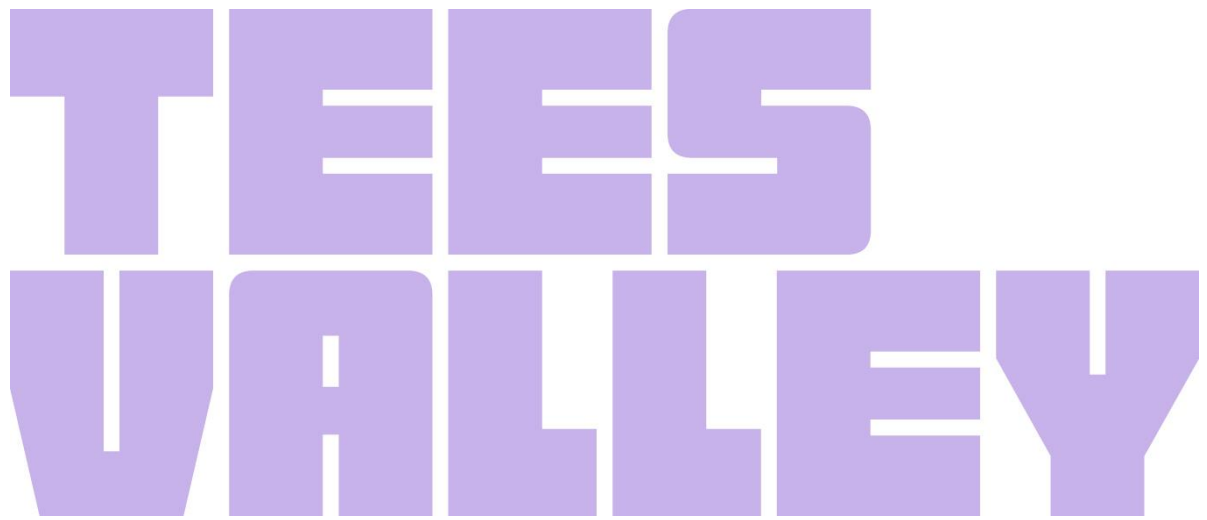




Funding Agreement – Part 7

TEES VALLEY COMBINED AUTHORITY
Adult Skills Fund and Level 3 FCFJ
SUBCONTRACTING POLICY 2025/26

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FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT, THE TERM 'PROVIDER' MEANS THE RECIPIENT AND ANY OTHER ORGANISATION PROVIDING ADULT EDUCATION, TRAINING OR SKILLS PROVISION THAT IS FUNDED BY TVCA.

Aim and purpose of this document

1. This guidance covers the period 1 August 2025 to 31 July 2026 and is TVCA's current advice for the funding year.
2. The purpose of this policy is to ensure high quality subcontracting provision is delivered by all Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) directly funded institutions and to ensure all subcontracted provision specifically meets the needs of Tees Valley learners and employers.
3. This document sets out the TVCA compliance and control regulations for all directly funded institutions that use third parties to deliver adult education that is funded by TVCA. Directly funded institutions includes all institutions that are directly funded by TVCA, and this covers all Sixth Form and FE colleges, all Local Authorities and Independent Training Providers (ITPs).
4. In addition, all TVCA directly funded institutions must ensure that their subcontractors comply with all of the requirements set out in the TVCA 2025/26 Funding Rates and Formula Policy and 2025/26 Funding and Performance Management Rules. All TVCA directly funded institutions are fully responsible for all aspects of the provision delivered under subcontracting, third party arrangements, including all aspects of learner and programme eligibility, performance and the safeguarding of adults.

Provision outside the scope of this document

5. These regulations do not apply where TVCA directly funded institutions agree to collaborate with each other in their individual local delivery arrangements to Tees Valley adult learners. Collaborative arrangements are those where two (or more) institutions directly funded by TVCA agree to share part of the delivery of education and training to Tees Valley adults, where the majority of each adult's education and training is delivered by the adult's home institution, and where the home institution records the adult on the ILR.

