

Regional Skills Pilot Programme

(Cheshire West & Chester)

Short Course: Competition Guidance

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Introduction to the Regional Skills Pilot Programme

The Office for Clean Energy Jobs (OCEJ) identified Cheshire West and Chester as a location with the potential for abundant Clean Energy Jobs.

The key objective of this second phase of the Regional Skills Pilot Programme is to test various approaches that will enable Cheshire West & Chester's 'carbon & energy intensive' businesses to commence their transition to clean energy through the following priorities:

- Development of a cohesive, responsive and accessible training solution that removes any misalignments between industry and training providers
- Improved employer engagement with the design and delivery of relevant training opportunities
- Stronger relationships between employers and training providers so that training providers are more able to respond to employer training needs
- Development of the key skills needed within the current local workforce to support decarbonisation
- Increased recruitment to clean energy-related apprenticeships

The pilot will be monitored and evaluated to inform any future investments.

In phase 1 of the Regional Skills Pilot, a skills map was produced in consultation with energy-intensive and carbon-intensive industries, and to meet the requirements for clean power 2030. This skills map identified the following priority skills:

- High Voltage & Electrical Safety
- Engineering, Welding & Multi-skilling
- Hydrogen & Carbon Capture Training
- Digital, Automation and Data Competency
- Environmental Compliance, HSEQ & Safety
- Clean Energy, Net Zero & Carbon Awareness

A recommendation for phase 2 of the Regional Skills Pilot was for the commissioning of a series of short courses for employers designed around the above priority skills. These short courses should be aimed at those who are working in energy-intensive or carbon-intensive industries and who require reskilling/upskilling in order to help transition their organisation to cleaner energy and reduce its carbon footprint.

The commissioned short courses should:

- Have a direct impact on businesses ability to transition towards low carbon and provide employees with the skills needed to meet the changing skills needs of their jobs.
- Be no less than 10 GLH and typically, no more than 4 weeks in length (*this could include 1-5 day long short courses, CPD modules, or skills extension pathways/enhancements for apprentices...*)
- Deliver training in one of the following priority skills areas: High Voltage & Electrical Safety; Engineering, Welding & Multi-skilling; Hydrogen & Carbon Capture Training; Digital, Automation and Data Competency; Environmental Compliance, HSEQ & Safety; or Clean Energy, Net Zero & Carbon Awareness
- Be delivered via an appropriate delivery mode suitable to the content being taught (this can include face-to-face, hybrid or online)
- Support career enhancement and progression

- Ideally delivered by the end of March 2026
- Be delivered in conjunction with Cheshire West & Chester based employer(s) from the clean-energy sector or from energy-intensive/carbon-intensive industries
- Be delivered within the Cheshire West & Chester area (employees do not need to be residents of Cheshire West & Chester if working for a Cheshire West & Chester employer)
- Be delivered by suitably trained & qualified trainers
- Not replicate existing provision that is already on offer via other funded streams (i.e. the Adult Skills Fund, Free Courses for Jobs or Skills Bootcamps)
- Offer good value for money

Competition Eligibility

Provider eligibility

Provider eligibility for application to the Regional Skills Pilot Programme short course competition is based upon:

- Registered as a UK training provider *
- Ability to deliver within the Cheshire West & Chester area (or fringe areas if more appropriate)
- Prior experience in delivering similar training programmes
- Evidence of strong employer relationships within the relevant sectors across Cheshire West & Chester
- Ability to demonstrate the capacity and resources needed to mobilise and deliver appropriate training solutions within the set time period

* Applications made by a Cheshire West & Chester employer for a bespoke programme either designed and delivered in collaboration with a training provider, or by an in-house training team will also be considered.

Applications will be scored on the following:

- Experience and Approach (20%)
- Employer Engagement (20%)
- Detailed Scope (20%)
- Costs & Value for Money (20%)
- Capacity & Resources (10%)
- Mobilisation & Marketing (10%)

Learner eligibility

Learner eligibility for participation in the Regional Skills Pilot Programme is based upon age, geographical location and employment status.

To be funded for participation in the Regional Skills Pilot managed by ECW, a learner must meet all of the following criteria:

1	Aged 19 or older on or before 31 October 2025 for short courses starting between 1 st November 2025 and 31 st March 2026
2	Have the right to work in the UK. This can be checked on Right to work checks: an employer's guide - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
3	Lives in Cheshire West & Chester and/or works for a Cheshire West & Chester based business (from the clean energy or energy-intensive/carbon-intensive sectors)*

*Potential flexibilities

Whilst the Regional Skills Pilot Programme is predominantly focused on upskilling those who are already in employment, ECW will not exclude unemployed residents if the course being proposed in the application is specifically targeting the unemployed to help fill vacancies within the clean energy sector. If you are proposing such a course, please ensure that you have captured the rationale on your application form. You will also need to provide evidence of the vacancies on offer and employer confirmation that they intend to utilise the programme as a recruitment mechanism. Participants must be from the Cheshire West & Chester area.

