



**West Midlands
Combined Authority**

9 November 2023

Numeracy champions to help adults in the region feel more confident with numbers

Four voluntary and community sector organisations in the region have been granted a total of £150,581 by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to employ 'Numeracy Champions' to deliver training and support for employed adults as part of the government funded Multiply programme aiming to improve maths skills across the region.

Access to Business, Working Actively To Change Hillfields (WATCH), Smartlyte Communities Community Interest Company (CIC) and Nishkam Civic Association are four of the most recently funded organisations that the WMCA is working with to help identify residents who would benefit from numeracy support.

Each organisation will act as an advocate for Multiply, employing a 'Numeracy Champion' to develop and deliver a learning programme and to engage with residents to promote the benefit of enhanced numeracy skills and qualifications.

Learning and Work Institute, using OECD's adult basic skills survey, shows that an estimated 440,000 adults (24.1%) in the WMCA area have low literacy or numeracy skills.

The government has put in £17m funding into the Multiply programme since 2022 - an innovative approach that aims to boost adults confidence with numbers and maths from budgeting to cooking and in turn improve their career prospects, support family learning and help them to get new qualifications and better manage their finances.

Michelle is enrolled in a 6 week financial resilience Skills for Life course as part of the Multiply programme funded by WMCA and delivered by [Provision House](#). She said "When relationship breakdown and poor health circumstances meant I had to move my family into temporary accommodation, I needed support with managing my limited resources. My support worker at Dudley Council introduced me to Provision House where I was given the support and advice on how to manage my money to get the essentials that I need for me and my family. I'm also now doing a financial management course through the programme and although I'm fairly good at maths this has really helped with managing a budget and to make a number of savings."

Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands and WMCA Chair, said: "It's great news that we've been able to fund four voluntary and community sector organisations to support the delivery of the Multiply programme.

"With more than £150,000 of WMCA funding on the table, we know this support will help residents including Michelle to become more confident with numbers in everyday life and more adept in managing finances.

“The Multiply programme is a practical way we can work together to help local people to develop flexible and transferable numeracy skills that they can apply in their jobs and day to day lives for many years to come. I cannot wait to see the results and I’m glad we’ve been able to play our part by funding this initiative.”

Cllr George Duggins, the WMCA’s portfolio holder for productivity and skills and leader of Coventry City Council, said: “Providing funding to organisations in the voluntary and community sector will help us to identify those employed residents and small businesses that currently do not have access to numeracy training. Acting as advocates the organisations can support local people upskill building a resilient workforce for the future of the region.”

Four voluntary and community sector organisations that applied to the WMCA were successful in gaining funding to deliver Multiply and further opportunities for the voluntary and community sector to apply for Multiply delivery grants will be made available by the end of 2023.

Simon Moore, Operations Manager, Access to Business, said: "We are thrilled to be delivering the Multiply Small Grant programme enabling us to support local part-time working or zero-hour contract residents across our city to improve their Maths skills to help them to progress their careers. Our experienced Maths Tutor has developed programmes that will be offered across our city in a welcoming and supportive environment. We are already seeing great demand from local schools and employers to support part-time working parents who will then not only improve their own maths skills but also support their children and other family members too."

Hafsa D Shaikh, Smartlyte Communities, said: "We are excited to share we have been successful in securing a new Multiply contract with the WMCA and we look forward to helping Birmingham communities to raise awareness of Multiply and support them to improve their numeracy skills, through many different pathways available through Multiply providers. It’s an important project to support people to boost their confidence in developing skills for employment, daily tasks and to raise future aspirations."

Zainab Bibi, Strengthening Families and Welfare Lead, Nishkam Civic Association, said: "We're so happy to have received the grant for the Multiply programme. This project allows us to facilitate our vision of providing "lifelong learning" to the community. By offering an opportunity to members of the community to achieve their functional maths qualification, we are encouraging career progression and empowering individuals to pursue their career goals, bringing about change in the community and hopefully making a positive impact that will span generations."

Nadia Taghi, Working Actively To Change Hillfields, said: “WATCH is thrilled to have been awarded a small grant through the Multiply programme. The grant will enable us to provide two hours of maths taster sessions per week, giving participants a base knowledge of maths and hopefully sparking an interest to pursue a level 1. This will enhance their career prospects, enable them to go on to higher paying roles, and become more confident in using maths in their everyday lives”.

Further opportunities for the voluntary and community sector to apply for Multiply delivery grants will be made available by the end of 2023.

Learning and feedback from each of the Multiply programmes will be used to inform future policy and developments in numeracy improvement in the future.

An overview of the WMCA regional focus of Multiply can be found on the [WMCA website](#).

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**More information from the WMCA media team on 07887 794241 or
email media@wmca.org.uk**

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Notes to Editors:

About the West Midlands Combined Authority

Led by the Mayor of the West Midlands, the WMCA brings together 17 local councils to oversee the transfer of powers and funding from Whitehall to the West Midlands.

The WMCA is putting these new powers from government back where they belong, in local hands, bringing the region together to build a healthier, happier, better connected and more prosperous West Midlands.

Billions of pounds are being invested by the WMCA to improve the region's transport network, transform its derelict industrial land into new homes and workplaces, support existing businesses and help grow the innovative, green industries of the future.

At the heart of this vision is a strong economy that is both green and inclusive, one that supports the region's ambition to be net zero carbon by 2041 and offers everyone the opportunity of a good quality, affordable home and the skills needed for a worthwhile job.