Direct delivery definition

6. Direct delivery arrangements are defined as institutions that hold a direct funding award with the Tees Valley Combined Authority and who use and manage their own staff in their own buildings. This includes buildings that form part of the institution's own infrastructure including any that may be rented or leased, usually on a long-term basis.

Subcontracted delivery definition

7. TVCA considers the term 'subcontracting' to encompass all third-party arrangements you have with other providers where the provider is managing and delivering a proportion of your TVCA ASF funding award.
8. It is important to note that you cannot be a subcontractor and a direct funded provider of TVCA to deliver ASF. TVCA defines a delivery subcontractor as a separate legal entity that has an agreement with you to deliver any provision that we fund for Tees Valley residents. A separate legal entity includes any training provider with a UKPRN including those in your group and other associated companies.
9. The term 'subcontractor' will also apply to any partnership, associate or third-party working relationships you have where your staff and/or provision is managed by another partner/institution. TVCA will consider all the above as a subcontracting arrangement and as such will require all relevant detail in your 2025/26 Delivery Plan for appraisal by TVCA. These arrangements must also be identified in the ILR using the Partner UKPRN Field. This type of partnership working, in terms of outcomes for learners and quality assurance activities, will be monitored and reviewed during regular Provider Performance Management meetings.
10. The amount of TVCA adult education funding retained by the directly funded institution must be proportionate to the costs they incur in the management and administration of the subcontractor and must be determined through established and robust due diligence and risk assessment processes. Management fees must be kept to a minimum and should be an accurate reflection of the support activities provided by the directly funded institution.

Declaring subcontracting provision

11. All institutions receiving TVCA adult education funding must record subcontracted provision in line with the published Education and Skills Funding Agency (DFE) guidance for completion of the ILR (Individualised Learner

Record). The Provider Delivery Plan must detail all intended subcontracting activity, and this must be approved by TVCA prior to the commencement of any subcontracting delivery. Any changes to subcontracting arrangements during the funding agreement period must be agreed and approved with TVCA prior to any subcontracting activity outside of the agreed Delivery Plan.

12. TVCA will publish annually a summary of provider subcontracting activity and information including the names of subcontractors.

Why TVCA require additional controls and procedures in respect of subcontracted provision

13. Some subcontracting arrangements have created substantial financial and reputational issues for institutions in the past, particularly where the subcontracted delivery has taken place at a distance from the directly funded institution. One particular concern is how the funding body has assured the proper use of public money, when funding is being transferred by publicly funded institutions to the independent sector. Directly funded institutions must properly monitor and control all subcontracted delivery of adult learning provision. Institutions must not make artificial distinctions or distortions when describing delivery arrangements in order to avoid the application of these regulations.

TVCA intervention

14. When TVCA has concerns about a subcontracting arrangement between an institution directly funded by the TVCA and a third party, we will carry out an assessment to determine if the arrangements comply with the detail, spirit and intention of this guidance. The assessment will take into account:
 - the overall quality of the education and/or training being delivered under the subcontracting arrangement
 - the funding eligibility
 - the quality of outcomes for learners
 - the management, monitoring and control of the contract and the welfare of the adult learners involved.

TVCA penalties for failure to comply with funding guidance for adult learners

15. TVCA reserves the right to take a range of actions (in accordance with the TVCA Provider Funding Agreement) where institutions are not compliant with the guidance set out in this document, relating either to ineligible provision or failures in management and control of the sub contracted provision.

Ineligible provision within Tees Valley Combined Authority adult education funding

16. For non-existent or ineligible subcontracted activity either recorded or claimed by directly funded institutions, TVCA shall either:
 - seek to recover any funds paid for the ineligible activity or adult learners in full or;
 - TVCA reserve the right to cease all future payments to the provider.
17. Where TVCA seeks to recover funds paid, this is usually through adjusting the future profile payments outlined in your funding agreement, but in the case of serious error or irregularity, TVCA reserves the right to insist on recovery of funding in-year and TVCA will cease all future payments. In future funding years, if it is reported to TVCA that an institution has recorded ineligible activity in funding returns, TVCA will potentially recover funding in-year and for the previous year(s) and up to 6 previous funding years, in accordance with normal public-sector accounting rules for the protection of public funds.

