

Q&A for Multiply programme evaluation

What was the purpose of the Multiply programme?

Multiply was designed to improve adult numeracy skills up to Level 2, providing flexible, locally tailored learning for adults with low numeracy, especially those who would not otherwise engage in adult education. It aimed to build confidence, widen participation, and act as a stepping stone into further learning. It ran from April 2022 and ended as planned in March 2025.

What was the menu of interventions within the Multiply programme?

Local areas were allocated funding for adult numeracy to spend on a menu of interventions set by DfE. Local areas commissioned learning organisations and partners to deliver their chosen interventions in their area:

- a) Courses designed to increase confidence with numbers for those needing the first steps towards formal numeracy qualifications
- b) Courses designed to help people use numeracy to manage their money
- c) Innovative numeracy programmes delivered together with employers – including courses designed to cover specific numeracy skills required in the workplace
- d) Courses aimed at people who can't apply for certain jobs because of lack of numeracy skills and/or to encourage people to upskill in numeracy order to access a certain job/career
- e) New intensive and flexible numeracy courses targeted at people without Level 2 maths, leading to a Functional Skills Qualification
- f) Courses for parents wanting to increase their numeracy skills in order to help their children and help with their own progression.
- g) Numeracy courses aimed at prisoners, those recently released from prison or on temporary licence.
- h) Numeracy courses aimed at those 19 or over that are leaving, or have just left, the care system.
- i) Numeracy activities, courses or provision developed in partnership with community organisations and other partners aimed at engaging the hardest to reach learners – for example, those not in the labour market or other groups identified locally as in need.
- j) Additional relevant maths modules embedded into other vocational courses.

Which learners did Multiply reach?

Multiply reached groups that are typically under-represented in adult learning:

- 48% of learners had English as a second language.

- 29% had a long-term physical or mental health condition.
- 41% had parental responsibilities; 13% were single parents.
- 7% were care-experienced; 5% were ex-offenders.

Learners came from a range of employment backgrounds:

- 35% of Multiply learners were in employment immediately prior to starting their course, whilst 24% were looking for work, and 41% were economically inactive.

Did Multiply meet its aims?

While progression to Level 2 qualifications was limited, this reflects the programme's short, engagement-focused design and learner starting points. Multiply met its aims in several ways. It was successful in increasing adult participation in numeracy learning particularly among groups who are often under-represented in adult learning. It provided the opportunity to test new course content or methods of delivery, and the opportunity to establish networks and partnerships between providers and local employers and community organisations. Furthermore, Multiply provided valuable evidence for commissioners and deliverers of adult numeracy provision for hard-to-reach groups.

What did Multiply achieve?

Multiply showed strong impacts across confidence, wellbeing and progression for learners:

- At the time of reporting, 58% of Multiply learners had progressed onto further study. This is in line with qualification-bearing numeracy courses in mainstream Further Education.
- 83% of Multiply learners were more interested in doing more learning across a range of subjects since doing their Multiply course, and 75% were more interested in doing more maths learning. 78% of learners were more interested in getting more qualifications.
- 75% of Multiply learners reported a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing, 71% reported a positive impact on their sense of being part of their local community, and 64% reported a positive impact on their chances of finding paid work in the future.
- 97% of learners completed their course.

How many learners engaged in outreach activities?

Local areas also engaged people through outreach. Outreach events included information sessions at local adult education centres on ways to improve maths, and

confidence building sessions. 25% of Multiply learners reported participating in at least one type of outreach activity, prior to undertaking more substantive provision.

What proportion of learners progressed to other learning after finishing a Multiply course?

Progression rates for Multiply are in line with established qualification bearing pathways. At the time of reporting, a third of Multiply learners (33%) had gone on to take another numeracy course - 37% of which were qualification-bearing. A further 25% were recorded as taking non-numeracy courses.

Given Multiply brought new groups of learners into the adult education system, and those learners tended to be further away from learning at the outset, this progression rate is encouraging. 83% of those progressing into further study or training reported that Multiply had positively influenced their decision.

Which elements of the Multiply programme can be applied to core funding such as the Adult Skills Fund?

The evaluation suggests that several Multiply delivery approaches are transferable into core Adult Skills Fund (ASF) funded provision,

- **Innovative outreach and engagement approaches**, including partnerships with employers and community organisations, which were effective in engaging learners who would not otherwise participate.
- **Short, flexible, non-qualification provision**, which was particularly suited to adults not yet ready for formal qualifications.
- **Stepping-stone pathways into further learning**, with progression rates that were broadly in line with mainstream numeracy provision.
- **Curriculum and delivery approaches** such as contextualised, family-focused or workplace-based numeracy, which improved learner engagement and confidence.
- **Community-based delivery** in familiar, trusted settings such as libraries, foodbanks, housing associations, and community organisations, which enabled access to groups who would not typically engage with adult education.

