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Adult education:
making it a genuine
second chance

@TheIFS

Adult education: the past, present and future



Economic
and Social
Research Council

A Lifetime Skills Guarantee

“

My message today is that at every stage of your life, this government will help you get the skills you need.

”

Boris Johnson
September 2020

The Lifetime Skills Guarantee

- Since the PM's speech in 2020, we have learnt a lot more about the policy reforms the government will implement
 - 1) Additional spending on adult education
 - 2) Lifelong loan entitlement
 - 3) Reforms to technical qualifications
- This set of reforms has the potential to affect every adult learner from those studying at local colleges to university students



1) Additional spending on adult education

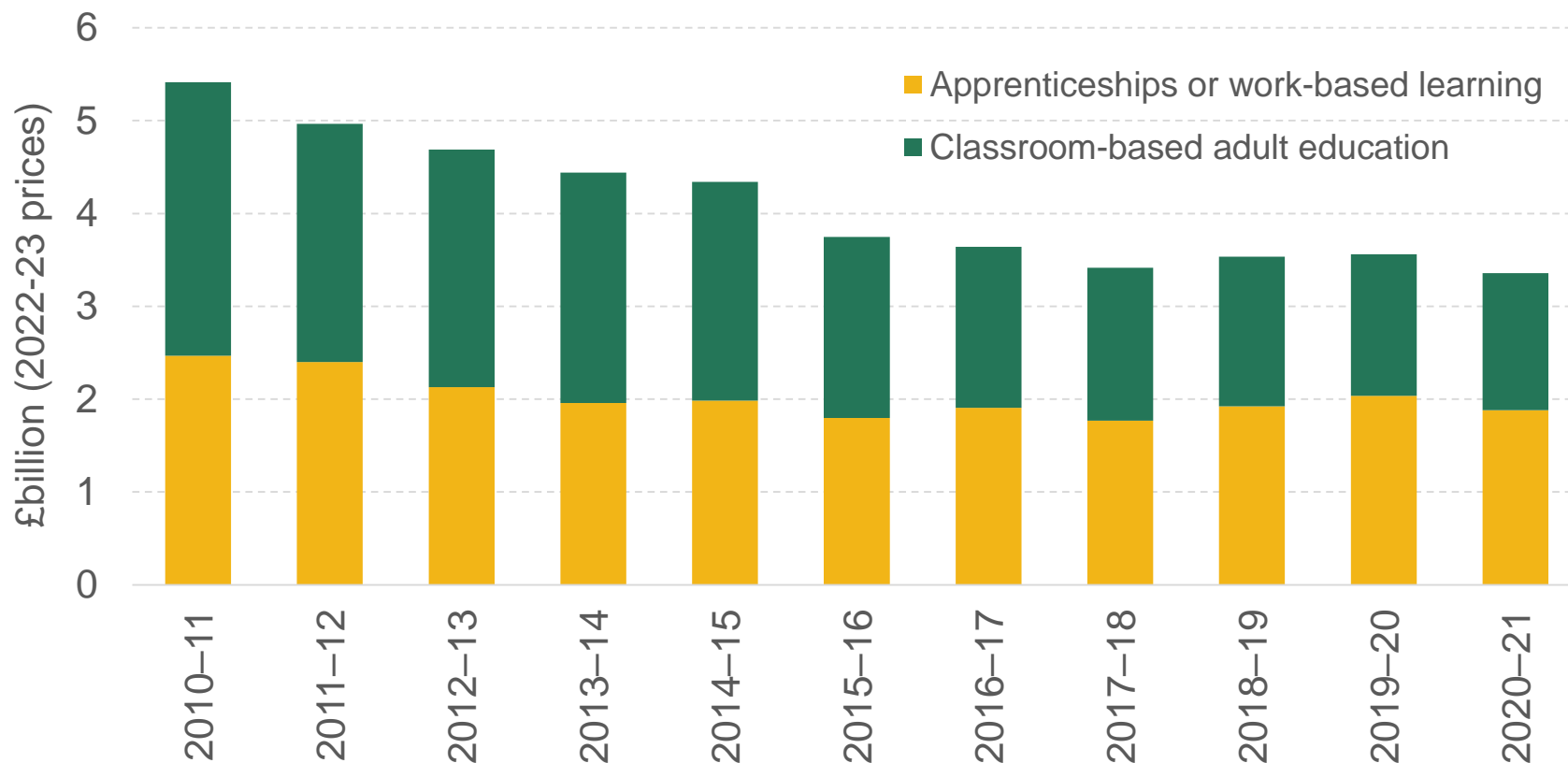
An additional **£3.8 billion** skills spending during this parliament