Management, monitoring and control within Adult Learning provision

18. When directly funded institutions do not appropriately manage and monitor subcontracted delivery, TVCA may remove Tees Valley adult learner numbers and the associated funding allocation generated from their agreed Provider Delivery Plan, even if there are no concerns over the subcontracted provision's quality. TVCA may also require the institution to discontinue the subcontracting arrangement either with immediate effect or from the end of the current funding year.
19. The Department for Education (DfE) and/or TVCA shall apply its intervention policy, and TVCA may apply recruitment restrictions when it is deemed necessary. TVCA will also consider subcontracted provision under the control of a failed institution to be inadequate. Failed institutions must not enter any new, or extend existing, TVCA funded subcontractor arrangements. The TVCA Funding Agreement sets out the action that may follow intervention. An institution fails when:
 - Ofsted provides an overall assessment of inadequate
 - It does not meet DfE ASF national minimum standards for adult provision

- The DFE assess it as in financial failure and issue a financial notice to improve
 - The DFE issue a notice to improve due to quality concerns
 - Instigation of the Insolvency Regime.
20. As detailed in the funding agreement and in the 2025/26 TVCA Provider Performance Management Framework, any change in subcontracting delivery must be approved by TVCA. In addition, if you intend to use a subcontractor not included in your agreed Delivery Plan, you must inform TVCA immediately and seek the required approval to engage the new subcontractor.
21. When subcontracted provision does not meet the required standards as detailed in the TVCA 2025/26 Provider Performance Management Framework and TVCA 2025/26 Funding and Performance Management Rules, TVCA may take one or both of the following actions:
- remove the adult learner numbers and associated subcontracting funding value from the funding allocation for the directly funded institution
 - require the institution to discontinue the subcontracting arrangement, either with immediate effect or from the end of the current funding year.

Advice for accounting officers of directly funded institutions on managing subcontracted provision within TVCA Adult Learning provision

22. Heads, Principals, Managing Directors and Chief Executives of directly funded institutions must ensure full compliance with this guidance regardless of any TVCA or DFE auditing activity for ASF. This advice also applies to the lead institution where subcontractors have multiple contracts for the delivery of TVCA funded provision.
23. The directly funded institution's management are required to satisfy themselves that:
- all subcontracted delivery arrangements comply with the evidential requirements set out in the TVCA Provider Funding Agreement
 - the controls set out in this document are in place and operating effectively for all subcontractor arrangements
 - they are making appropriate systematic checks to ensure that Tees Valley adult learners enrolled by subcontractors on their behalf and recorded in their records are correctly described in their own adult learner record system (ILR) and are receiving the scheduled provision described.

Appointing and approving subcontractors

24. When appointing subcontractors, the direct funded institutions' management must take steps to avoid any conflicts of interest and/or any circumstances (for example, common directorships) which might give rise to an actual or perceived conflict of interest.
25. Directly Funded Institutions' management must satisfy themselves that the detailed guidance in this document from section 24 has been appropriately carried out. Directly funded institutions must ensure that there is no risk of double funding for subcontractors with multiple subcontracts with directly funded institutions.

Subcontracting Fees and Charges

26. TVCA recognises that there is a need for TVCA directly funded institutions to charge a management fee for managing a subcontracting agreement and the operation activities related to ensuring high quality provision and positive outcomes for adult learners. However, it is also recognised that the management fee should be realistic, and an accurate reflection of the management costs incurred by the funded institution. TVCA will not accept management fees to be charged at more than 20% and a provider's management fees will be detailed and reviewed as part of the TVCA Provider ASF Delivery Plan review. The provider is accountable for ensuring the management fee applied is a realistic and accurate fee for the management activities undertaken to support the subcontractor and ensure high quality outcomes for Tees Valley learners and is in line with the requirements of this guidance.