Overall, many of its delivery practices and lessons are transferable. [Promising practice](#) examples, [case studies](#), and [lessons learnt](#) via the programme evaluation provide the most appropriate route for embedding the learning from Multiply into ongoing provision.

What are the lessons for Strategic Authorities commissioning adult education?

Currently, approximately 68% of the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) is devolved to 12 strategic authorities (SAs) and delegated to the Mayor of London acting through the Greater

London Authority (GLA). These authorities are responsible for the provision of adult education and allocation of the ASF in their local areas.

Multiply provides valuable learning for Strategic Authorities, to inform future commissioning and delivery of adult education. The evaluation highlights several key factors that drive successful engagement in adult numeracy, such as informal, flexible provision to attract learners and build confidence; contextualised learning to embed numeracy within everyday activities such as budgeting, cooking or crafts; strong local partnerships and delivery in familiar, trusted settings such as libraries and community centres, to reach communities that previously hadn't engaged.

The programme evaluation demonstrates the strong success of the Multiply programme in engaging adults and building their confidence in numeracy. This success was made possible through the significant effort of Strategic Authorities in driving delivery and ensuring the programme's effectiveness.

Why did the evaluation not collect data on how learners improved through the programme?

The evaluation attempted to collect pre and post course assessment data both through providers, and by going directly to learners through offering an incentive. However, buy-in in both cases was very low, with provider feedback suggesting that assessments were having a negative impact on delivery because they were off-putting for learners who either had maths anxiety or who were otherwise difficult to engage. Given the minimal response rates and the disproportionate administrative and financial costs of collecting limited data, continuing with standardised assessment was not considered value for money. Instead, the evaluation used learner and provider surveys and qualitative evidence, which indicated strong self-reported improvements in confidence and practical use of numeracy skills, alongside increased interest in further maths learning.

The evaluation nevertheless demonstrates clear positive impacts.

Is there information on the longer-term economic benefits?

It is too early to assess the programme's longer-term economic benefits, such as impact on employment and earnings – partly because of the time which needs to elapse after the course to observe their outcomes. This information will be extracted from the Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data when it becomes available. We expect data on learners' destinations in the academic year after their learning to be available in late 2026 for Multiply learners who completed courses in 2023/24. Outcomes for learners completing courses in 2024/25 will be available in late 2027.

The evaluation of Multiply drew on administrative and survey data to assess patterns in learner participation and self-reported outcomes, and showed a range of positive

impacts from the programme: engagement of new groups of learners, progression rates in line with established pathways, self-reported improvements to numeracy, confidence and well-being, and innovation in recruitment of learners as well as the design and delivery of numeracy courses.

How much funding was available to local areas?

The funding allocations across England can be found here: [UKSPF allocations \(2022-2025\) - GOV.UK](#)

What were the learnings from the programme of Adult Numeracy Randomised Controlled Trials?

The programme of Adult Numeracy Randomised Controlled Trials demonstrated that conducting trials is both possible and welcomed within the adult education sector. Despite the challenges of working with a relatively small sector with limited prior experience of RCTs, the programme successfully delivered a fully powered trial for Encouraging Progression and recruited 96 providers, 72 schools, and over 2,700 learners to five course-based trials (Embedded Maths, Family Numeracy, Adapted Mastery Approach, Contextualised Curriculum, and Preparation for Maths GCSE).

The course-based trials were ultimately underpowered to definitively establish the impact of the interventions tested. However, the absence of statistically significant findings does not mean the interventions had no impact; rather, it indicates that they do not have medium-to-large positive effects.

The IPE findings for the course-based trials provide evidence that learners and tutors felt positively about the interventions, and that the interventions can be implemented with good fidelity. It can be inferred from this that the interventions show promise, though further research, which uses the data collected through this trial to inform estimates in trial design, would be needed to conclusively demonstrate their impact.

Additionally, all the trials generated valuable methodological learning. In five out of six trials, tutors and providers were willing and able to work within the constraints of an RCT, including collecting and submitting the significant levels of data required in a compliant way and not changing their behaviour because of taking part in a trial.

Finally, the programme built capacity and awareness of trials within the adult education sector. Providers now better understand what participating in trials involves and have expressed interest in future research opportunities (76% of providers agreed they would consider taking part in an RCT in the future).