Delivery & Claims

The key objective of the Regional Skills Pilot is to increase the number of local people who are sufficiently trained in clean-energy related skills, thus equipping local businesses to more effectively complete their decarbonisation journey and enable Cheshire & Warrington to meet the net zero targets set for 2030. As part of the Regional Skills Pilot, the short course competition aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- Approximately 15 short courses commissioned
- At least 150 student enrolments
- At least 135 student completions
- At least 75 participating students secure new jobs/promotions/new responsibilities as a result of their training
- At least 10 businesses who engage with the training are Small or Medium Enterprises
- At least 80% of engaged businesses report that the training received has positively impacted their business & supported their decarbonisation journey

The type of post-training expected outcome will depend on learner categorisation. For participating learners, one of the following outcomes is expected at the end of course:

For employer-referred learners :	These are learners supported by their employers to undertake the training for re-skilling or up-skilling as part of their business strategy for decarbonisation. Businesses should be based within Cheshire West & Chester.	New tasks/responsibilities in current role, new role or promotion related to clean energy
For self-employed or sole trader learners :	These are individuals who are registered as a business (as self-employed or a limited company or a partner in a business partnership)	New or improved products or services related to clean energy on offer by the learner

	within the Cheshire West & Chester area and who wish to up-skill in order to add new products or services related to clean energy to their business offer.	
For unemployed learners :	These are individuals who are currently not in paid work who wish to secure roles in the clean energy sector.	New job/role related to clean energy

Employers who refer their own employees, should expect to support the employee into a new or enhanced role that aligns with the company's net zero ambitions.

ECW will only contract with those providers who are able to demonstrate strong employer relationships and support within the Cheshire West & Chester area in order to facilitate the above expected outcomes.

The funding claim arrangements reflect the importance ECW attaches to post-training outcomes, making provision for:

- 50% of the total cost per learner, claimable once the learner has started on programme and completed at least 50% GLH, and in accordance with the requirements in **Table 1** below – **Milestone Payment 1**.
- 50% of the total cost per learner, claimable once the learner has completed the actual training and achieved the relevant employment/work or business-related outcome and in accordance with the requirements set out in **Table 1** below – **Milestone Payment 2**.

The ability to sufficiently mobilise, resource the delivery of the training and capture outcomes in accordance with the above milestones should be articulated in a provider's application.

Table 1 – Requirements for claiming funds.

Milestone 1 – Funding claim Requirements

The Provider must evidence a Learner has enrolled, started on-programme and completed at least 50% of the GLH.

An individual Learner must only start on course if it allows them sufficient opportunity for completing the training by no later than 31st March 2026 (unless otherwise agreed as part of the competition application approval).

In addition:

If, before enrolment, a **self-referred learner** states their intention to operate as self-employed or as a sole trader once they have completed their training, the Provider must submit evidence to ECW that the learner has registered with the Government as a business (as self-employed or a

limited company or a partner in a business partnership). The learner must meet their own costs in this respect. Short course funding cannot be used to pay any registration fees.

The Provider must submit evidence to ECW that all **self-employed/sole trader learners** for whom they claim have signed a declaration of intent to work with the Provider have produced a SMART Business Plan for securing new markets or business opportunities for their goods or services within the Cheshire West & Chester area.

The Provider must submit evidence to ECW that the employers of all **employer-referred learners** for whom they claim have confirmed in writing their intention to seek to support those employees to use the skills acquired on the short course to assume new responsibilities, acquire a new role, or gain a promotion in the workplace.

A successful funding claim for a learner achieving Milestone 1 will attract a payment of 50% of the agreed Cost as stipulated in the contract.

Milestone 2 – Funding claim Requirements

The Provider must submit evidence that each learner for whom they are claiming has successfully & fully completed the short course, including any assessments and qualifications.

In addition:

The Provider must submit evidence to ECW of a job-related outcome for each participating learner. For an **employer-referred learner** this should be confirmation of new responsibilities/tasks being undertaken as part of their current role, a new role or a promotion. For an **unemployed learner**, this should be written confirmation of a job offer with a firm start date. For a **self-employed/sole trader learner**, this should be evidence of new or improved goods or services added to their business offer.