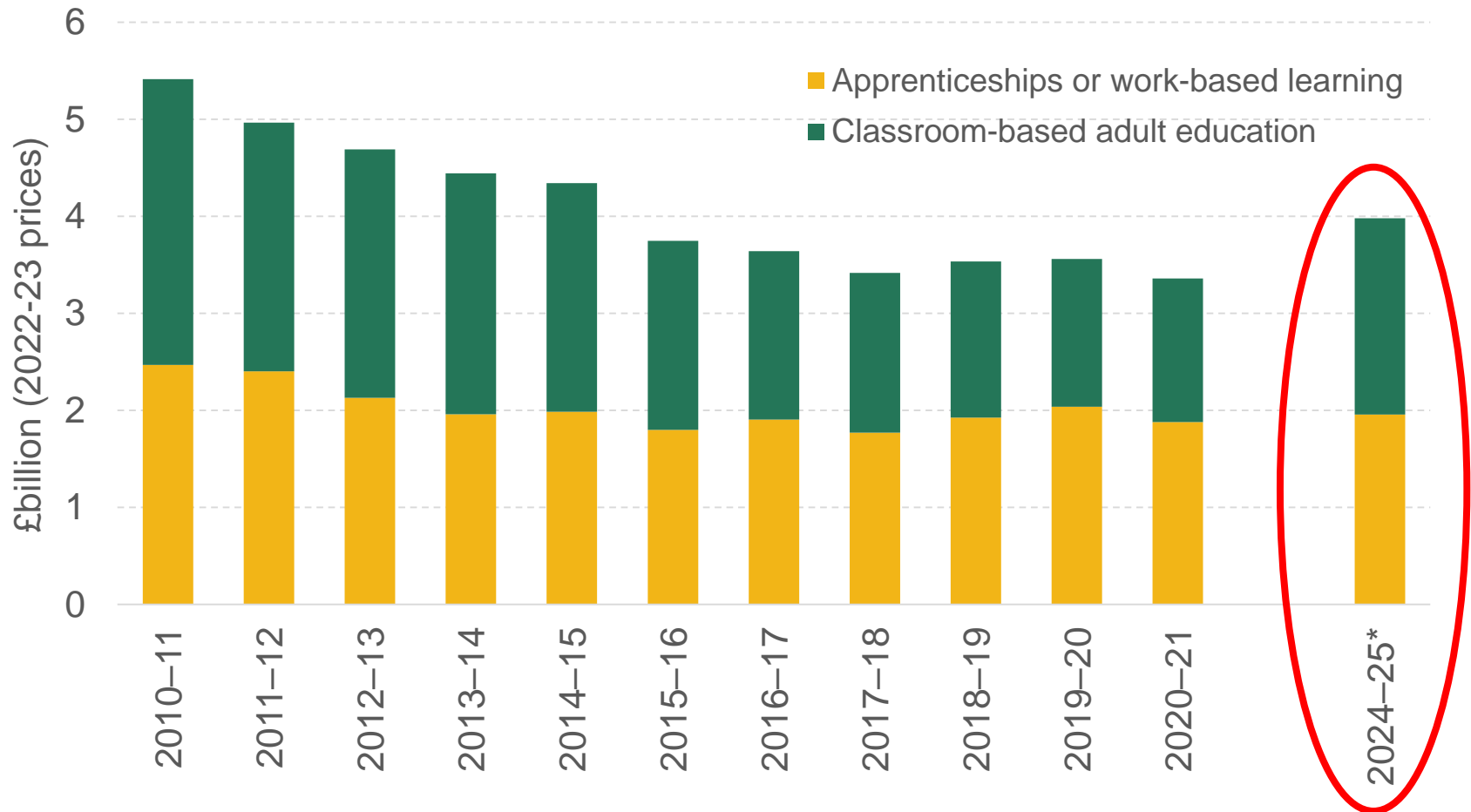
- In the 2021 Spending Review the government outlined the following spending programmes:
 - 1) £2.5 billion National Skills Fund
 - 2) Additional apprenticeship funding
 - 3) £560 million on the new 'Multiply' programme

- This will equate to an **additional £900m** (real terms) spending in **2024-25** relative to **2019-20**