Level and percentage of subcontracting

27. All subcontracting activity must be effectively planned on an annual basis and detailed within the Provider ASF Delivery Plan for review by TVCA prior to any award of ASF funding allocation and any potential funding agreement. A subcontractor can only enter into an agreement with one direct delivery partner and therefore cannot be a named subcontractor to multiple Providers. Details will include all subcontracted types of provision, learner numbers and funding values. In addition, the provider's intended management fee will be detailed for review by TVCA for each subcontractor detailed within the agreed TVCA Provider Delivery Plan. Any additional subcontracted delivery in-year that is above the level and scope detailed within the agreed TVCA Provider Delivery Plan must be approved and agreed by TVCA prior to any additional subcontracting agreement or activity. TVCA will not allow a Provider to subcontract any more than 40% of their ASF allocation.

28. All providers must publish their specific Subcontracting Fees & Charges Policy for each academic year on their organisational website.

Prevent duty

29. The Prevent duty, which requires that institutions, when exercising their functions, have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism, extends to any subcontracted provision. It is a condition of funding that all further education and independent training providers must comply with relevant legislation and any statutory responsibilities associated with the delivery of education and safeguarding of learners, and this includes learners receiving provision under a subcontracting arrangement.

Controls and procedures for all subcontracting within adult learning

Procurement

30. All directly funded institutions must ensure that they openly comply with current and relevant procurement regulations. Each institution must ensure that they select their subcontractor(s) fairly and that they have sufficient capacity, capability, quality, experience and business standing to deliver the provision that is being subcontracted. All publicly funded bodies must ensure they comply with relevant UK and European regulations when procuring the services of a subcontractor.
31. A directly funded institution must not subcontract, without written TVCA permission, with any provider in the categories defined below. A clear written rationale must be provided to TVCA detailing the need for subcontracting. The contract between the directly funded institution and the subcontractor should allow immediate or early termination if these circumstances arise during the contract:
- a subcontractor that is inspected in its own right and is assessed as being inadequate
 - a subcontractor that is subject to intervention by the DFE or FE Commissioner due to financial or quality concerns
 - instigation of DFE Insolvency Regime
 - DFE Poor financial health reporting.
32. A directly funded institution must take all necessary steps to verify any actual or perceived conflicts of interests in potential subcontractors and eliminate such subcontractors from the process. How institutions choose to meet these procurement requirements and monitor them is a matter for them to determine.

However, TVCA reserves the right to ask all institutions for additional evidence that supports their decisions within this process to resolve any eligibility issues.

33. A directly funded institution must remain responsible for checking the details provided by the successful subcontractor and neither TVCA nor the Secretary of State will accept any liability in respect of the directly funded institution procurement of any subcontractor.
34. TVCA Funding and Performance Management Rules for 2025/26 confirm that if a provider has not previously subcontracted provision and intends on subcontracting TVCA ASF in 2025/26, they must get approval in writing from TVCA before awarding a contract to a subcontractor. The evidence requirements specified within the TVCA Funding and Performance Management Rules for 2025/26 state that the request to subcontract must be accompanied by a report from an external auditor.

Application process to subcontract for the first time

35. You must seek written approval from TVCA to subcontract for the first time, before entering a subcontracting arrangement.
36. You must submit the request in writing, on your organisation's letterhead. In your request, we require you to supply the following information about your proposed subcontracting arrangement:
 - Why you are seeking to subcontract for the first time
 - The elements of delivery you are seeking to subcontract
 - The full legal name and UKPRN, if appropriate, of the subcontractor(s) that you will use (if you have already selected the subcontractor(s) that you intend to use)
 - The proposed financial value of the subcontracting arrangement(s), not exceeding 40% of your ASF funding allocation
 - Confirmation that all relevant Funding Rules have been considered and met
 - Your subcontracting fees and charges policy should be included as an annex to the request and must adhere to section 25, subcontracting fees and charges, of this guidance.
37. The accompanying report must be written by an external auditor and must confirm that you have effective processes and controls in place for carrying out the effective management of subcontractors.