This information will be used to demonstrate impact of the programme. Learner anonymity will be safeguarded. ECW will accept claims for learners up to 10th April 2026 2026 (unless otherwise agreed as part of the competition application approval).

A successful funding claim for a learner achieving Milestone 2 will attract a payment of 50% of the agreed Cost as stipulated in the contract.

Data Requirements

All providers must agree to share short course performance data with DESNZ and ECW. This will enable DESNZ/ECW to review previous performance within the programme when considering other future funding contracts.

To be compliant, training providers must follow the data requirements as detailed in this section. The training provider must supply accurate data in accordance with the following:

- in adherence with the UK GDPR and DPA 2018;
- to support payments to be made;
- to enable reconciliation to take place;
- to support the contract management and assurance processes including employer engagement;
- to respond to any reasonable written request from the DDESNZ or ECW
- audit arrangements.

All learners are required to sign a Learner declaration highlighting the need for their personal data to be shared with ECW and DESNZ.

Each month, the training provider should submit fully populated Learner Datasheets to ECW by the deadlines set. Further guidance will be provided on how to submit claims upon receipt of signed grant funding agreements.

Quality Assurance

The short courses commissioned through the Regional Skills Pilot Programme are not subject to inspection by Ofsted. However, contracted training providers will be expected to participate in quality assurance activities as stipulated in a provider's grant funding agreement.

These quality assurance processes are designed to help achieve the aims of the programme and may include, but are not exclusive to; adherence to all policies and procedures; undertaking of observations by ECW of teaching, learning & assessment; contract reviews; performance data; learner/employer feedback; and quality audits (i.e. learner ILPs/RARPA's, initial assessments, session plans, schemes of learning, copies of resources etc..)

As a training provider you will be aware of the requirement to:

- Meet the objectives of the short course competition and any subsequent updates, and the quality requirements of relevant Awarding Organisations;
- Ensure teaching staff meet the requirements as set out in any awarding body stipulations;
- Provide effective IAG for all learners to ensure positive progression;
- Maintain high quality evidence packs and attendance records and share these with ECW in a timely manner;
- Meet legislation and statutory regulations as mentioned in the Framework terms and conditions especially regulations in respect of Health and Safety; Equality, Diversity & Inclusion; Safeguarding: Prevent; Data Protection including GDPR and Employment Law;
- Have the responsibility to promote wellbeing, provide a safe, healthy and supportive learning environment, whether online or face-to-face, which meets the needs of learners, and ensure that learners adopt safe working practices;
- Have established:
 - a Safeguarding Policy (including Sexual Harassment and Prevent) in place and have effective systems for monitoring its implementation;
 - The acknowledgement of and training given around British Values
 - Senior named person with specific responsibility for safeguarding, sexual harassment and prevent;
 - Policies and procedures that cover, as a minimum, attendance and punctuality, observations of teaching, learning and assessment, and feedback and complaints.

- Have due regard to equality, diversity and inclusion and provide learner support where appropriate, and take reasonable steps to ensure the provision is accessible to a wide and diverse range of learners, whilst considering the adjustments required and the cultural background and beliefs of individuals when offering support;
- Ensure that learning opportunities are coherently planned and sequenced, meet the needs of learners, include planned progression, and have appropriate strategies to evaluate impact;
- Ensure that all learners are fully supported to meet the learning outcomes and their agreed personal goals which should be recorded and reviewed on learning plans and progress records, including RARPA and any evidence of certification;
- Take reasonable steps to minimise dropout rates, deliver high completion and achievement rates with appropriate progression;
- Be aware that funding may be withheld at any point in the contract if quality standards have not been fulfilled;

Payment Process

Any payments and claims relating to the Regional Skills Pilot short courses, will be made directly to the Training Provider by ECW.

Training providers will be paid by result in accordance with the Milestones below. To reach a Milestone, providers must submit an accurate Learner Datasheet and related evidence for each learner.

All percentages for the milestones are based on the cost per learner stated on the application document:

- Milestone 1 – 50%
- Milestone 2 – 50%

Further guidance on submitting claims and receiving payments will be provided upon receipt of signed grant funding agreements.

Marketing/Branding

Information on marketing requirements will be provided upon receipt of signed grant funding agreements. Successful training providers will be required to provide marketing materials to ECW for case studies.

Contact Information

For all enquiries related to the Regional Skills Pilot Programme, including the short course competition, please contact: rsp@cheshireandwarrington.com

All submissions should be sent to rsp@cheshireandwarrington.com

The Regional Skills Pilot team are as follows:

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Version Control

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4.0	Version 4	Rebecca Anderson-Moss	28/12/2025