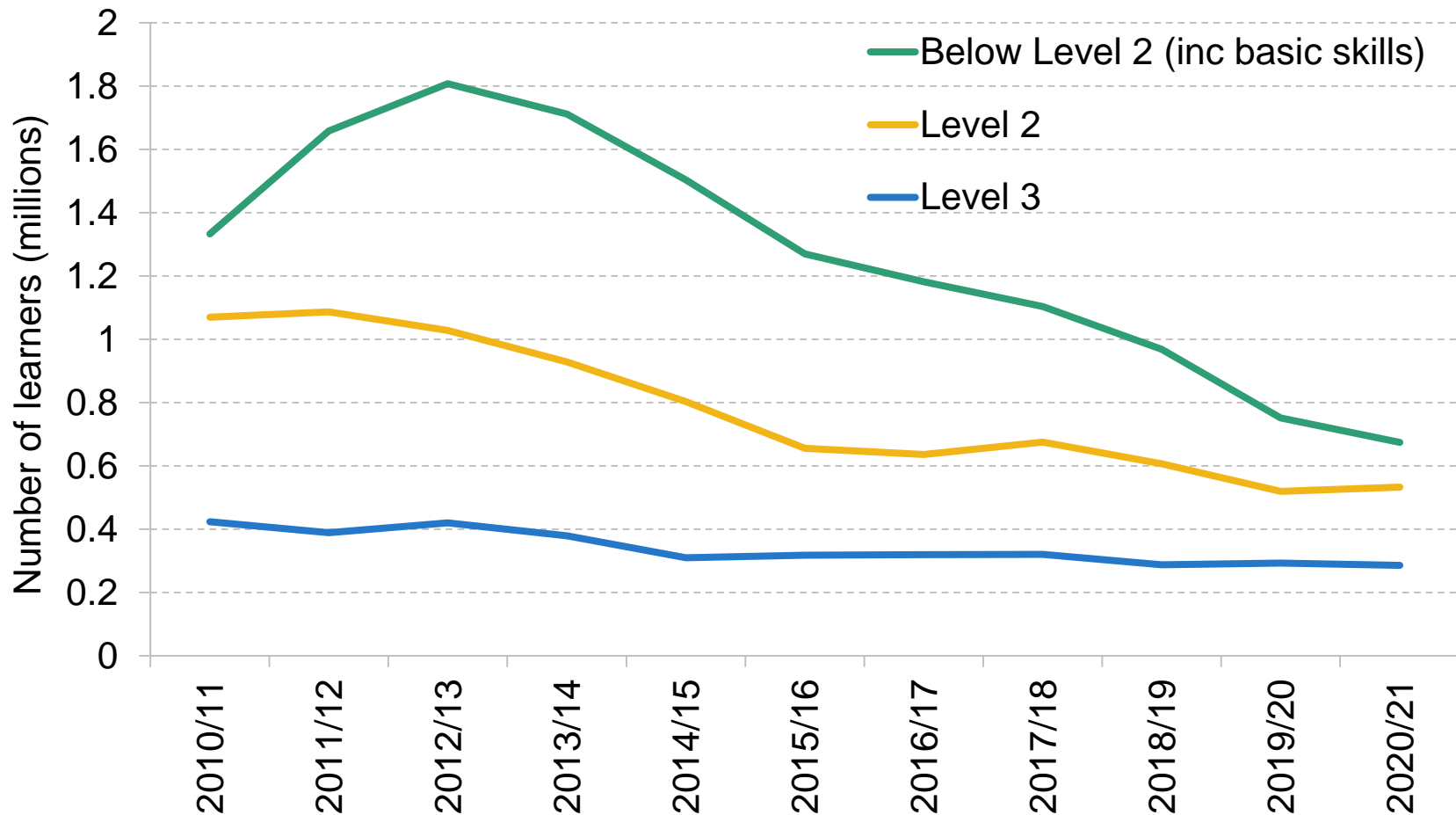
Spending on adult education fell by 38% over the last decade



The additional spending will bring back to around **2015 levels**, still **25% lower** than in 2010



The number of adult learners at Level 2 and below has fallen by 50%



How is money being spent to support low-skilled adults?

- The government has already restored public funding for first Level 3 (A Level or equivalent) qualifications
- Yet there is no commitment to restore full funding for lower level courses, instead these learners will get:
 - The new 'Multiply' programme
 - Skills bootcamps
- While the extra support is important, these are untested courses which may not lead to formal qualifications



2) The Lifelong Loan Entitlement

The Lifelong Loan Entitlement

- The LLE – to be introduced in 2025 – will give everyone access to funding for the equivalent of four years of post-18 education

- The LLE will change the existing system in three ways:
 - 1) Unify student finance system for HE and FE
 - 2) Introduce funding for separate modules
 - 3) Reform Equivalent and Lower Qualification (ELQ) restrictions

- These changes should make funding more flexible and enable more people to take higher technical qualifications

There are at least three major questions about the LLE

- However, it is difficult to evaluate the impact of the LLE until we know the answers to the following questions:
 - 1) Which courses will be eligible for the LLE?
 - 2) Will universities and colleges provide modular courses?
 - 3) How will ELQ rules be relaxed?
- The government are currently consulting on (1) and (3), while higher education short courses are being trialled this September



3) Reforms to technical qualifications

It is not just funding changes

- This government (and previous) are also reforming the qualification landscape

- 1) Improve the quality of existing training and education
 - Move from apprenticeship frameworks to standards
 - Higher technical qualifications

- 2) Introduce new courses to address gaps in technical education
 - T Levels
 - Skills bootcamps

Just one more set of reforms to adult education?

- These reforms are targeted at addressing current issues with the quality and provision of technical education
- The government is right to focus on improving the standards of technical education and it is sensible to seek employer engagement
- Yet there is the risk that this becomes just the latest in a long list of reforms to technical education in the UK

- In recent years, there have been a range of reforms to adult education in part to deliver the Lifetime Skills Guarantee

- 1) **Additional spending** will only partially reverse cuts and potentially also the large fall in the number of adult learners

- 2) **The Lifelong Loan Entitlement** is a sensible strategy but a lot of important questions remain unanswered

- 3) **Reforming technical education** is a key priority, but many governments have (unsuccessfully) attempted this over the years

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