38. Your report should also include the following detail:
- Developing the business case
 - Establishing the selection process
 - Assessing the capacity and capability
 - Managing performance
 - Contracting fees
 - Risk assessment.
39. When complete, you should email your request to your Business Solutions Adviser at TVCA. **All requests must be submitted to TVCA for approval.**

Decision Making Process

40. We will consider your request, considering data and information available within and outside the Tees Valley, including any national data and information from the DFE. Examples of these include, but are not restricted to:
- Companies House and Charity Commission databases to check that the proposed subcontractor(s) is/are a bona fide legal entity
 - The UKRLP website to check the supplied UKPRN(s)
 - The DFE Subcontracting Register to determine the current commitments of the proposed subcontractor(s)
 - We will consider your subcontracting fees and charges policy
 - We will consider the external auditor's report on the effectiveness of the processes and controls you have in place for managing subcontractors.
41. TVCA will, under normal circumstances, respond to your request within 14 days of receipt.
42. TVCA reserves the right to decline your request and will provide an explanation in such instances. If TVCA decline your request, you must not enter into a subcontracting arrangement for the delivery of your TVCA ASF allocation during the Funding Agreement period.

Due diligence

43. Institutions are responsible for carrying out their own due diligence to manage the reputational and other risks of contracting with the proposed subcontractor. This process must consider financial and non-financial issues. The governing bodies of colleges and senior executives of all authorities or independent training providers must determine the nature and extent of these procedures but, in financial terms, they will be expected to include the steps set out below:
- Institutions must only award contracts to registered companies or charities. The status of companies should be recorded as 'active' on the Companies House register
 - Institutions must assess the financial health of the proposed subcontractor on at least an annual basis to ensure that they have the financial standing and capacity to deliver the subcontract. This will involve obtaining and reviewing their statutory accounts (financial statements), and possible reference to credit agency checks
 - Institutions must exercise extreme caution where a credit agency limit is low, or where the company has high levels of borrowing or poor indicators of financial solvency.
44. In addition, contracts must not be awarded to companies with any of the following:
- risk warnings (that is, above average risk warning from an agency)
 - legal notices (that is, intention to dissolve, winding up petition/order, compulsory or voluntary liquidation, etc.)
 - overdue statutory accounts.
45. Institutions must not award contracts to brand new companies who:
- are yet to submit their first statutory accounts, or
 - have a legal relationship with a company falling into the categories listed above.
46. In an exception where an institution wishes to contract with a newly established company, it will obtain sufficient information to verify financial capacity, for example through a costed business plan.

Contracts for subcontracted delivery for Adult Learning

47. As part of showing compliance with this guidance, directly funded institutions must have a written contract governing their subcontractor arrangements that clearly sets out the respective responsibilities of both the directly funded institution and the

subcontractor. This contract must entitle the institution to exercise the management controls over the subcontractor's activity, including access by auditors appointed by either the institution or TVCA. Each directly funded institution may wish to take its own legal advice before entering contracts.

Controls over learners, tutors and provision within Adult Learning

48. Additional controls in respect of subcontracted provision are required for several reasons:
- to ensure that the quality of the education provision delivered through a subcontracting relationship is actively managed and monitored by the directly funded institution to the same standards as directly delivered provision
 - to ensure that the risks to public funding are actively managed by the directly funded institution
 - to protect the reputation of the sector, individual institutions and TVCA.
49. The management and control exercised by the directly funded institution must be able to demonstrate the following key elements are in place:
- a directly funded institution can enrol or reject learners as it would do if the learners were to be taught on its own site
 - a robust initial assessment has been undertaken with all eligible learners to establish their prior knowledge, skills and experience
 - impartial Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) has been provided to learners that is clear and easily accessible to learners and will help them understand the opportunities and support available to them
 - the national Provider Learner Record system (PLR) is used to confirm prior learning and accurately record this in a learner's evidence pack and ILR
 - a learning agreement, signed by the learner, entered into at the time of enrolment that reflects the outcome of initial guidance and assessment (IAG) for an individual learner and sets out adult learning programme
 - that the learner eligibility for TVCA funding is confirmed through their individually signed enrolment form and/or learning agreement which must include the name and logo of the directly funded institution
 - a robust and time bound learning programme and its means of delivery that have been clearly specified by the institution
 - arrangements for assessing and evaluating the progress and satisfaction of individual learners, and
 - procedures for the institution to regularly monitor the delivery of programmes provided in its name.
50. Subcontractors must not subcontract any part of the delivery of TVCA ASF funded provision to other organisations or self-employed individuals. TVCA do not allow

