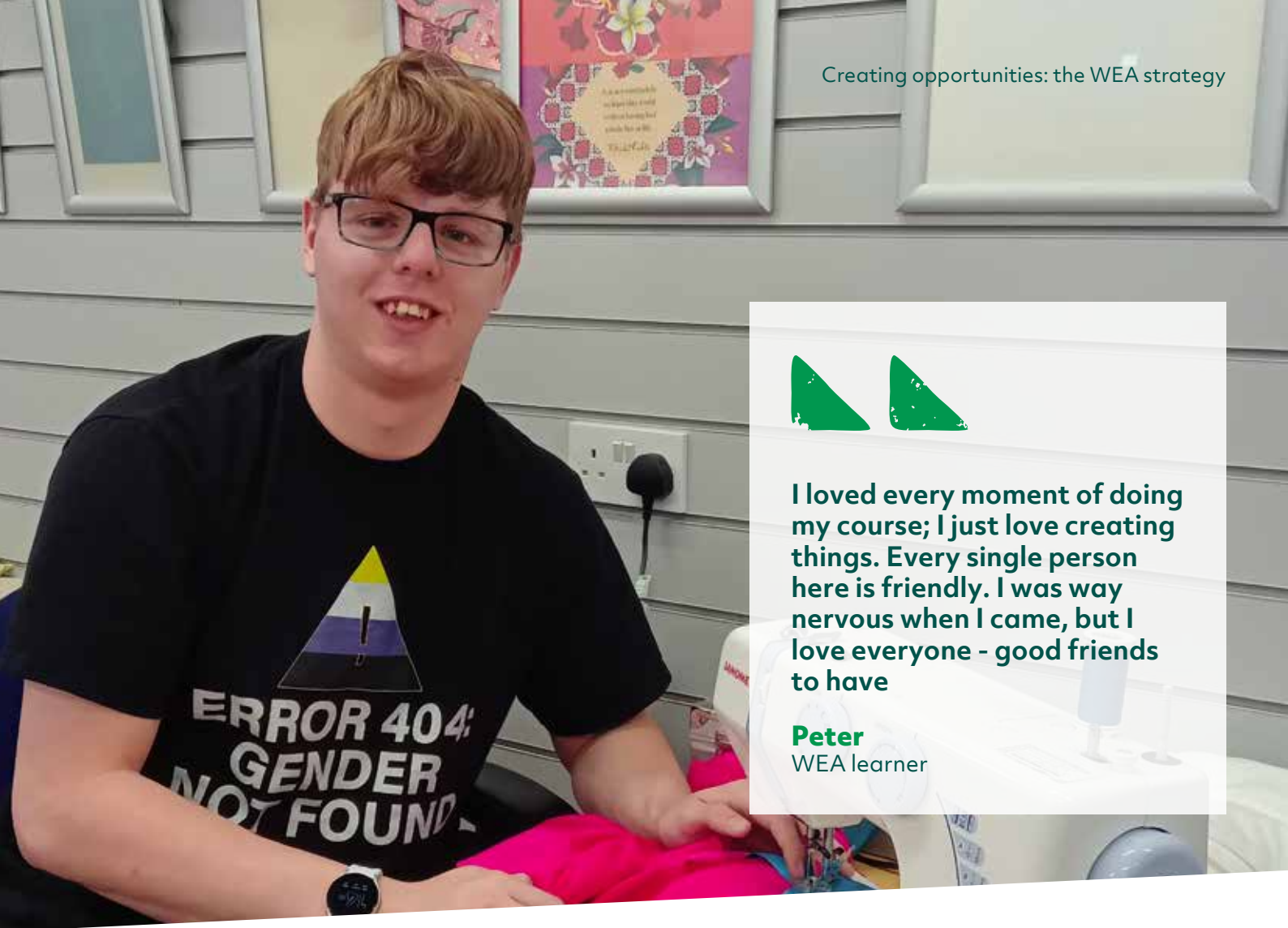
## Priority 2: Learning for Work

We believe that all people deserve good, sustainable work, and the opportunity to maximise their personal potential and their contribution to society. Through a needs-based curriculum, an innovative and learner-driven approach to teaching, learning and assessment, and individualised personalised support we can enable individuals to truly flourish.

