# West Midlands to offer free AI training to all adults in £10m skills drive



Every adult in the West Midlands will be offered free training in how to use artificial intelligence, under a £10 million programme unveiled by West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) mayor Richard Parker as part of his new Growth Plan.

The three-year initiative will establish a region-wide AI Academy, bringing together colleges, universities, employers, specialist providers and community groups to co-design and deliver courses. Training will cover how to use AI tools “in everyday life at home, work or in the community” and create clear pathways into digital, data and AI jobs.

The WMCA says the scheme could reach up to 2.3 million adults across its constituent and partner councils. Parker, elected as the region’s first Labour mayor in 2024, framed AI skills as essential to avoiding a “digital divide” and making the West Midlands “the UK’s number one place for AI skills”.

The £10 million AI funding is part of a wider £30 million skills package, alongside equal tranches for bespoke employer-designed training and for programmes to help marginalised communities into work. The Growth Plan sets out a 10-year goal to create 100,000 good jobs, raise productivity and improve living standards.

Delivery at scale will require coordinated reach into workplaces, further-education colleges and community venues. Officials say the AI Academy will be the vehicle for partnership working, but acknowledge challenges such as ensuring digital access in excluded areas and aligning short courses with recognised credentials.

Early case studies highlight the potential impact: one engineering firm cut quotation times from 12 days to six seconds with AI-driven automation. The WMCA cites World Economic Forum research warning of the need for large-scale reskilling as automation advances.

Critics and practitioners will watch for detail on curricula, accreditation, vendor roles, privacy protections and funding beyond the initial three years. Supporters say that if the West Midlands can deliver high-quality, employer-linked training at scale, it could set a model for other regions, combining social inclusion with tech-led productivity gains.

Scoping work on the academy begins immediately, with rollout planned over the Growth Plan’s three-year timeline.

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.publictechnology.net/2025/08/12/education-and-skills/west-midlands-mayor-plans-free-ai-training-for-over-two-million-adults/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.publictechnology.net/2025/08/12/education-and-skills/west-midlands-mayor-plans-free-ai-training-for-over-two-million-adults/> - The article reports that the West Midlands Combined Authority, led by Mayor Richard Parker, will offer free artificial intelligence training to all adults across the region as part of a wider Growth Plan. It states a £10 million fund will support an AI training programme and a new AI Academy involving tech firms, colleges and community groups. The piece notes the wider £30 million skills package, with additional £10 million allocations for bespoke employer-shaped training and a more inclusive local skills system. It highlights WMCA’s remit over constituent councils including Birmingham, Coventry, Wolverhampton, Solihull, Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and partners.
3. <https://www.wmca.org.uk/news/mayor-announces-bold-ambition-to-give-every-adult-free-artificial-intelligence-skills-training/> - The WMCA press release outlines Mayor Richard Parker’s ambition to make the West Midlands the UK’s leading area for AI skills by offering free training to every adult. It confirms a £10 million investment for an AI training package and proposes a region-wide AI Academy partnering with colleges, universities, employers and community organisations. The release highlights the region’s AI sector strength and frames the initiative within the Growth Plan’s three-year programme to create career routes into digital, data and AI employment. It states the £10 million forms part of a broader £30 million skills commitment aimed at inclusive economic growth.
4. <https://growth.wmca.org.uk/> - The West Midlands Growth Plan sets out a decade-long strategy to boost the region’s productivity, create 100,000 good jobs and raise living standards. It emphasises inclusive growth, skills, innovation, green transition, and identifies digital and AI as priority sectors. The plan includes funding and interventions to expand training, career pathways and employer-led provision, with a focus on closing skills gaps and supporting marginalised communities. It presents targets, missions and investment priorities and situates the AI training ambition within a broader economic blueprint. The document provides evidence, regional statistics and policy commitments to guide delivery and partnership working across local authorities.
5. <https://www.wmca.org.uk/who-we-are/> - The WMCA 'Who we are' page explains the combined authority’s role, purpose and structure. It states the WMCA was set up to deliver devolution, improving transport, housing, economic growth and skills across the region. The page lists seven constituent authorities with full voting rights — Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton — plus a number of non-constituent local councils and observer organisations. It clarifies the mayoral leadership model, the Mayor’s role and the board composition, and provides links to the constitution and governance documents. The page serves as an authoritative summary of WMCA membership and remit for partners.
6. <https://www.expressandstar.com/news/business/2025/08/11/ambitious-10-million-plan-to-teach-west-midlands-adults-how-to-use-ai/> - The Express & Star piece reports Mayor Richard Parker’s announcement of an £10 million plan to give every West Midlands adult free training in how to use artificial intelligence. It reiterates that the initiative forms part of the Growth Plan and will include establishing a regionwide AI Academy in partnership with tech firms, colleges and community providers. The article cites WMCA figures on the local AI sector, notes ambitions to create career routes into digital jobs, and places the £10 million AI package within a wider £30 million skills commitment. It describes the plan as aimed at boosting opportunity and productivity.
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-68959995> - The BBC report covers Richard Parker’s narrow victory in the 2024 West Midlands mayoral election, defeating incumbent Andy Street by approximately 1,500 votes. It outlines recounts and close counts across constituent councils and situates the result within wider local election losses for the Conservatives. The article notes Parker is the first Labour mayor of the West Midlands since the role was established and mentions his priorities including jobs, skills and public services. It records vote totals and turnout and includes quotes from Parker following the result. The piece provides authoritative election coverage and background on the WMCA mayoralty and context.