multiple level subcontracting in any funded delivery for adult learning provision. For example, if the trainers used normally provide their services as self-employed contractors, the subcontractor must create an employment relationship with them. The delivery of provision should be by the subcontractor's directly employed staff. In the case of volunteers, the control will be 'as if they were employed.'

51. It is not acceptable for subcontractors or institution staff with a financial interest in the subcontractor to undertake any management control activities. This includes signing time sheets or invoices as well as organising and/or performing any monitoring activity or visits about the subcontractor delivery.

Controls over qualifications and curriculum within adult learning provision

52. The directly funded institution should normally be the centre approved by the awarding body for the qualifications being offered by means of subcontracted provision. The directly funded institution should be able to demonstrate that it is monitoring the activities of the approved centre, in particular its relationship with the awarding body, and that it is exercising control over, and making appropriate arrangements for, the quality assurance of all provision.
53. Where the directly funded institution is making subcontracted provision in curriculum areas not normally covered by the institution, it must be able to demonstrate that it can exercise effective control over the provision. In these circumstances, the directly funded institution should employ an independent person with appropriate expertise in the curriculum area to provide advice on subcontracted arrangements and undertake the necessary checks on the operation of the arrangements, including monitoring of the quality of provision. This person must not have a financial relationship with the subcontracted firm or organisation.

TVCA directly funded adult learners attending more than one institution

54. The learner's home institution must draw down all the funding for a TVCA funded learner. A learner cannot enrol at more than one directly funded TVCA institution for different components of their programme. Where a learner is attending different institutions for different components of their programme, the home institution must record all these components, and indicate on the individualised learner record (ILR) which elements are delivered via a subcontracting arrangement (see sections 9 and 10). All institutions, whether funded directly or through subcontracting arrangements,

should ensure that before any TVCA funding is claimed for any subcontracted learners no 'double funding' is being claimed for them. They should be assured that the subcontracted learners are not enrolled and being directly funded by TVCA or any other ASF funding, i.e. DFE or another combined authority, via another institution. All individual learners recorded for funding purposes must have the correct unique learner number recorded.

Monitoring (control) visits and spot-checks within adult learning provision

55. Directly funded institutions must address all the monitoring, management and control issues over their subcontracted delivery set out in this document for themselves. This section gives some advice on the management controls and monitoring required from TVCA directly funded institutions on their subcontracted delivery arrangements.
56. Spot check visits should be carried out regularly in cases where the provision runs throughout the year. In other cases, the scheduled spot-check visits should take account of the pattern of provision so that they are applied to a significant proportion of learners on a regular basis.
57. Systematic spot check visits should involve the institution making unannounced visits in-year to each subcontractor. A sample of sites must be included for provision being delivered by each subcontractor, rather than simply revisiting the same site.
58. The checks should be proportionate to the risk and volume of the provision and contract. They should also be undertaken during the year at times that are proportionate to the periods in which funding is being claimed. Institutions should ensure that they meet and interview a sample of students and staff. Institutions must ask learners to name the institution they are enrolled at and must also ask if they are at the same time, or have been recently, a learner at another TVCA directly funded institution. In addition, learners should be asked about the quality of their learner experience including the support provided by the subcontractor to ensure positive progression and planning for their next steps.
59. Other evidence sought should include:
 - marketing material
 - copies of registers
 - results of Initial Assessment undertaken with learners
 - evidence of robust Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) undertaken with learners
 - personalised Learner Records
 - individual learning plans and progress reviews