We will design and deliver a dynamic skills and employability offer, matched to local and national need, and continually shaped by working in partnership with employers and employer groups.

### In the next three years you will see that the WEA is:

- ▶ Continuing to proactively support learners, regardless of their starting point, by supporting them into work and to progress at work
- ▶ Offering clearer pathways for learners, from building firm foundation skills to progression into higher level skills learning
- ▶ Targeting our curriculum around a selection of key employment sectors and partners which will provide good, sustainable careers to create job opportunities and work experience for our learners



I loved every moment of doing my course; I just love creating things. Every single person here is friendly. I was way nervous when I came, but I love everyone - good friends to have

**Peter**  
WEA learner

## Priority 3: Learning That Builds Communities

We believe that vibrant and inclusive communities promote health, happiness, and success at both an individual and community level. WEA learning networks bring communities together.

We will design and deliver learning networks which inspire passions, ignite friendships and bring communities together, enhancing their purpose and providing them with the skills and knowledge to make them self-sufficient. The creation of a WEA family with reciprocal benefits for the individual and their local community will deliver a social contract – creating a responsibility to others and a desire to promote social justice.

### In the next three years you will see that the WEA is:

- ▶ Supporting and developing self-funded, efficient, and effective learning communities
- ▶ Building relations with partners and learner networks to enhance their communities and deliver our mission
- ▶ Making our learning even more accessible, when and how our learners need it



**I would recommend the WEA. The course prepared me for day-to-day work scenarios and opened my mind to different perspectives. The tutor helped me find my voice**

**Grace**  
WEA learner



## **Overarching priority: Quality and learner success**

We believe that all WEA learners deserve an outstanding level of teaching and learning to maximise their chances of success and be provided with additional support to help them overcome their barriers to learning.

We will provide all learners with exceptional service, high professional standards resulting in an excellent quality learning experience which caters for their needs. Our aspirations surpass compliance, striving to continually improve our teaching. We will embrace technology to improve learner engagement and make learning more accessible wherever our learners live. We will improve our learners' understanding of the outcomes possible and support them to track and celebrate their achievements. We will provide tailored and timely advice, guidance and support for their learning.

### **In the next three years you will see that the WEA is:**

- ▶ Recognised as a Good or Outstanding provider of education and skills
- ▶ Recognised as visionary and innovative in our teaching of skills within the sector
- ▶ Ensuring quality and performance improvement initiatives are applied to every element of the WEA's work in order to constantly review and improve upon the provision and the services it provides

# Local Needs Duty

In response to The Skills Act (2022), Trustees have conducted a review of our delivery, determining how well our curriculum meets local needs across each of our strategic objectives.

The review considered our approach to identifying need through local needs assessment, how this informed curriculum planning and how managers used self-assessment processes to determine how well we met need.

The review also considered our stakeholder engagement and how we work with a broad range of partners to reach into communities.

It also considered the relevant findings and recommendations from our recent Ofsted report and used these to inform a series of improvement actions and activities.

## Corporation statement

I, John Widdowson, Chair of the Board of Trustees for the WEA, recommend this statement as a true reflection of the work and ambitions of the WEA.



**John Widdowson**  
Chair of Trustees, WEA



### This can be found digitally at



[wea.org.uk/resources/wea-accountability-statement](https://wea.org.uk/resources/wea-accountability-statement)

### Supporting documentation

<b>WEA Strategy -</b>	<a href="https://wea.org.uk/resources/wea-strategy">wea.org.uk/resources/wea-strategy</a>
<b>WEA Impact Report -</b>	<a href="https://wea.org.uk/about-us/our-impact">wea.org.uk/about-us/our-impact</a>
<b>WEA Governance -</b>	<a href="https://wea.org.uk/about-us/governance">wea.org.uk/about-us/governance</a>
<b>WEA Ofsted Report -</b>	<a href="https://wea.org.uk/resources/ofsted-report">wea.org.uk/resources/ofsted-report</a>
<b>WEA Trustees Report -</b>	<a href="https://wea.org.uk/resources/trustees-report">wea.org.uk/resources/trustees-report</a>

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Education & Skills  
Funding Agency

 INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE

 European Union  
European  
Social Fund

 matrix  
Quality standard for education  
and professional services