- learning agreements
 - registration documents for awarding bodies
 - visit notes from external moderators
 - evidence of certification.
60. Institutions must use systematic checks to confirm that the provision exists and is consistent with their expectations and records. The number and characteristics of learners should accord with the institution's expectations and records.
61. The TVCA directly funded institution must carry out an investigation at their own cost if there is any evidence of a subcontractor's irregular financial and / or delivery activity and report the outcome of the investigation, in writing, to TVCA within 10 business days of the investigation ending.
62. Monitoring of provision must include checks on eligibility of provision and direct observation of the initial guidance and assessment process and, at appropriate intervals, the delivery of the learning programmes, which must include reviewing examples of learner work and marked feedback. Monitoring activities should be similar to those considered appropriate for external verification or moderation, sufficient to ensure that learner progress can be monitored, and used to gather regular student feedback.

Reporting outcomes of all monitoring activities

63. All outcomes from directly funded institutions spot checks and auditing activities of their subcontractors must be shared with the relevant TVCA Business Solutions Adviser within six weeks of the completed monitoring activity. The outcomes of all subcontracting provision will be discussed and reviewed during Provider Performance Review Meetings with TVCA. In addition, the TVCA Annual Review with the provider will also assess the outcomes and impact of the subcontracted provision.
64. In line with the requirements and published timescales of the Provider monitoring and submission cycle, TVCA expect funded institutions to provide copies of subcontractor monitoring reports for all subcontractors.

Providing external assurance on subcontracting controls

65. The clause within the TVCA Funding Agreement requires directly funded institutions to obtain a report from an external auditor that provides assurances on the arrangements in place to manage and control subcontractors. The clause requires directly funded institutions in scope to supply us with a certificate confirming that the

report provides satisfactory assurance. (This Certificate is provided in Annex A of this document.)

66. In relation to this clause, an external auditor is a professionally qualified person from an organisation external to you that is able to provide an independent report on systems and controls and is registered with an appropriate professional body.
67. For the sake of clarity, the external auditor cannot be a Director, Trustee, shareholder, employee or any other similar party with a vested interest in your organisation, irrespective of whether their normal role is to carry out audit work for you. The external auditor does not necessarily have to be your existing external auditor.

External assurance process

68. You must select and engage an external auditor that fulfils the definition above. The external auditor must be able to sign the certificate provided in Annex A.
69. You must obtain a report from your chosen external auditor that provides assurance on the systems and controls you had in place in 2025/26 for managing subcontracted delivery.
70. The report must reflect the end-to-end subcontracting process and subcontracting requirements set out in your TVCA Provider Funding Agreement and the TVCA Funding Rules for 2024/2025. It must cover the following as a minimum:
 - General requirements – Subcontracting
 - Selection and procurement
 - Entering into a subcontract
 - Contract requirements
 - Management and Monitoring of subcontracting
 - Second level subcontracting
 - Reporting on subcontracting
 - Fees and charges
71. TVCA will not prescribe the process that the auditor must follow in undertaking the assignment. It is your role to agree this with the auditor.
72. Once the report has been completed, your accounting officer or senior responsible person must review it. Examples of the senior responsible person are: Chief Executive, Managing Director, Principal or their equivalent.

73. Your accounting officer or senior responsible person must then complete a certificate. The certificate must also be signed by the auditor. A template of the certificate can be found at Annex A of this policy.
74. Transmittal letters or other forms of letter will not be accepted as a replacement for the certificate.
75. When your certificate has been completed, you must send it via email address for the attention of your Business Solutions Adviser. Failure to submit your External Assurance Certificate (Annex A) may delay the distribution of your 2025/26 Funding Agreement.
76. You do not need to send a copy of the report to TVCA, but we reserve the right to request a copy from you at any point during the funding agreement period to review as part of our quality compliance arrangements.
77. If the external auditor has indicated that an implementation plan is required following their audit, we reserve the right to request a copy of it from you for us to review as part of our quality compliance arrangements.
78. For the avoidance of doubt, the external auditor will not be liable to us for the work it has undertaken for you.

Subcontractors with multiple institution contracts within adult learning provision

79. Directly funded institutions must establish which of their subcontractors work with other directly funded TVCA institutions. Subcontracted provision has had the highest number of historic double funding problems and TVCA regards such arrangements as high risk. TVCA expects any institution with subcontracted provision to use the advice below to reduce their risk in recording ineligible provision. If double funding occurs, then TVCA will treat the delivery as ineligible for funding and recovery of funds will take place.
80. TVCA regards the best practice for this control activity to be that a subcontractor should report on a regular basis to each TVCA directly funded institution with which it has a subcontract. The report must confirm the volume and value of all contracts, and to confirm that each individual student only has funding claimed by one institution. Institutions will find that accurate recording, use and exchange of unique learner numbers (ULNs) simplifies this work.

Transferring provision from institution

81. When a directly funded institution ceases a subcontracting arrangement and the subcontractor transfers the provision to a different prime contractor, TVCA may

remove one or both institutions from the allocation process to ensure that the funding follows the learner.

82. When a directly funded institution stops a subcontracting arrangement, they must make sure there is continuity of provision for those learners already on the programme and that there is no gap in provision created as a result. We remind directly funded institutions that learners on subcontracted provision are their responsibility. They are responsible for ensuring that existing learners are funded to the end of their programme either by a phased withdrawal from the relationship or by transferring funded numbers to another institution that has agreed to pick up the continuing students.
83. If a directly funded institution plans to stop a subcontracting arrangement, we expect them to give the subcontractor sufficient notice. This must be at least 3 months but may need to be longer. The directly funded institution must work with the subcontractor to put plans in place to ensure that students who are part way through their learning programme are supported to complete.
84. When a subcontracting arrangement stops, TVCA reserves the right to adjust the provider's allocation to remove the subcontracted numbers and related funding value. The decision on whether to make an adjustment to numbers and funding payments will depend on the scale of the subcontracted provision, the timing and process followed in ceasing the contract, and the nature of any resulting gap. However, TVCA reserves the right to re-profile in-year future payments to the provider to reflect the reduced subcontracting activity and learner numbers.
85. If we adjust the allocation for the former directly funded institution, the funding for continuing learners would usually transfer to the new prime institution. We would then consider an evidence-based business case from the new prime to fund any planned new starts.
86. When a directly funded institution ceases a subcontracting arrangement and the subcontractor transfers the provision to a different prime contractor, the directly funded institution must inform TVCA immediately. The directly funded institution must inform and liaise with their TVCA Relationship and Performance Officer to discuss and review their plans to ensure the continuity of provision for Tees Valley learners. The TVCA Relationship and Performance Officer must be made aware of all transfer arrangements prior to any agreement with another directly funded institution.

Annex A:

Providing External Assurance on Subcontracting Controls

Certificate

Lead Provider

We certify that the report prepared by _____ [insert name of external audit organisation] provides satisfactory assurance on the systems, processes and controls we have in place to manage subcontractors delivering education and training funded by the Tees Valley Combined Authority in 2025 to 2026 and does confirm that subcontractor controls will continue to be in place throughout 2025 to 2026 and an annual review of these controls will be undertaken to review compliance and provide assurance.

We certify that the report identified no recommendations or, where recommendations were identified, either these have been implemented or there is an implementation plan that sets out when the recommendations will be completed by.

The full copy of the report and, where relevant, the implementation plan, are available to TVCA if required.

Name:

Job title:

Signature:

Date:

Audit Organisation

We certify that we have delivered a report of the subcontracting systems, processes and controls of _____ [insert name of lead provider] in accordance with the requirements set out in 'TVCA 2025/26 Providing External Assurance on Subcontracting controls'.

Name:

Job title:

Signature:

Date: