

Submissions to London Assembly Economy Committee call for evidence on London's Adult Education Budget

As part of the London Assembly Economy Committee's investigation into the Adult Education Budget (AEB) in London, the Committee published a call for evidence. The Committee set out to hear from learners, training providers, employers, and any other groups with an interest in adult education in London. The call for evidence was published in September 2022, and the deadline for responses was 21 October 2022. The responses are compiled in this document.

Response to call for evidence received from London HOLEX



Introduction

London HOLEX are pleased to respond to this scrutiny exercise and we have responded to the nine questions suggested. London HOLEX represents the 36 adult community education services, institutions and centres in London. HOLEX London is part of a national organisation and as such is in a good place to compare London to the other Mayoral Combined Authorities in other parts of the country. We would be pleased to expand on any of the points we raise in our response.

- 1. What are the social and economic benefits of adult education in London? These benefits could include helping to get people into work, but could also relate to social outcomes such as improved health and wellbeing.**

The Mayor's Skills Road Map sets out fully the outcomes for London and it recognises both the economic and social justice aspects of adult education. The draft was consulted upon and learners, stakeholders and learning institutions feel they were fully part of the development. Compared to other areas of the country that have delegated powers the GLA have been very inclusive in developing their policy.

The provider base has been encouraged not only to do level 3 vocational programmes but also to ensure a pipeline of level 1 and 2 qualifications and to prioritise the national entitlements for English language, maths and digital. GLA have expanded these entitlements to cover sign language.

GLA have continued to support the wider benefits of learning and Annex 1 sets out the type of learner centred provision that is delivered via the London Adult Community Education network.

- 2. How is London's adult education system currently working for learners, in particular the most disadvantaged learners, and could it be improved? If so, how?**

The ACE provider network provides programmes that support the most disadvantaged learners - see Annex 1.

The ACE provider network funding agreement with the GLA sets out scope of their work. As part of this agreement there is a requirement to prioritise learners from the most deprived parts of London. This is monitored through the Individual Learner Record (ILR) and service plans. The data demonstrates that the AEB delegated to ACE services in London goes on the most deprived areas and supports those learners into work and improving life chances.

3. What has the impact of the Mayor's reforms to the AEB been since it was delegated at the start of the 2019/20 academic year? Have these reforms made a significant difference to how the AEB is spent? What differences have you noticed since 2019/20?

Yes, the major reforms have made a vast difference to learners - for example, introducing the living wage at the means tested level and not the minimum wage level as used by DfE has allowed many thousands of adults to access adult education for free. The Mayor was quick to understand the importance of ESOL in London and the changes to policy have allowed access to learners who need language support the most. The 10% funding uplift for English and Math has been most welcomed but it still falls short of the optimum learning hours needed to support adults learning maths and English. Recognising and support British Sign Language (BSL) speakers and learners with special needs and disabilities (SEND) is another area that has been welcomed however as the numbers are still small more joint work needs to be done promote these programmes. Other initiatives have encouraged innovation and have created a joined up approach. GLA pragmatic treatment of the new Multiply fund has allowed learning institutions, services, centres and colleges to quickly move into delivery and implementation.

4. Is London's AEB targeting courses that improve the life chances and employment prospects of Londoners, and is funding being directed towards the learners that need it most?

Yes, London is targeting programmes that improve life chances and employment prospects. The funding agreement with the ACE provider base highlights the expectation that providers will target the most vulnerable in society, and the evidence and type of courses being provided demonstrate that is having impact - see Annex 1 for the type of provision being delivered.

5. Is London's AEB working for employers? Is it helping to address London's skills needs and workforce gaps? What other measures would support employers with London's skills needs and workforce gaps?

The Skills Road Map was generated through discussion and consultation with London employer groups. It sets out the key growth industries and those industries and businesses that London relies on, such as the financial services sector and the construction industry. It recognises the role of creative industries and the importance of tourism to London. It has worked to balance the competing priorities of these industries while having an eye on those who are unemployed and need basic education before they can get a foot on the job ladder. The GLA has been proactive and had convened joint work between the Skills for Londoners and Skills Business Partnership Boards, by doing so the Mayor has been able to clearly establish a framework within which employers, providers and other stakeholders can come together to articulate current and emerging skills needs, with a view to provision being developed to meet those needs.

6. What difference has the delegation of the AEB to London made to colleges and other training providers?

GLA have made a vast difference by recognising and understanding the granularity of the needs of Londoners compared to DfE who had to look at the whole of England. Devolution has allowed locally based providers such LA ACE providers, learning

institutions and colleges to determine what is needed for the residents of their councils and areas. They have allowed providers to be agile and were supportive throughout Covid, helping providers to go online and keep “London Learning”. This happened because they were able to quickly move funding around. This could not and did not happen in areas funded directly by ESFA.

7. Would colleges and other training providers like to see the Mayor make further reforms to how the AEB is allocated?

ACE services, learning institutions and colleges would like the Mayor to use his good offices to:

- bring together Health Services and Adult Education to develop a London wide social prescribing policy.
- quicken up the process of having agreed student pathways from entry level to level 3 and beyond.
- encourage the university sector to open their doors to adult education services so there can be shared use.
- determine a new family learning policy for London which encourages schools to welcome adult education in to use their premises.
- lobby government to ensure all adult funding is delegated to GLA especially Bootcamps and the Skills for Life level 3 offer.
- establish an ESOL policy for London that brings together all government language offers, which also standardises the entry criteria and allows all ESOL learners to have free provision. Within this policy determine has a strand that covers language requirements for young (16-18) recently arrived students.
- work with learning institutions, services, centres and colleges to mitigate the impact of Covid and encourage the vulnerable and older learners back to learning
- prioritise sustainability and the green agenda
- bring forward work to establish a systematic system to collect destination data on all types of learners

8. Do colleges and other training providers feel that the Mayor adequately consults with them and works in a collaborative way? If not, what could be improved? How does this compare to before delegation?

Adult Community Education services, learning institutions and centres were pleased to be involved in the policy development and implementation strategy developed by the GLA, The GLA has built up strong relationships and uses a partnership approach. They have given time for ideas to be developed and welcomed views and comments from others. They have been open to attending sector meetings and answering all questions quickly.

They have accepted the concept of having representatives from adult education on the Skills Board and are transparent, with minutes of meetings being published on their websites. When compared to other skills devolved areas, London is leading the way on transparent government and working in progressive partnership with learning institutions.

9. What further reforms could the Mayor make to the AEB, or by the Government in relation to funding in order to benefit learners, employers and training providers in London.

England does not have a Lifelong Learning strategy. The Mayor could use his good offices to encourage DfE to work with other departments such Health, Business, DWP, Levelling Up and the Home Office to write one in partnership with MCAs and the GLA. This new strategy should bring together all the ad hoc programmes - such as Bootcamps and Free level 3 - with the AEB and the total fund should then be delegated. This Lifelong Learning strategy should embrace the power of adult education to improve productivity and personal wellbeing, covering all levels from entry level to post graduate and establish clear progressions routes. This policy would need to be funded properly, allowing for inflation and increased cost of living, with the 2011 cuts restored.

Annex 1

Adult Community Education Programmes in London

Vocational Programmes

- Vocational level 1, 2 and some level 3 qualifications
 - Bookkeeping,
 - Children education- support workers
 - Care
 - Community Interpretation
 - Counselling
 - Floristry
 - Horticulture
 - Health and Social Care
 - Media
 - Art and Design
 - Digital
- GCSE and Functional Skills, Maths and English

Basic/Essential Skills

- Literacy - entry levels 123, level 1 and level 2
- ESOL
- Numeracy/Maths - entry level 123, level 1 and level 2
- Digital entitlement

Social Justice - Wider benefits of learning

- those engaging in learning to improve their ability to manage household budgets,
- those needing to learn to cook cheaply to ensure they can survive the recession,
- those engaging in adult learning for health and wellbeing,
- those without the confidence to enrol on a formal course,
- support for integration policies that will help combat racial tension and improve community cohesion,
- provision that brings communities together and reduces isolation,
- provision that enables parents and children to learn together,
- provision that enables communities to have a voice,
- provision that supports our most vulnerable residents including older people,
- provision that supports English language development for parents and families (who may not be able to enter the labour market for years) for speakers of other languages including refugees, asylum seekers and evacuees,
- provision that helps generate additional funding through the Pound Plus model - thus enabling the provider to make extra investment in courses for those most in need, and

- provision for those studying for personal development for whom adult education is life changing.
- progress towards formal learning or employment and/or improvement in health and wellbeing, including mental health and/or developing strong communities

The current policy directs learning institutions to:

- focus public funding on people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate, including in rural areas and for people on low incomes with low skills,
- collect fee income from people who can afford to pay and use it where possible to extend provision to those who cannot,
- widen participation and transform people's destinies by supporting progression relevant to personal circumstances, including:
 - improved confidence and willingness to engage in learning,
 - acquisition of skills preparing people for training, employment and/or self-employment
 - improved digital, financial literacy and/or communication skills
 - making parents/carers better equipped to support and encourage their children's learning,
 - improved/maintained health and/or social wellbeing.
- develop stronger communities, with more self-sufficient, connected and pro-active citizens, leading to:
 - increased volunteering, civic engagement and social integration
 - reduced costs on welfare, health and anti-social behaviour
 - increased online learning and self-organised learning
 - the lives of our most troubled families being turned around
- commission, deliver and support learning in ways that contribute directly to these objectives, including:
 - bringing together people from backgrounds, cultures and income groups, including people who can/cannot afford to pay
 - using effective local partnerships to bring together key providers and relevant local agencies and services
 - devolving planning and accountability to neighbourhood/parish level, with local people involved in decisions about the learning offer
 - involving volunteers and voluntary and community sector groups, shifting long-term 'blocked' classes into learning clubs, growing self-organised learning groups, and encouraging employers to support informal learning in the workplace
 - supporting the wider use of online information and learning resources
 - minimising overheads, bureaucracy and administration
 - health and wellbeing outcomes (including for those with long-term health conditions, those referred through social prescribing routes and those managing mental ill health)
 - personal outcomes (including the development of transferable skills, green skills and confidence which are of benefit to our society, even when

gained by people, such as carers, parents, people with physical disabilities and older people, who are not on a path to employment)

- community integration and inclusion outcomes (including community cohesion, Prevent, reduction in loneliness and isolation)
- creative and cultural outcomes
- outcomes that support people through transitions in their life-course, including parenting, caring, independent living, and ageing

Response to call for evidence received from Morley College London

61 Westminster Bridge Road
London
SE1 7HT

17 October 2022

Dear Colleagues

RE: London Assembly's Economy Committee - Call for Evidence

Please find below the response from Morley College London to the call for evidence from the London Assembly Economy Committee regarding London's Adult Education Budget.

As you may be aware, Morley College London is one of the oldest institutions of adult learning in the country, having been founded as a college in 1889 to serve our local communities. Last year there were 11,500 students, making 22,000 enrolments, who benefited from courses at Morley. The majority of our students are funded by the GLA through the adult education budget including at our Waterloo centre where in 2021-22 over 6000 students (14,700 enrolments) studied on over two thousand community learning funded courses.

Mindful that the committee will be receiving evidence from providers in the further education sector, we are focussing our response on the positive impact of the GLA on community learning. In this response we have clustered the nine questions into four themes, which we address in turn below.

The impact of adult education on learners (Questions 1 and 2)

We know that adult education can deliver great impact and is one of the most significant pieces of social machinery available to the GLA. A vital type of adult education is community learning: often short non-accredited provision delivered both within community settings and at scale

within London's Institutes of Adult Learning, and often receiving less emphasis than its FE funding cousins but nonetheless providing essential skills for life as well as work. Community learning has an impact way beyond its low costs, for example the overall Department for Education budget is £89 billion, whilst within this the adult community learning budget is around £200million but positively affects hundreds of thousands of people's lives. And within the GLA, the overall AEB budget is around £320million, with a small proportion of this dedicated to valuable community learning courses changing the lives of tens of thousands of Londoners.

Community Learning, supported by the GLA, has a reach far beyond the walls of a college, operating in community venues, schools, children's centres and local partner organisations which makes adult education provision accessible to people even in the most isolated of areas.

But most significantly the impact of community learning is manifold. A structured adult education class, with an experienced tutor creating a safe learning space, engaging people from across a community in order for them to gain knowledge, skills and understanding, is a powerful intervention with numerous outcomes. Policy makers, educationalists and students have long recognised that adult community education has always had multiple outcomes, multiple functions, that do not come at the cost of one another – these multiple outcomes occur alongside one another, as part of the process of structured learning described above. These outcomes include:

- enabling people to move into employment, or gain qualifications and skills that bring them closer to employment;
- developing life skills, including 'fusion' skills so essential to an individual's success in life, including problem solving, collaborative working, communication, creative thinking and confidence, and the development of values including an understanding of tolerance, democracy and climate awareness informing green skills.
- improving health and wellbeing amongst individuals and their families;
- nurturing community integration and contribution, building relationships whilst reducing isolation and loneliness;
- extending cultural participation and engagement to those who would otherwise be excluded (helping to promote cultural diversity and avoid cultural division);
- supporting people through life's transitions, including independent living (for adults with a physical or learning disability or difficulty), raising a family and supporting children's learning (for parents and grandparents), supporting people through retirement and ageing whilst enabling them to continue to their civic contribution as volunteers and active citizens.

It might be helpful to think of these different types of outcomes through the framework of a ‘Capitals’ model, and we are mindful that this broad multi-outcome approach has been recognised by the GLA, for example in the recent excellent awards event where adult education, including community learning, was recognised. This approach ensures that providers can use the AEB to fund provision for adult education reaching and engaging even those most vulnerable Londoners who are farthest away from the labour market, but who will still benefit from the impact that adult education has on their lives.

Economic Capital	Social Capital	Cultural Capital	Human Capital
Progression towards employment	Community integration	Cultural participation	Health & Wellbeing
Further qualifications and specialism	Community inclusion	Cultural contribution	Life skills, green skills and support through life's transitions

GLA have undertaken research supporting the wider impact of adult education, drawing conclusions in line with numerous recent evidence, both national and international, which shows the value and wider impact of adult learning on communities and students. This evidence includes the UNESCO’s Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE 3 , 2016) and the Learning & Work Institute’s report Healthy, Wealthy and Wise (2017). We highlight two other significant pieces of research below:

“What Are The Wider Benefits Of Learning Across The Life Course?” Government Office For Science 2017: *Adult learning has a positive effect on health, and on the educational achievement of their children and their children’s health. Adult learning fosters civic participation, and leads to a higher degree of trust in people of different religions and nationalities. Adult learning can reduce reoffending rates for a number of categories of prisoners. And engagement in learning enhances older people’s contribution to civic, social and cultural life.*

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/635837/Skills_and_lifelong_learning_-_the_benefits_of_adult_learning_-_schuller_-_final.pdf

“Adult Education: Important for Health & Wellbeing”, University of Warwick Institute for Employment Research, 2017: *Adult education does keep individuals well and supports longer and productive lives. Adult education does help meet major challenges such as: ageing,*

loneliness, long-term conditions, mental health and well-being and community cohesion. Adult education does help save money in the National Health Service and the social care system.

<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/news/?newsItem=8a17841a6142b5ad0161575b02ed3bf0>

Since the delegation of the AEB budget, the GLA have recognised this impact of the wider, social outcomes of learning, valuing the acquisition of skills for both life and work. Their commitment to an inclusive perspective on skills is demonstrated by the work underway with the London Learner Survey to more fully understand the impact of adult learning in its fullest sense, and we urge the GLA to continue to recognise the full value and wider impact of adult learning.

The impact of AEB on employment and employers (Questions 4 and 5)

From a provider perspective, the recognition outlined above of the broader skills that London's workforce needs, and the continued GLA funding of courses that deliver those courses, is critical. At Morley College London we have been working with employer representative bodies, including the Southbank Employers Group, to try to identify these broader, transferable, skills, which have been captured in the T Shaped Skills model used at Morley. This includes important fusion skills (creative thinking, critical thinking, communication and collaborative working) as well as green skills and climate literacy that we know both employees and employers will need for future success in tackling this climate emergency.

We also recognise the value and significance of the variations made by the Mayor to AEB funding rules to support those earning below the London living wage. This includes fully funding level 3 qualifications to encourage progression to advanced learning in support of better paid, sustainable employment, with the Skills for Londoners strategy clear in its ambition for Londoners to progress to higher levels of learning

The impact of the GLA reforms since delegation (Questions 3 and 6)

From across the sector in London there is a recognition that delegation of AEB has been a positive force for adult education in London. The GLA has engaged with providers in more depth and detail than that of previous funding bodies (the SFA and ESFA) particular in consideration of the intent and impact of adult education, and in recognising the wider outcomes of adult learning on the lives of Londoners.

There has been greatly valued, constructive, support and challenge with providers from the Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills (Jules Pipe CBE) and his team, who have been responsive and understanding of the challenges and opportunities that providers are working to address in the interests of Londoners, supported by ongoing dialogue with providers to support forward planning.

Since receiving the devolved adult education budget the GLA have demonstrated a determined responsiveness to recent crises. During the pandemic we hugely appreciated the emergency support needed to fund essential safety equipment and modifications in college buildings to enable learning to continue safely. And the GLA have grasped the inflationary pressures that providers are under, and have acted to increase the London weighting factor within our funding from 10% to 13.5%.

And the GLA have remained learner focussed, with the recent Mayor of London Adult Learning awards being a wonderful celebration of the life-changing impact of adult education on the lives of Londoners.

Future changes and improvements (Questions 7, 8 and 9).

We would welcome opportunities to bid again for LEAP capital funding, and support for projects designed to support and encourage Londoners to re-engage in learning. At Morley LEAP funding supported a complete renovation of the entrance to a college centre to make it accessible and to provide a new student hub for information, advice and guidance.

The London Learner Survey is an important step in understanding the wider impact of adult learning, and as the survey evolves there may be further changes that could help engagement and boost participation in capturing the impact of adult education. For example, drawing on the expertise within London's adult education community, the GLA could lead the way in developing an App, easy to use and highly visual, which captures the impact of adult education – Morley would be happy to contribute to the development of this, based on our own experience of developing online methods for capturing impact.

We hope that this response is helpful for the call for evidence by the London Assembly's Economy Committee, and please do not hesitate to contact us should further clarification or detail be required.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Jones', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gerald Jones
Director of Community Learning
Morley College London

Response to call for evidence received from London Borough of Hounslow

Response to London Assembly Devolved AEB Consultation

London Borough of Hounslow: Adult and Community Education Service

Introduction

Hounslow Adult and Community Education (known as Learn Hounslow) delivers the council's Adult Education Budget allocation, which funds a range of learning opportunities to help adults develop their knowledge, skills and confidence so they can re-skill, up-skill, have a voice, move into work, improve their prospects and support their families.

Our offer is shaped to meet the needs of residents who are furthest from employment and least likely to take it up, and is comprised of family learning, basic skills, ESOL, creative craft and enterprise, digital skills and technology, a range of vocational curricula to support sustainable employment and wellbeing. The pathway is from pre-entry/complete beginner to level 3.

10. What are the social and economic benefits of adult education in London?

These benefits could include helping to get people into work, but could also relate to social outcomes such as improved health and wellbeing.

Irrespective of the subject area, Adult Education delivered by local authority providers contributes to Londoners' personal development, their potential to engage with their local community, their physical and mental wellbeing, and their confidence leading to social integration, stronger and healthier communities and a potential/more resilient workforce. We know these outcomes are achieved through our own learner surveys, achievement results and the distance travelled by learners on our courses.

The Mayor's Skills Road Map includes the London Learner Survey, which will provide strong evidence of the wide ranging impacts of adult and community education.

11. How is London's adult education system currently working for learners, in particular the most disadvantaged learners, and could it be improved? If so, how?

Information from our ILR and our service plans shows that Hounslow Adult and Community Education has an offer which engages a high proportion of residents who are on benefits or low wage, live in areas of multiple deprivation, are from disadvantaged equalities groups (women, minority ethnic groups, refugees and asylum seekers and those with learning difficulty and disability) and have no or low prior educational attainment. Both the funding rules (annex 2) and the regulator (Ofsted)

define the objectives of adult and community education in this question, so as a provider we are incentivised and motivated to tailor the curriculum offer to the needs of the most disadvantaged and support them into better outcomes.

12. What has the impact of the Mayor's reforms to the AEB been since it was delegated at the start of the 2019/20 academic year? Have these reforms made a significant difference to how the AEB is spent? What differences have you noticed since 2019/20?

Yes, the Mayor of London's reforms have made a difference. For example, the London Living Wage minimum threshold in addition to benefits as a means-test has brought many learners into the offer for free. The London Factor for level 2 and below qualifications allows the service to enrich our offer and increase the ways in which we support our residents with their ambition for learning and work. The use of Community Learning funding to support those whose employment was impacted by Covid has allowed us to innovate with non-regulated courses to support residents into work. Other initiatives, such as the Good Work for All project have provide a 'springboard' for the service to develop its non-regulated offer into qualification pathways in two sector areas which are significant in our local economy. The Multiply fund allocation – using the existing provider network/infrastructure has allowed our service to develop initial plans quickly and start running courses.

13. Is London's AEB targeting courses that improve the life chances and employment prospects of Londoners, and is funding being directed towards the learners that need it most?

Yes, London is targeting programmes that improve life chances and employment prospects. As mentioned above this is specifically defined in the funding rules and Ofsted Education Inspection Framework criteria. The ILR data shows the profile of who is engaged, their educational and progression outcomes.

14. Is London's AEB working for employers? Is it helping to address London's skills needs and workforce gaps? What other measures would support employers with London's skills needs and workforce gaps?

The Skills Road Map was generated through discussion and consultation with London employer groups. It sets out the key growth industries and those industries and businesses that London relies on. The policy recognises that realistically, those engage in adult and community education may have a long learning journey which they need to embark on, whilst at the same time working in lower level positions to support themselves and their families. Other measures which could be considered to support employers would be more flexibility for providers to deliver adult education in the workplace (currently restricted to the entitlement offer only) and therefore allow more scope for workforce development through the study of approved qualification learning aims, including ESOL.

15. What difference has the delegation of the AEB to London made to colleges and other training providers?

Devolution has allowed us to focus on our local residents. Our service also contributes to our local economy and infrastructure and the Covid-driven flexibilities of the devolved funding combined with other initiatives of the GLA, allowed us to provide quickly considerable support for digital inclusion for our workforce (training and resources) and residents (devices, data and skills) and rapidly re-shape our curriculum offer and deliver it in a different way to a high standard – thereby keeping going for our residents.

16. Would colleges and other training providers like to see the Mayor make further reforms to how the AEB is allocated?

Yes:

- bring together Health Services and Adult Education to develop a London wide social prescribing policy.
- determine a new family learning policy for London which encourages schools to welcome adult education in to use their premises.
- lobby government to ensure all adult funding is delegated to GLA
- Include ESOL learning aims in the entitlement offer
- Recognise and celebrate the benefits of community learning for those who don't work the difference it makes to sustaining good health and wellbeing for vulnerable and older learners.

17. Do colleges and other training providers feel that the Mayor adequately consults with them and works in a collaborative way? If not, what could be improved? How does this compare to before delegation?

We were consulted on Skills for Londoners and then the Skills Roadmap. There is information sharing and consultation through the West London Skills Board, and collaboration, for example, with the No Wrong Door approach. More recently, there have been more information sessions and roundtable events – which are always informative.

18. What further reforms could the Mayor make to the AEB, or by the Government in relation to funding in order to benefit learners, employers and training providers in London.

England does not have a Lifelong Learning strategy. The Mayor could encourage DfE to work with other departments such as Health, Business, DWP, Levelling Up and the Home Office to write one in partnership with MCAs and the GLA. This new strategy should bring together all the ad hoc programmes - such as Bootcamps and Free level 3 - with the AEB and the total fund should then be delegated. This Lifelong Learning strategy should embrace the power of adult education to improve productivity and personal wellbeing, covering all levels from entry level to post graduate and establish clear progressions routes. This policy would need to be funded properly, allowing for inflation and increased cost of living, with the 2011 cuts restored.

Dr Margaret Joojo-Richards
Service Manager: Adult and Community Education Service

Response to call for evidence received from London & South East Education Group



London & South East Education Group evidence submission on London's Adult Education Budget to the London Assembly Economy Committee, October 2022.

Thank you for providing the opportunity to provide evidence on London's Adult Education Budget to the London Assembly Economy Committee.

Social and economic impact of Adult Education Budget

In our experience at London South East Colleges (LSEC), the Mayor's reforms to the AEB have been positive. The reforms have provided much needed funding to the sector, supporting us to attract and retain high quality staff to help meet learner demand. Provision funded via the AEB provides important employment skills such as basic English, maths, and digital skills, which also support learners to better connect with and feel part of their communities. Learners who are employed gain the qualifications and training needed to progress in work. This supports individuals and their families, and has broader social and economic benefits, strengthening local communities, building wealth and local business ([Upskilling and retraining the adult workforce - POST \(parliament.uk\)](#)¹ provides a useful summary of these). ~~Initiatives which provide funding for priority groups and courses~~ have been helpful in removing some barriers to learning, for example the full funding for Londoners earning below the Living Wage.

The flexibility provided by the current funding model is welcome and supports close working with employers by covering delivery costs for bespoke training. One way this might be strengthened is by providing funding to recognise the time required to develop this bespoke training, for example through a bespoke training uplift. This could encourage more providers to work closely with employers to address local skills needs by covering the additional costs associated with development of training provision.

To have a greater impact across the adult and broader further education sector, we would welcome development of funding and other initiatives which are complementary and strengthen both adult and 16-19 provision across London. Doing so could help maximise the impact of AEB and other funding, working with other parts of the sector to draw on learning, identify shared priorities and develop policy and funding solutions to make the best use of the resources available, and make the case for more funding in priority areas. For example, this might focus on shared challenges and opportunities to recruit and train staff, support enrolment activities for the most disadvantaged learners and provision of key skills.

Below we outline two areas which the London Assembly may wish to consider to enhance access, delivery and collaboration.

Improving communication about the benefits of adult education to individuals, families,

communities and businesses and funding available to support this. We must acknowledge that encouraging uptake of education is particularly challenging at the moment with many Londoners facing difficult decisions about whether to invest in their skills to secure work or progress in employment or prioritising their immediate income due to the cost of living crisis. However, generating learner and business demand is a critical step, with many of those people who could benefit the most facing significant practical barriers to doing so. More initiatives to increase public awareness and developing practical support to help those facing barriers could help support uptake (e.g. for those facing language barriers, childcare or other caring responsibilities).

- Providing opportunities for funders and providers to work collaboratively. The GLA would be perfectly placed to bring together providers, funders and other stakeholders to find common ground and develop solutions to shared challenges. This could be a powerful network/forum in which to forge new partnerships in the region and work together to use adult education to transform communities across London.

Approach to consultation

In our experience, the Mayor regularly consults with providers directly, or via commissioned agencies, including the independent evaluation of the AEB being undertaken by IFF. We welcome this engagement and efforts to better understand the impacts through external evaluation.

The first evaluation report from IFF (published in May 2022) identified aspects that are working well and some areas for attention, particularly to improve accessibility for learners with a disability or learning difficulty across London and uptake of priority provision. It would be helpful to see more about how the recommendations from this research and other consultation are being taken forward to address areas identified and further strengthen initiatives to support adult education.

Response to call for evidence received from Westminster Adult Education Service

**To: The London Assembly: Economic
Committee**
**From: Westminster Adult
Education Service**
Date: 21 October 2022
Author: Arinola Edeh, Principal and Head of Service

Introduction

Westminster Adult Education Service is delighted to respond to this scrutiny exercise and we have responded to the nine questions suggested.

We would be pleased to expand on any of the points we raise in our response.

1. What are the social and economic benefits of adult education in London? These benefits could include helping to get people into work but could also relate to social outcomes such as improved health and wellbeing.

As a provider of adult learning, we have been working closely with the GLA on meeting the skills needs of Londoners. The Skills for Londoners strategy which was launched pre-covid provided the initial framework for our work and we were fully consulted on the proposals. This has been followed post-covid with the Mayor's Skills Road Map, which sets out fully the outcomes for London and it recognises both the economic and social justice aspects of adult education.

Learners, stakeholders and learning institutions were fully consulted and helped shape the final document, and as such have complete buy-in to the plan and ambitions set out in the road map. The GLA have been very inclusive in developing their policy.

We have been encouraged to deliver a broad range of accredited and non-accredited vocational programmes across all levels. This has ensured that there is a diverse offer from entry levels to level 3, providing good progression pathways for Londoners. The wider benefits of learning including social outcomes are also valued within the roadmap. London Adult Community Education network.

2. How is London's adult education system currently working for learners, in particular the most disadvantaged learners, and could it be improved? If so, how?

By working across the whole sector in a collaborative way, the GLA has ensured that Londoners have access to a diverse adult education system, encompassing the work of Further Education Colleges, Adult and Community Education (ACE) providers and independent training providers. As an ACE provider, we work with Londoners who are often the most disadvantaged, due to economic and social circumstances.

This includes women, those from a black and minoritized ethnic group, those with disabilities and those who have no, or low qualifications and can often end up unemployed or in low paid insecure work. Our data shows that the majority of our learners are from the most deprived areas of London.

There is always more that can be done to support those who need it most. Streamlining of funding nationally, would be a good starting point. This would provide the GLA with additional flexibilities to meet needs at regionally, at a subregional level through the SRPs and locally through the boroughs.

3. What has the impact of the Mayor's reforms to the AEB been since it was delegated at the start of the 2019/20 academic year? Have these reforms made a significant difference to how the AEB is spent? What differences have you noticed since 2019/20?

The major reforms have made a vast difference to learners. Introducing the fee exemptions for those on a low-wage and recognising that this should be mapped against the London Living wage has increased access and allowed thousands of adults to train, upskill, or reskill. The uplifts to English and maths, were a clear indication that the Mayor recognised the value of these foundation qualifications to support learners to progress. There is still more to do in this area, as it still falls short of the optimum hours and resources that are needed to really support adults to gain these skills. In addition, the flexibilities around ESOL entitlements, equally enabled access for significant numbers of Londoners who would have been left behind. The flexibilities in the budget (10% on non-accredited) that enabled providers to deliver employer focused training was very welcome. For example, we used those flexibilities to deliver a bootcamp style cloud computing programme, prior to funding for bootcamps. This allowed us to provide career focussed training that enabled Londoners to access good jobs in the digital sector, on completion of their programme. More recently, the additional flexibilities that will support people who are not working and fall outside benefit arrangements and the removal of general three-year UK residency requirements as a condition of AEB funding is really welcomed as it will again open opportunities for skills training to thousands of Londoners who desperately need it. Women and those from a BAME background are often disproportionately impacted by this national rule.

These new flexibilities should mitigate some of the impact of rising costs of living, which could preclude those that need higher level skills in order to get better paid jobs from access training that would support their ambitions.

The GLA has had a pragmatic approach to some additional funding that has been provided nationally e.g., Multiply and Bootcamps. This has allowed trusted learning institutions, services, centres, and colleges to quickly move into delivery and implementation.

4. Is London's AEB targeting courses that improve the life chances and employment prospects of Londoners, and is funding being directed towards the learners that need it most?

Our AEB funded programmes are targeting those who are most in need of support to improve their life chances and employment prospects in London. As indicated in the responses above, the AEB funds a broad range of provision. This includes foundation and basic skills like English, maths, and digital skills, which form the bedrock of learning to enable progression to vocational and technical pathways. The funding eligibility rules that we apply in assessing learner needs is robust and takes account of previous

qualifications, household income and learning needs.

5. Is London's AEB working for employers? Is it helping to address London's skills needs and workforce gaps? What other measures would support employers with London's skills needs and workforce gaps?

The Mayor's Skills Road Map was generated through discussion and consultation with London employer groups. It sets out the key growth industries and those industries and businesses that London relies on, such as the financial services sector and the construction industry. It recognises the role of creative industries and the importance of tourism to London. It has worked to balance the competing priorities of these industries while having an eye on those who are unemployed and need basic education before they can get a foot on the job ladder. By convening joint work between the Skills for Londoners and Skills Business Partnership Boards, the Mayor has been able to clearly establish a framework within which employers, providers and other stakeholders can come together to articulate current and emerging skills needs, with a view to provision being developed to meet those needs.

6. What difference has the delegation of the AEB to London made to colleges and other training providers?

Prior to delegation, we had concerns that this would create an additional level of administration and bureaucracy that would bog providers down. Those fears have in the main been unfounded. A major difference with delegation is that we have a body that really understands the granularity of the needs of Londoners compared to DfE who based policy on a national picture. Devolution has allowed locally based providers like us to work with the Mayor to determine what is needed for the residents in our local areas. By listening and having key points of contact in the GLA, who are responsive, we have increased our ability to be agile in meeting emerging needs e.g., during Covid and more recently with the Afghan evacuees and the Ukrainian refugees. The support throughout Covid provided stability and enabled us to keep our learners learning.

7. Would colleges and other training providers like to see the Mayor make further reforms to how the AEB is allocated?

ACE services, learning institutions and colleges would like the Mayor to use his good offices to:

- bring together Health Services and Adult Education to develop a London wide social prescribing policy.
- quicken up the process of having agreed student pathways from entry level to level 3 and beyond.
- encourage the university sector to open their doors to adult education services so there can be shared use.
- determine a new family learning policy for London which encourages schools to welcome adult education in to use their premises.
- lobby government to ensure all adult funding is delegated to GLA especially Bootcamps and the Skills for Life level 3 offer.

- establish an ESOL policy for London that brings together all government language offers, which also standardises the entry criteria and allows all ESOL learners to have free provision.
- work with learning institutions, services, centres, and colleges to mitigate the impact of Covid and encourage the vulnerable and older learners back to learning

8. Do colleges and other training providers feel that the Mayor adequately consults with them and works in a collaborative way? If not, what could be improved? How does this compare to before delegation?

The levels of consultation by the GLA have surpassed anything that we experienced pre- devolution. We are consulted and involved in policy development right from the start. A truly collaborative approach has been developed via the officers leading the implementation of the devolved AEB and this has led to strong relationships and a level of trust and confidence that was lacking pre-devolution. It has been a progressive partnership approach, which all in the sector have welcomed.

9. What further reforms could the Mayor make to the AEB, or by the Government in relation to funding in order to benefit learners, employers, and training providers in London.

The Mayor should be seeking to develop a skills fund, but not along the lines proposed in the funding and accountability consultation, which does not recognise the value of community learning. The Mayor's Skills fund could bring together the plethora of funding streams, which have different reporting and contract management requirements, thereby adding to the administration burden for providers. A simplified fund, which allowed for flexibility of movement between funds, with some caveats would be welcomed. The Mayor could use its convening powers to work with other key departments that impact on the adult education and skills agenda. This would be welcomed by providers, as we could establish where there are synergies that would enable funds to be used more efficiently and effectively across departments, such as DWP, the Home Office, Public Health and DCMS. England does not have a Lifelong Learning strategy. This would benefit learners and employers greatly as the current education and skills landscape is complex to navigate.

Response to call for evidence received from Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service



Place Directorate

Executive Director: Stewart Murray

Town Hall Campus, Forest Road, Walthamstow, E17 4JF

**To: London Assembly
Economy Committee**

Call for evidence: London's Adult Education Budget

This response is from Waltham Forest Council that receives Adult Education Budget (AEB) funding each year.

About Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service

The council's Adult Learning Service is a grant funded Adult & Community Education (ACE) provider and is part of our Employment, Business & Skills Directorate. It supports about 3,500 residents each year with about a third of these on Community Learning Courses. These learners engage in about 4,000 enrolments (5 years trend taking account of the impact of the pandemic). 75% of learners are women, 67% are from minoritised communities and about 23% have a disability or learning difficulty. About 80% of provision is at pre-entry, entry level and level 1. Most courses focus on English, maths, ESOL, employability and digital with a vocational offer linked to good job opportunities locally.

What are the social and economic benefits of adult education in London? These benefits could include helping to get people into work, but could also relate to social outcomes such as improved health and wellbeing.

The social and economic benefits are:

- Up skilling - acting as a gateway to higher level skills at level 3 and above by giving Londoners skills at level 2 and below
- Gateway to learning – using Community Learning to engage those with no or low skills or who haven't learned in a while and equipping them with the confidence to move into more vocational learning. Community Learning can do this by attracting people to learn hobby skills for example (arts and crafts)
- Focus on core skills – AEB is used to give people the skills that all jobs require as well as life. These are English, maths, ESOL, employability and digital. 25% of people of working age population find it hard to use numbers and words as well as they could and

this is holding them back. Second language speakers often have poorer paid jobs and find it hard to progress

- Community Learning especially but all learner improves health and well-being by meeting new people and developing new networks.

How is London's adult education system currently working for learners, in particular the most disadvantaged learners, and could it be improved? If so, how?

In Waltham Forest our use of AEB as an ACE provider means that funded is used well to target those who are discriminated against in the work place and wider society. It helps equip them with basic skills especially at lower levels so that they can start or re-start their journey into better paid work and a more fulfilling life.

It could be improved by further disadvantage weightings and learning support funding being provided to the most disadvantaged learners. The intensity of support required to help some learn is under recognised (although we recognise that the GLA have really made efforts to give more funding to those who need it most e.g. the 15% uplift).

Enrolments and participation in maths provision is a concern and we are hoping that Multiply will help us create a bridge into formal maths provision to improve the position.

More needs to be done to widen participation such as the proposed community outreach commitment in the Skills Roadmap.

What has the impact of the Mayor's reforms to the AEB been since it was delegated at the start of the 2019/20 academic year? Have these reforms made a significant difference to how the AEB is spent? What differences have you noticed since 2019/20?

The reforms have had a positive impact overall and continue to do so. For example, the introduction of fully funded learning for those earning below the London Living Wage. Also the 10% flex between has enabled us to improve how we use funding to support transitions from Community Learning to regulated provision. The level 3 offer and the Mayor's recovery funding are other examples of how a London angle to AEB has tailored support to our needs.

There is an altogether more positive and collaborative approach to working with us as a borough council and a provider. Sometimes we are concerned that in being very aspirational for the funding, the GLA is in danger of spreading the funding too thinly and this may dilute impact.

Is London's AEB targeting courses that improve the life chances and employment prospects of Londoners, and is funding being directed towards the learners that need it most?

The focus in the Skills Roadmap for AEB of ensuring 80% of funding is for level 2 and below is right to ensure we target limited resources where they can make the biggest impact and where needs are greatest (the hour glass economy for example and the need to help people progress to higher levels in the wider education system).

As an ACE provider we are able to direct funding to those who need it most and for whom it will have the greatest impact. We need to ensure that ACE providers retain their Community Learning Grant and where possible that borough councils have their CL grants increased over time to unlock opportunity for more people who don't participate in learning.

Is London's AEB working for employers? Is it helping to address London's skills needs and workforce gaps? What other measures would support employers with London's skills needs and workforce gaps?

For us as an ACE provider we are able to use AEB to work for employers. We have a small vocational offer and our core skills help people improve what they need for all jobs. From a wider perspective it is difficult to have a supply led system delivering qualifications be completely in step with meeting the demand for skills from employers.

The GLA uses AEB and does a reasonable job of this but the focus on supplying qualifications to help residents compete better in the open job market is the best way to support employers.

Often workforce development needs are for in-work training rather than qualifications and this needs to be squared in the best use of limited AEB funding. AEB in London could better support vocational learning such as Apprenticeships.

What difference has the delegation of the AEB to London made to colleges and other training providers?

We have a more collaborative and productive relationship with the funder. For example, termly meetings with a relationship manager is helpful. The funder is more accessible and helpful in attempting to help us meet our learners' needs. Strategic objectives and the ability to tailor the offer to meet issues faced by London and Londoners is very welcome. The collaboration between the GLA and London Councils is also welcome.

Would colleges and other training providers like to see the Mayor make further reforms to how the AEB is allocated?

A review of Community Learning allocations amongst borough councils so that the most deprived boroughs' allocation reflects local need and demand.

Do colleges and other training providers feel that the Mayor adequately consults with them and works in a collaborative way? If not, what could be improved? How does this compare to before delegation?

The Mayor does adequately consult with us (e.g. the Roadmap consultation) and is collaborative. This is an improvement to the situation prior to delegation.

What further reforms could the Mayor make to the AEB, or by the Government in relation to funding in order to benefit learners, employers and training providers in London?

We need to widen participation in learning particularly amongst underrepresented groups. The intelligence gained from the London Learner Survey should be used to determine where we can jointly target campaigns (between the GLA and providers) to engage more people in learning.

The cost-of-living crisis needs to be factored into the way funding works. We helpfully had recovery funding to support recovery from the pandemic. An equally rapid and agile response to the emerging impact of inflation (in-work poverty, earning more money either in your current business or by getting the skills needed to get a better paid job etc) should be considered with additional funding.

With the loss of European funding and UKSPF not picking up the loss until 24/25 we need to urgently consider how we use AEB to ensure that support to get, keep and progress in work is there for residents, especially to help employers fill hard to fill vacancies currently a feature of the job market and if the cost of living crisis leads to rising unemployment in the next 2 years).

Response to call for evidence received from the Workers' Educational Association (WEA)

Call for evidence: London's Adult Education Budget

The WEA is an adult education charity working across England and Scotland, supporting nearly 30,000 adult learners annually. In London, the WEA receives funding from the GLA and delivers community-based adult learning across a number of venues. Our focus is on short courses, many of which do not lead to a qualification, while others support learners from disadvantaged communities to obtain their first entry level qualifications or to support them into employment.

We are a specialist designated institution (also known as an Institute of Adult Learning) which means we are formally part of the further education sector and hence as well as being eligible to receive grant funding are in scope for most of the same quality and accountability frameworks as other FE providers.

We are pleased to be able to offer this evidence to the inquiry and if any further information is required, please contact the WEA's Policy Manager, Chris Butcher on cbutcher@wea.ac.uk

Response to questions

What are the social and economic benefits of adult education in London? These benefits could include helping to get people into work, but could also relate to social outcomes such as improved health and wellbeing.

Adult learning at all levels and in all forms can have positive outcomes for those who take part. These outcomes have a wider social and economic benefit

The WEA Impact Report is part of a growing body of evidence which demonstrates the wider benefits of adult learning. The most recent edition of the survey was published in October 2022 and can be found in full [here](#)

Echoing findings from across England, the responses specifically from WEA students based in the GLA area and who completed courses in 2021/22, found the following:

- Adult learning supports in-work progression - 66% of employed students reported that their WEA course had improved skills or knowledge they could use in a job.

For students who are actively seeking work:

- **74%** felt they improved skills or knowledge that might be used in a job
- **33%** felt more confident about finding a job in the future
- **27%** knew better what to do to get a job
- **27%** have a better understanding of job opportunities suited to their skills and experiences.

In the same survey, we also asked students about other ways in which adult education has helped them

This has generated important findings about the wider benefits of adult education

- **77%** of students said it helped to keep their mind active
- **59%** said the course helped to increase self-confidence
- **86%** said the course improved their wellbeing
- **72%** students met people on the course they wouldn't normally mix with
- **86%** shared what they learned on the course with their family and friends
- **80%** of parents felt more confident helping their child(ren) with reading, writing or maths.

In short, the survey shows how adult education can support people to find their own direction both in work and in their wider lives

- **92%** of students are now more aware of what they can do next to improve their skills for life and work

Overall the report shows how impactful short, community-based course can be for adult learners of all backgrounds, including those in the most disadvantaged communities.

How is London's adult education system currently working for learners, in particular the most disadvantaged learners, and could it be improved? If so, how?

As the previous answer has gone some way to showing, adult learners from disadvantaged communities can benefit greatly where they have access to community-based learning.

In comparison to some other parts of the country, London's learners are potentially well served through the combination of community-based provision delivered by local authority providers and the mostly London-based Institutes for Adult Learning. These are all high quality providers who between them cover most areas of London.

While there are relatively few learning "cold" spots, in the GLA area, however, the capacity and reach of London's adult education providers are limited by two main factors. One is the historic underfunding which affects adult learning services nationwide.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies estimates that by 2024–25, spending on adult education on its own (i.e. excluding growing levels of spending on apprenticeships) will still be one-third below 2009–10 levels even with the additional funding announced in the 2021 Spending Review.

The devolution of adult education funding to GLA and Mayoral Combined Authorities has brought a degree of stability to adult education funding but has not seen an uplift (as the national budget for adult learning has not grown sufficiently to compensate for previous reductions).

Secondly, is the low visibility of adult learning opportunities. The GLA has been proactive to counter this, running promotional profile raising campaigns, headed by the Mayor, to alert Londoners to the options available to them. National government and other MCAs should be encouraged to follow this example.

Nevertheless, as annual participation surveys show, the national picture, also true of London, is that the majority of adults are not actively involved in learning. Worse still, the likelihood of being active in learning is lower for adults with low or no qualifications, with more highly qualified adults being those most likely to be taking part.

Taking the GLA's awareness-raising campaigns further by targeting those communities least likely to be participating, including spelling out where financial support and/or fully-funded courses are available, would improve participation across the board.

What has the impact of the Mayor's reforms to the AEB been since it was delegated at the start of the 2019/20 academic year? Have these reforms made a significant difference to how the AEB is spent? What differences have you noticed since 2019/20?

The most significant reform which the GLA has instigated has been the development of outcome measures which address issues beyond employment, including health and wellbeing, social integration, learner self-efficacy and participation in volunteering. At a time when national Government is proposing to restrict adult education funding to a narrow set of employment-related outcomes only, it is welcome to see GLA looking to expand and support broader social outcomes.

We also welcome the investment in the Mayor's initiatives such as the Community Outreach Programme Grants which have enabled a deeper understanding of how to work in partnership with communities who are not traditionally good at engaging in education. This has helped identify barriers and shown ways in which adult learning providers can work alongside user-led advocacy groups.

Is London's AEB targeting courses that improve the life chances and employment prospects of Londoners, and is funding being directed towards the learners that need it most?

As we have argued in previous consultations on the GLA's use of AEB, it is possible to be over-prescriptive in targeting. In attempting to closely define groups who might be prioritised for funding, it is possible to have the unintended consequence of excluding others by omission. It is better therefore to be less prescriptive and allow providers to use budget flexibly in order that they can determine where need is greatest in their communities (at the most granular level).

As we have set out above, the wider problem is the overall visibility of adult learning opportunities – potential learners either not knowing where courses are available or not having access to information on financial support.

Awareness-raising and promotional campaigns would be more effective at increasing participation than segmenting funding itself.

What difference has the delegation of the AEB to London made to colleges and other training providers?

As a national provider originally – before devolution of budgets – in receipt of a single ESFA grant which covered the entirety of our provision, the transition to devolved budgets was not without its challenges. Rather than corresponding with a single funding body, we had to move towards engagement with multiple funders, further complicated by a number of them electing to make funding available through competitive processes. It has been welcome that GLA has recognised the contribution of providers and the need for stability and continuity in provision by continuing to grant fund the majority of its existing providers.

This has enabled providers to continue to work with their communities and address local and regional needs, with relatively minimal additional administrative burden when compared with other areas with devolved AEB.

Would colleges and other training providers like to see the Mayor make further reforms to how the AEB is allocated?

There is always room for improvement and we would encourage the Mayor to continue to focus on:

1. Awareness raising of availability and support for learners facing financial or other barriers
2. Continuing to capture and reward delivery against a broad set of outcomes, including health & wellbeing outcomes
3. Facilitating closer links between providers and employers to develop Skills Improvement Plans which address longer term skills needs rather than short-term sector-based requirements
4. Negotiating with national government for the additional funding and flexibilities to support community-based provision which supports adults who have low or no qualifications and who need support with essential skills in literacy, numeracy and digital skills

Do colleges and other training providers feel that the Mayor adequately consults with them and works in a collaborative way? If not, what could be improved? How does this compare to before delegation?

In comparison with other MCAs and with the situation before delegation, the GLA is forward looking in terms of its engagement with providers. Through numerous working groups and regular consultation on priorities and frameworks, the GLA is commendably open in terms of setting out its direction of travel. The GLA supplements this with regular engagement with individual providers and groups such as the Institutes for Adult Learning, Association of Colleges and Hoxex. We feel that other MCAs could take the GLA's example in level of engagement.

Submitted on 21 October 2022

Response to call for evidence received from Toynbee Hall

London's Adult Education Budget

Toynbee Hall's response to the
London Assembly Economy Committee's Call for
2022



About Toynbee Hall

Based in the East End of London since 1884, Toynbee Hall works with communities and a wide range of partners to shape a fairer and happier future. We engage with communities and create opportunities to ensure they have a more meaningful say over the things that affect them and can shape platforms for social change.

Working with partners such as London Borough of Tower Hamlets, the Greater London Authority (GLA), and HM Treasury, we ensure that people affected by systemic issues are involved in designing effective and sustainable policy solutions.

We act as an independent and highly respected partner, providing rigorous, well-managed and supported research and policy programmes.

About this response

This response draws on findings from Toynbee Hall's report 'More than just education'¹, a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project focused on adult education in London. This work was commissioned by the Greater London Authority to inform the development of the Skills Roadmap for London and approaches to improving access to adult education for disadvantaged Londoners.

This response also draws on Toynbee Hall's learning and evaluation of the benefits to participants of our PAR projects through the lens of adult education. Based on our experience of facilitating PAR in the last five years, we would argue that Participatory Action Research is an innovative tool for adult education. It enables learners, especially disadvantaged learners, to learn new skills and integrate into the community in a very accessible and powerful way.

¹ Toynbee Hall (2022). More than Just Education. Available from: <https://www.toynbeehall.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/TH-GLA-Adult-Education-Report-Feb22-Digital.pdf> [Accessed 6th October 2022].

About Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is collaborative research, education and action which is oriented toward social change (Kendon et al. 2007²). It involves professional researchers and people with lived

experience of an issue (peer researchers) working as equal partners. From the very beginning of a research project, peer researchers are supported to determine focus, investigate the issue, collect data, and devise changes that would improve the situation of the community.

A core aspect of PAR is to ensure those with lived experience can shape research to focus on what is important to them and those around them. There is a strong training and learning element which develops skills and confidence for people to get involved. Another aspect of PAR is to work with communities and stakeholders to implement solutions, so we do not conduct research for research's sake, and peer researchers / learners use community insights to effect positive social change.

Toynbee Hall has been conducting Participatory Action Research since 2017, and we are currently working with over 240 community peer researchers and experts by experience in London. We have strong experience in ensuring meaningful partnership working with communities and achieving meaningful impact.

Responses to applicable questions

1. What are the social and economic benefits of adult education in London? These benefits could include helping to get people into work, but could also relate to social outcomes such as improved health and wellbeing.

Adult education can increase confidence and lead to greater social and economic outcomes: Our research found that increased confidence was the most common aim for Londoners taking or wanting to take an adult education course. Londoners saw building their confidence as a necessary step to feeling included and respected in a wider range of social settings, including employment settings.

We have strong evidence that personal confidence can be improved in a variety of ways through PAR. Peer researchers have described feeling increased confidence to speak English in different settings that improved their everyday experience of living in the UK. One peer researcher who struggled with reading expressed his surprise when he realised he had completed 12 surveys, saying "if you have a go, you'll be surprised at what you can do".

Another reported feeling more confident to speak up for her friends' needs at the community centre she attended. She said being a peer researcher gave her confidence to join a disability action group which became a central part of her life. Other peer researchers have become local and national activists.

Some parents reported feeling a sense of respect from their children as they met their commitments as peer researchers, especially those who had stopped working to raise

² Kindon S, Pain R and Kesby M (2007) Participatory action research approaches and methods: connecting people, participation and place. Routledge.

their children. This improved their self-esteem and these parents reported that the work experience helped them move back into employment.

"At the beginning I wasn't involved much... I was thinking that maybe ... people will be laughing at me. ... I wish we can start this project again so ... I have a lot of things to suggest."

- Peer researcher

Participatory Action Research as a form of adult education can develop transferable skills that help people secure employment: Peer researchers need to learn a variety of 'hard skills' to conduct research and influence policy. Examples include participating in designing research, developing question guides and surveys, conducting research in their community, translating research tools into different languages, facilitating meetings, presenting to stakeholders, learning to use online and abiding by safeguarding and confidentiality policies. Many also develop 'soft skills', such as working well as part of a team, building relationships with people from diverse backgrounds, communicating effectively and critical thinking.

A number of peer researchers have moved into a variety of employed roles with the help of skills developed on PAR projects, from health and education settings to social change organisations. Young people in particular have used their experiences to access work in research, policy, or campaigning roles, many of whom have been struggling to find employment without experience. Another peer researcher from our Older People PAR project secured a job at a school after taking part in the training. PAR projects can also offer direct employment. In our Safer Homes PAR work, two peer researchers were directly employed by the research and policy team during the pilot stage. As a result, one moved into a management role for the first time in the UK following their employment at Toynbee Hall, and the other found work in her field after being out of the workforce for some years.

"They (PAR staff team) were a very supportive team who not only give us a training; they went through with us more than four/five times what I was supposed to do. But at the same time they came with us, when I went to different venues. I was never left alone saying that's it, you've been trained, now go and get some surveys or do some interviews."

- Peer researcher

"Before I used to be aggressive. When people talked to me, I feel like fighting without knowing... People are different. ... But now I know that we are from different countries which means that we have our different ways of doing things. I so much like this project because ... I met different people and I have learned how to deal with people with different characters. ... I'm feeling comfortable and happy more than I used to be."

- Peer researcher

"Other than being a matter close to me, I feel this role could help me with my future career introducing me to the field of research which I've never had the chance to explore."

Adult education can create communities of support: Londoners described the role of adult education in tackling the loneliness of unemployment and offering companionship for the elderly. We heard that participation in adult education courses can foster a community atmosphere where learners help each other, leading to the development of supportive social networks and improved learning outcomes.

By taking part in Participatory Action Research projects, learners who feel isolated in their struggles can develop a support network through learning research and influencing skills with peers with shared experiences. For example, our Rent-Move- Repeat project saw a group of young Londoners, many of whom felt isolated and powerless to tackle their housing issues, benefitting from sharing their experiences with their peers and eventually forming a group that continues to campaign together after the close of the project³. Evaluation of our ‘Safer Homes and Neighbourhoods project’ also highlighted new social connections as being an improved outcome for participants⁴.

Adult education can improve physical and mental health: Our research findings showed that Londoners felt adult education was important for maintaining active physical lives and improving mental health.

Learning from our PAR approach supports improved mental health as a broader benefit of adult education. Peer researchers taking part in our Pandemic Stories PAR project described how relationships built with fellow peer researchers helped them deal with the grief, powerlessness and loneliness they experienced during the COVID-19 crisis⁵. Young people who took part in our co-design workshops for Thrive London described how the process of designing mental health support was enjoyable as an activity in itself. Adult education, especially adult education that leads to social change, can be emotionally and intellectually fulfilling.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) as a form of adult education can support individuals to become more empowered citizens: Evaluation of our PAR projects reflects many of the benefits of adult education discussed above, including increased confidence and skills through participation, better readiness for work, new relationships and better integration into society. PAR however plays a unique role in supporting individuals to become more active citizens, helping them to understand how institutions and public systems function, and developing skills, knowledge and experience alongside their peers to advocate for positive social change.

³ Toynbee Hall (2021). Rent-Move-Repeat. A Participatory Action Research approach. Available from: <https://www.toynbeehall.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Rent-Move-Repeat-Participatory-Action-Research-Approach-FINAL.pdf>. [Accessed 7th October 2022].

⁴ Toynbee Hall (2021). Participatory Action Research: Guidance on building marginalised residents’ power in local change-making. To be released November 2022.

⁵ Toynbee Hall (2021). Pandemic Stories. Available from: <https://www.toynbeehall.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Pandemic-Stories-Full-Report-August-2021.pdf> [Accessed 7th October 2022].

"It (PAR project) allows me to question my communities. ... I makes me very empowered, makes me feel very listened to."

- Peer researcher

"I had the opportunity to meet professionals and systems of government/power that would otherwise be inaccessible. I was given a space to speak about personal experiences of powerlessness and listen to others."

- Peer researcher

2. How is London's adult education system currently working for learners, in particular the most disadvantaged learners, and could it be improved? If so, how?

Londoners on low incomes face financial barriers to adult education:

- **The welfare benefits system represents a serious barrier for many who want to participate in adult education:** Our research noted that many Londoners are dissuaded from pursuing learning for fear that their welfare benefits may be affected by participation. For those who have been assessed as having a limited capacity for work, there is a fear that doing a course would later be used against them in future DWP assessments. Londoners also described finding it difficult to convince work coaches of the benefit of taking an adult education programme.
- **Longer courses are too expensive for many on low incomes, even if the course itself is free.** It should be recognised that taking part in adult education for many low-income people represents a trade-off where work hours are reduced in order to accommodate learning.
- **Absence of guarantees for continued funding for follow-on courses is another barrier for those who wish to engage with learning.** For those who were seeking better employment prospects there was a hesitancy to commit to Level 1 courses as they feared that funding may be withdrawn before they could progress to Level 2 or 3.
- **Inaccessible processes to apply for funding/support:** Londoners can struggle to complete applications to receive funding and other learning support.
- **Caring responsibilities remain a significant barrier to participating in adult education.** As well as reducing the time and energy a person has available, there is the added potential costs of arranging cover for caring responsibilities, meaning that even for fully funded courses carers were priced out of attending.

What would help low income Londoners:

- **Revisiting GLA and providers' relationships with Jobcentre Plus:** GLA and Providers need to work with Jobcentre Plus to ensure that adult education is properly promoted through Jobcentre Plus and that work coaches support claimants who want to get involved with adult education. We welcome GLA's approach in strengthening working relations with DWP and Jobcentre Plus.

Toynbee Hall would be willing to contribute to this conversation by providing insights from learners' perspective.

- **Improving the processes that exist to apply for support:** More support should be given through a variety of platforms, rather than just online, to help complete forms to receive financial support and learning adjustments. Whilst support from staff members was preferred, there was also a desire for step by step guides in print format as well.
- **For people seeking courses to progress within their career or to change careers, funding needs to be available as a package to cover multiple levels:** For example, funding covering a Level 1 to a Level 3 diploma should be available rather than on a per course basis to ensure that learners are able to reach the qualification level necessary for finding work.
- **Where possible, mentors should be provided by educational institutions in the form of experienced learners to help students:** Mentors can help navigate course content, signpost to support where needed, and provide advice on what other steps a student could take into adult education.
- **Transportation and care costs need to be provided to those who qualify for funding:** This will avoid the hidden costs which act as barriers to the uptake of free courses.

Disabled Londoners face specific challenges to accessing adult education:

- **Lack of support to learn:** Disabled Londoners described resistance from education providers to putting the appropriate support structures and adjustments in place for them to be able to learn equitably with their peers.
- **Significant additional financial costs:** Financial barriers included having to gather funds to get transport to underground stations, needing to organise captioning software for online courses, and being denied refunds for arriving late or missing a session due to their condition.
- **Impact of negative past experiences in education settings:** While many disadvantaged Londoners described difficulty overcoming negative childhood experiences in the education system, disabled Londoners particularly described how fear and shame from poor educational practices in childhood affected their ability to engage in adult education.

What would help disabled Londoners:

- **Making sure disabled learners get the adjustments and support they need to learn:** Disabled Londoners told us that as a formal diagnosis can sometimes be the only route to educational support. Access to support should be based on needs and not only on holding a formal diagnosis.
- **A central pan-London disability unit hosted at the GLA:** Disabled Londoners recommended the unit be staffed with disabled people, who could be called on by educational institutions to support them to improve their accessibility and to educate staff on the social model of disability.
- **Support the inclusion of PAR projects in the adult education offer:** PAR

has been successful in supporting adult education for disabled learners. This

can be attributed a focus on inclusive practices and co-production of projects, and a 'learning through doing' approach as opposed to traditional approaches to knowledge transfer.

Londoners who have experienced, are associated with the criminal justice system face specific barriers in adult education:

- **Stereotypes of those who have experienced the criminal justice system, or those associated with people who were, had significant impacts on the adult education experience for some interviewees:** There is evidence of prejudice in the classroom for these learners. Our research found a learner being denied resources to complete a course project because they were labelled as a potential thief by the teacher, and another being asked by peers if they could purchase drugs.

What would help Londoners stereotyped because of associations with the criminal justice system:

- Further Participatory Action Research would be needed to improve the experience of adult education for Londoners who have experienced of the criminal justice system.

Overall, our research shows that co-production of London's adult education offer, including communication, application processes, course content, and environment is needed to tackle most of the issues within the system. Co-production methods should be used to empower marginalised groups to re-engage with adult education and improve it for the benefit of others.

Londoners recommended that communication campaigns need to be co-produced and they should focus on the holistic benefits of adult education. Images and testimonies of real people saying "I did this course and then I..." were seen as a way to get people engaged.

Education providers should adopt co-production processes to design new curriculums and learning environments for adult education in collaboration with groups who have had personal negative experiences of education.

This process is not about seeking feedback from learners, but working in partnership with them to design what a good learning experience looks like and making improvements collectively. This is especially important to help people regain trust in the education system. For example, designing more accommodating classroom environments in collaboration with disabled people would go a long way to reducing the additional difficulties disabled learners face.

4. Is London's AEB targeting courses that improve the life chances and employment prospects of Londoners, and is funding being directed towards the learners that need it most?

A consistent theme throughout our research was the need for a more holistic adult education system that recognised the benefits of courses not directly linked to immediate employment opportunities. Londoners described a range of benefits from learning such as increased confidence and self-esteem. Non-employment focused courses have the potential to act as a stepping stone to successful participation in employment-focused courses and employment opportunities.

We therefore recommend that Participatory Action Research can be delivered as a 'stepping stone' programme. Peer researchers are encouraged to learn and apply their learning to improve a social issue that matters to them. This will be particularly effective in providing a 'soft entry point' and strong peer support to re-engage with disadvantaged learners, especially those who had negative experiences with traditional school and adult education programme.

7. Would colleges and other training providers like to see the Mayor make further reforms to how the AEB is allocated?

Based on the evaluation of our Participatory Action Research projects, there is a strong argument for encouraging existing adult education providers to adopt PAR to encourage community-based learning. We also recommend that the adult education budget should be allocated to non-traditional education institutions, such as organisations in the third sector, who can support marginalised communities to conduct PAR.

9. What further reforms could the Mayor make to the AEB, or by the Government in relation to funding in order to benefit learners, employers and training providers in London?

Funding needs to be allocated to the co-production of adult education provision:

The adult education system should centre the lived experience of those who had negative experiences and are the hardest 'to win back' in the co-production of the curriculum, learning environment, application processes and communication campaigns. Disabled Londoners, Londoners with English as a second language, low income Londoners and Londoners with experience of the criminal justice system should have their inclusion prioritised and incentivised.

Participatory action research should play a role in co-producing a more effective adult education offer, and Participatory Action Research should be funded as part of the adult education budget: Many of the systemic issues uncovered in our report 'More than Just Education' could be tackled through the taking a PAR approach to researching issues and co-producing solutions.

Toynbee Hall also has an increasing body of evidence that taking part in Participatory Action Research on a range of topics, from tackling poverty to improving private renting, can be transformative to individuals and communities. As such, Participatory Action Research should be funded as part of the Adult Education Budget, through a range of third sector providers with expertise in this area.

Response to call for evidence received from Hillingdon Council

Please find my response to the Call for evidence: London's Adult Education Budget. I have tried to respond to all eight questions and am happy to discuss any of the points I have raised should you wish to contact me.

1. What are the social and economic benefits of adult education in London? These benefits could include helping to get people into work, but could also relate to social outcomes such as improved health and wellbeing.

The Mayor's Roadmap was a landmark document in London for ACE providers. It highlights not just economic benefits of learning for adults but also the social, health and wellbeing outcomes that result from learning as an adult, and most importantly it gives providers space to help adults develop the skill they need to benefit in all of these ways.

For example, we do a lot of work with Londoners with identified mild to moderate mental health needs, such as anxiety and depression. The Roadmap and subsequent funding priorities allow us to develop non-accredited, community-based courses that focus on helping those adults better understand the issues they face and become more resilient in overcoming them.

We had a learner who began with us as someone who would hardly speak in her first group, but she learned to trust us and persevered, and progressed from short courses (where her targets were focused on attending regularly and on time), into intro to flower arranging courses (where she began to make friends), then into Level 1 floristry courses (where she found her vocation and stood for election by her peers to the Learner Council). By the time she finished her level 3 floristry qualifications, she had started her own business and plans to send her new staff to us for their training.

Without the GLA a) valuing the social outcomes that helped her overcome her mental health issues; and b) seeing the value in a step-by-step approach for adults as they work their way through the entry levels of study; and c) an experienced ACE team who do a great job, none of this would have been possible. Working with adults is not just about having them pass a course, it's about helping them see themselves achieve their goal so that they begin to believe that each step they take is leading them forward; that if they can achieve 'a', they might be able to achieve 'b' and 'c', and then the sky is the limit. And it's about helping them to build their resilience so they can overcome the barriers they face, from the cost of their commute to domestic abuse. The most remarkable thing is that having done all that with us, they go on to be the best, most committed and efficient workers because of the skills they have developed along that way, the skills that are considered 'soft' skills but are in fact the hardest to achieve and to capture in any management data system.

2. How is London's adult education system currently working for learners, in particular the most disadvantaged learners, and could it be improved? If so, how?

All adult ed providers target the most disadvantaged learners and the system in London significantly helps to support that. Wherever possible, those with the lowest skills levels, who are most likely to be on low incomes or unemployed, are supported by the GLAs criteria for full funding.

The London system recognises the additional pressures faced by these residents and tries to address them, i.e. they have little or no education and very often the education they received as children left them with low self-esteem and feeling like they were stupid and could not be taught. This often leads them to dismiss education, thinking it is for others, and this in turn is transmitted to their own children creating multi-generational barriers to socio-economic advancement.

These people are wary of education and reluctant to join any classes at first. It takes a long time to build their trust, but Adult Ed providers are skilled at putting those stepping-stones in place, from their first tentative steps in a short community learning non-accredited class into longer courses; from there into their first qualification and onwards through the Entry, Level 1 and 2 basic skills and vocational qualifications towards work. The sense of achievement and pride is palpable when you speak to these learners.

However, not everyone can work and the system in London also recognises the wider impact of learning, from that rising self-esteem, through greater community involvement, say volunteering, and the harder to capture impact as a role model for their children, who sit with mum whilst they both do their homework. This is a story we hear often but it is more difficult to capture and quantify.

With that in mind, some ACE providers are working on developing ways to capture relevant, meaningful reporting data about the impact on learners of their progress: their individual distance travelled. In Hillingdon, we are involved in one such pilot programme, and the GLA have been involved from the start, but I am aware that this is not the only work in development. That willingness to listen and support providers to come up with solutions to issues, some of which have been challenging systemically for many years, is good for everyone: learners, who cannot always articulate the impact in a survey or a questionnaire; providers, who feel their experience and expertise is valued and will therefore work even harder to do a good job; and the GLA itself who will benefit as robust impact measurement tools are developed.

ACE providers see these disadvantaged learners as their core target group. We are skilled and experienced in developing community-based courses that provide those initial stepping-stones but also in supporting learners as individuals to keep going through the hard work of studying over what can be a period of years to eventually achieve their aims. The results benefit the learner, their families, their communities and the economy, reducing costs elsewhere as the learners gain the skills,

confidence and work experience that enable them to take on greater opportunities and overcome the barriers they will inevitably face.

3. What has the impact of the Mayor's reforms to the AEB been since it was delegated at the start of the 2019/20 academic year? Have these reforms made a significant difference to how the AEB is spent? What differences have you noticed since 2019/20?

The funding flexibilities and the introduction of the London Living Wage have significantly helped us to recruit and retain learners because they remove economic barriers that could otherwise prevent engagement with learning, especially for women with ESOL needs and more recently for asylum seekers. The importance of English/ESOL, maths and digital skills are clearly recognised and supported by the Mayor, which we applaud, but some qualifications are way too complicated and not always as functional as they should be, which can hamper delivery and results. That said, the GLAs support of entry level, level 1 and level 2 qualifications is very much appreciated, as is the continued commitment to the importance of community learning provision which is so critical to reaching and fully engaging those who are furthest away from education.

We have an ESFA contract as well as a GLA contract and the flexibilities discussed clearly allow more people who face disadvantage and are from deprived areas/backgrounds to access and stay in education at the lowest levels, i.e. their start points can be met rather than us having to turn them away because funding is only available for higher level courses.

In terms of improvements, if the GLA turned to its trusted ACE providers as the preferred providers of provision up to Level 2, particularly when reaching these most disadvantaged learners with community-based and lower-level qualifications instead of putting so much through bidding, we could best utilise the expertise and local partnerships to maximise value for money. As it stands, larger, sometimes national, organisations bid for London-based work with little local experience but with the benefit of professional bid writers. Once awarded, they often contact ACE providers to ask for help delivering. This makes no sense. Please consider looking at your provider base first, utilising all the metadata available through Ofsted reports, MIS and funding returns and avoid the additional resource and expense incurred by the bidding structure that should not be necessary.

The resulting additional funding would help those trusted providers to meet the needs of their local Londoners whilst rationalising the inevitable budget pressures incurred through ever-increasing running costs, all the time keeping the expertise in London and capitalizing on the existing progression pathways for learners. The current Multiply programme is a great example of this working very well, as it is simply another reporting line and provision can be overseen by partnership managers who are already in place.

4. Is London's AEB targeting courses that improve the life chances and employment prospects of Londoners, and is funding being directed towards the learners that need it most?

Yes, the priorities are clearly aimed at helping Londoners gain the skills to be more productive and contribute to the economy and society, and it is excellent that this always includes the most vulnerable in society and those with the weakest start points.

One good example is a learner of ours, Joanne Matthews, who recently won a Festival of Learning Award. She came to us with significant mental health issues, complex dyslexia, and was working towards transgender surgery. With no formal qualifications wanted 'to get some certificates' and to help others going through the same issues as she was. She did just that and is now working at a mental health charity in London, specialising in transgender support within the organisation. She recently bought herself a treasured car, for which she has saved for years. She is one of the greatest advocates of Adult Education and contributes to the health and wellbeing of her fellow Londoners as well as the economy. She continues to work and study to 'get a better job' because she wants to come off Universal Credit altogether and be economically self-sufficient.

Joanne is a great example of the changes ACE providers see again and again in our learners, but this investment takes time, patience, learning support, skilled tutors, exam resits on occasion and funding that is flexible enough to plot an individualised route for each learner. The Mayor's approach to opportunities for all Londoners enables this. Learners who are defined at the beginning of their journey as part of the 'low skilled, low paid/unemployed, disadvantaged' sub-group, still have a wealth of experience and significant determination to succeed, even if it means them returning year after year to achieve their goals. This kind of investment is essential to real equality of opportunity and ultimately socio-economic advancement and is the specialist area for ACE providers.

Whilst I applaud the Mayor's clear determination to improve the life and employment chances for all Londoners, I do think that money and resources are at times wasted on bidding opportunities. Bidding is time consuming, expensive and does not always result in the best providers winning the opportunities. Instead, the intelligence and systems already in place could be maximised by utilising the best of London's existing providers and infrastructure for additional funded opportunities, as stated in my answer to 3 above. It seems flawed to me that the good and outstanding provision that is already deeply embedded in London communities is not better used, but instead time and resources are wasted on complicated bidding processes which frequently go to providers with poorer track records who may even be from other parts of the country. That does not make sense. Please consider saving everyone's time and resources by utilising the existing provider base and sub-regional groups before considering bidding opportunities, as has been the case with the Multiply funding. I would respectfully ask for more of this please.

5. Is London's AEB working for employers? Is it helping to address London's skills needs and workforce gaps? What other measures would support employers with London's skills needs and workforce gaps?

The Skills Roadmap provides a considered and consultative direction for employers, providers and most importantly Londoners. The key industries are clearly laid out but there is room for local need to be met. In terms of gaps, I eagerly await the new census data and will find it very useful when that is analysed and available in order to check that we are all still on the right track, given the pace of change in these fast-moving times and its impact on the job market.

6. What difference has the delegation of the AEB to London made to colleges and other training providers?

It has been a pleasure to work with the GLA. From my perspective as the Head of a Local Authority provider, the collaborative and practical approach of the GLA has enabled me to adapt our provision in order to meet the needs of local residents more swiftly than ever before, allowing us to be fleet of foot in addressing local needs. Provider Managers have always been keen to find out about the service and provide whatever support they can to help us give Londoners the best service possible. The supportive approach from the GLA through Covid was in marked contrast to our experience with our co-existing ESFA contract and allowed us to adapt and innovate through an exceptional period, keeping learning going for over 85% of our learners on qualifications. It would be a sad day for London if this changed.

7. Would colleges and other training providers like to see the Mayor make further reforms to how the AEB is allocated?

ACE services, learning institutions and colleges would like the Mayor to use his good offices to:

- bring together Health Services and Adult Education to develop a London wide social prescribing policy.
- quicken up the process of having agreed student pathways from entry level to level 3 and beyond.
- encourage the university sector to open their doors to adult education services so there can be shared use.
- determine a new family learning policy for London which encourages schools to welcome adult education in to use their premises.
- lobby government to ensure all adult funding is delegated to GLA especially Bootcamps and the Skills for Life level 3 offer.
- establish an ESOL policy for London that brings together all government language offers, which also standardises the entry criteria and allows all ESOL learners to have free provision.
- work with learning institutions, services, centres and colleges to mitigate the impact of Covid and encourage the vulnerable and older learners back to learning

8. Do colleges and other training providers feel that the Mayor adequately consults with them and works in a collaborative way? If not, what could be improved? How does this compare to before delegation?

As stated above, I think the collaborative approach taken Mayor and the GLA has led to better systems and high-quality provision for Londoners. The partnership approach utilised throughout has led to strong relationships based on shared goals and provides space for views and comments from both parties to achieve the best results for Londoners.

It is particularly gratifying to see ACE representatives at high-level meetings, e.g. the Skills Board, which ensures that all parts of the sector can contribute to strategic and operational decisions, each bringing their expertise to strengthen the whole.

Debbie Scarborough
Service Manager
Learn Hillingdon Adult Community Education
20 October 2022.

Response to call for evidence received from Wandsworth Council Lifelong Learning

Hi Tim

I note the call for evidence and have read the response collated by Hoxex for London providers.

I am aware that there is also an opportunity to submit video evidence. I have attached a link below.

At Wandsworth Council Lifelong Council, we are extremely mindful of how we deliver the best possible plan for the borough. That means, not duplicating the work of other providers and only commissioning work that (i) we can't deliver directly (ii) we need more of.

Increasingly we are delivering a much more targeted service, focussing on those who are most disadvantaged and at different stages of readiness for employment. We are also highly effective at enabling those on low incomes to progress.

You will be very aware that local authority providers of AEB generally deliver a wider remit/approach. In my service we also deliver apprenticeships, we're part of 6 ESF projects, and I also manage the Education Business Partnership (delivering work experience to young people aged 14-24). We try to create as much synergy and value between the projects e.g., employer engagement.

Obviously, we are participating in the London Learner Survey, and we also have our own evaluation processes. Here I am attaching our composite film from last year's Wandsworth awards process which went out during National Lifelong Learning Week <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1aNCtzBE9E>. We have just finished filming the case studies that will feature in this year's awards process that will be posted on social media during Lifelong Learning Week this November.

Please let me know if you would like any further information.

Regards,
Santino

Santino Fragola
Head of Lifelong Learning
Children's Services
Serving Richmond and Wandsworth Councils
Gwynneth Morgan Centre
52 East Hill
Wandsworth
London
SW18 2HJ



Follow us on social media



Response to call for evidence received from London Friends of the Earth Network

Dear Hina

We are emailing you in your capacity as chair of the London Assembly Economy Committee. Under the new [Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022](#), the government has designated [Business LDN \(formerly London First\) and three other business organisations](#) to develop the Local Skills Improvement Plan for London. It is vital that this new process prioritises training for the climate emergency, as recommended by the latest [London Local Skills Report](#) (chapter 2). We do not know how the new process will fit in with the [Skills for Londoners \(SfL\) Board](#). Will the Economy Committee please look into this very soon, and use its influence to achieve a large and prompt increase in retrofit training?

We are very concerned that progress on training retrofitters is nowhere near as fast as required. The Element Energy January 2022 report states that nearly [900 retrofit coordinator roles will be required](#) across London by the mid 2020s, and at the peak of activity later this decade, the retrofit workforce will need 37,000 workers (para 3.2.2). However no London College is yet running a Retrofit Coordinator course. In addition, the [Retrofit London Housing Implementation Plan](#), published in May, states (Priority G) that “retrofitting projects are competing for labour at a time when the number of people employed in construction is decreasing”. It emphasises the need to train more workers in all construction trades, as many skills are transferable. Workers who move into retrofit will need replacing in other parts of the construction industry. Across all 33 London councils, the total annual retrofit spend should very soon be more than enough to guarantee future employment and thus encourage people to train.

Both major UK parties are now [committed to increased spending on retrofit](#). Therefore London needs to fund a significant boost in training both retrofitters, and the other apprentice builders who will either go on to become retrofitters or fill the roles vacated by new retrofitters. The Mayor’s Construction Academy was allocated [only 8.8% of the Skills for Londoners Round 2](#) funding. The number of [Adult Education Budget learners in construction is far fewer](#) than those in a) arts media and publishing, b) ICT, c) business, administration, finance and law, d) retail and commercial enterprise, and substantially less than those in leisure, travel and tourism (see Table 3). The large amount in the Adult Education budget gives the mayor considerable ability to direct funds to boost retrofit training.

The emails to the mayor from the seven organisations we brought together are copied below, with his reply attached.

Thank you

Kind Regards

Tim Root (Muswell Hill & Hornsey Friends of the Earth), Connie Muir (Croydon Climate Action), Katherine Linsley (Croydon Climate Action), , Quentin Given (Tottenham and Wood Green Friends of the Earth), Gabriel Partos (Merton Friends of the Earth), Laura Norton (Balham Climate Action), and Dave McCormick (Barnet Friends of the Earth).

Response to call for evidence received from the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP)

About AELP and Our Members

The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) is a national membership body, proudly representing around 800 organisations. AELP members support thousands of businesses and millions of residents in England by delivering a wide range of training, vocational learning, and employability programmes.

We support residents of all ages, in every community, and at every level of post-16 study. Formed in 1988, AELP's priority has always been advocating for the training providers that we represent and offering a wide range of competitive member benefits.

W: www.aelp.org.uk

T: @AELPUK

Adult education is undervalued but improves lives and livelihoods

AELP warmly welcomes this review by the London Economic Committee into adult education in London. Improving adult education has significant socioeconomic benefits for Londoners, so every opportunity must be maximised.

Funding channelled through the adult education budget (AEB), delegated to the Mayor of London enables both in-work progression to better paid and more sustainable employment and for the unemployed, it also supports adults to transition to the world of work.

There are also wider societal benefits in offering provision such as ESOL to enable Londoners to integrate more effectively within the diverse community and improve their health and well-being.

Importantly levels of core literacy and numeracy remain low in adults. To achieve a high-skilled, high-productivity workforce the building blocks need to be in place to enable residents onto the skills ladder of opportunity.

A changing systems system means greater opportunities for meeting residents' needs

From August 2019, the AEB was apportioned between the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and initially 6 mayoral combined authorities (MCA's) and the Greater London Authority (GLA). These 7 trailblazer areas have since led the way to further devolution in other MCA and additional adult skills funding including the National Skills Fund (NSF) and more recently the new UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

Before part devolution, the AEB was controlled centrally and managed by the ESFA. The ESFA would distribute funding through a mixture of grant funding and contracted procurement on the ratio of approximately 90% grant and 10% procured. This approach to distribution has long been criticised as both ineffective and inefficient.

Providers who had demand from residents and employers were not able to either access funding or access enough funding, whilst some providers were given allocations that they were unable to directly spend in what was and still is a very inefficient and clunky system that lacks responsiveness.

This then created a whole industry of unnecessary subcontracting, meaning significant funds were being retained as management fees and this meant what was already a reducing overall adult education budget being diluted with even less funding being made available to be spent

on the front-line provision. Having an effective and dynamic approach to funding is key to meeting the needs of residents.

The need for a more dynamic approach to commissioning and performance management Through the devolution process, it has enabled commissioners to follow a different path regarding how funding is distributed. Some MCAs (e.g., Tees Valley Mayoral Combined Authority) were bold and decided to competitively procure their full AEB to ensure a redistribution of allocations.

Most MCAs chose to still grant fund institutions but also chose to competitively procure a larger proportion of the AEB than the ESFA and in the minority of cases areas such as with the GLA chose to align a grant/procurement model on a similar distribution model as used by the ESFA.

London providers have appreciated being able to secure new commissioning opportunities, however, there is a perception that independent training providers (ITPs) are not treated equally and there is a two-tier system based on institutional type.

The vast majority of devolved AEB funding needs to reach adult residents on the frontline. AELP believe the GLA should adopt a commissioning approach which allows for more commissioning and less grant funding, to maximise value for money and reduce the underspend. Historically ITPs have a strong track record of engaging employers more effectively than other types of institutions.

At present, a vast majority of the AEB is grant funded (mostly to FE colleges) - and we understand there is a significant underspend, which means adult residents are missing out. It shouldn't matter what type of provider you are- what matters is your ability to deliver. To support the business case for deeper and further devolution, the ability to effectively spend existing funding is a critical factor.

AELP would also question whether the current provider base is wide enough to deliver London's work and skills programme - and whether the GLA is working in a dynamic enough way to keep funding flowing through the system.

One of the frustrations with the centralised ESFA approach was/is that it isn't dynamic enough with its performance management regime to ensure funding was quickly and efficiently redistributed across the supply chain from those unable to spend it to allow those with excess demand to continue to support needs of employers and residents.

Now that the AEB is controlled locally, the GLA has the power to be more dynamic in its approach to performance management of under-delivery and supporting areas of excess demand which gets capped based on contract funding levels. This process needs to be more seamless and timelier to meet the ongoing responsiveness of demand.

Supporting innovation, but the need to ensure the AEB meets its core purpose

There have been some good examples of using AEB creatively and flexibly in-year: the Mayor's Academies Programme, and the Good Work for All.

Earlier this year, the Mayor of London announced several AEB flexibilities- including an increase in funding rates in London for devolved AEB for level 2 and below qualifications. This is on the face of it good news. However, there is no extra money, so it's being funded from the existing budget, which means fewer participants as spending per head increases. Participation rates in adult education continue to decline, although this is a national challenge which has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

There was also an announcement earlier this year that the GLA will also be funding non-prescribed vocational and technical qualifications at level 4. However, in essence, the GLA is using unspent AEB to fund mid-higher level skills, which isn't really what the core purpose and audience of what the AEB is for.

AELP understands that there is a need to think creatively to tackle the underspend but feels this would be done more effectively by less reliance on grant funding and more commissioning - putting funding in the hands of providers who can demonstrate they can spend it on adult residents and in a more flexible and agile way.

The importance of level 2 and below provision

The importance of level 2 and below provision is vital to adults and must not be downplayed.

Unfortunately, though central government's planned reforms of level 2 and below qualifications¹ the direction of travel is to publicly defund a significant number of qualifications for adults at levels 2 and below – nationally this would impact over 360,000 enrolments, against a backdrop of a declining trend in adult participation.

AELP believes that there is currently a lack of clarity on the process for funded qualifications for adults in the devolved regions. AELP has found confusion from several MCAs as to what actual extent they will be able to fully specify the qualifications they will be able to fund for adults, despite it being positioned in the proposals that MCAs will have responsibility for this.

The GLA must continue to champion the availability of a range of level 2 and below qualifications, it funds through the AEB to ensure that Londoners have access to and choice of qualifications that will help support their socio-economic prosperity.

Future funding model and longer-term settlements

AELP understands the GLA is considering moving to a dynamic purchasing system (DPS) commissioning framework – a model that other MCAs are considering or have moved to already. This can work well when it's used appropriately. There are some cases where it has not been as successful. It can help more agile commissioning, particularly when in-year opportunities arise.

Longer-term AEB funding settlements would provide more stability in the system. This would encourage longer-term investment from providers in London – as well as give residents more certainty about the available learning offer. One of the proposals in the central government's Funding and Accountability reforms² is to move to multi-year funding settlements, but only to targeted institutions.

AELP believes that multi-year funding settlements are something that the GLA should adopt but apply across all their AEB providers, not just grant-funded institutions.

Effectively engaging with stakeholders

AELP has appreciated the GLA's engagement with us as a trade body and feels like a valued part of the London work and skills system. We hope this engagement translates to a fairer deal for providers of all types.

Overall, in the past year, it has been a mixed picture for providers of different types – ITPs have fared well in some commissioning exercises and have been consulted on policy and further commissioning. In others, they have been much less successful compared to colleges/ local authorities.

Some AELP members have also raised issues with contract management and delays in securing funding allocations- we understand there has been a lot of staff turnover at the GLA, particularly in contract management. AELP appreciates this is somewhat beyond their control, but further stability would be helpful.

Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP)

¹ [Review of Post 16 Qualifications at L2 and Below Consultation Response \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/consultations/post-16-qualifications-at-level-2-and-below)

² [Implementing a new FE funding and accountability system - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/fe-funding-and-accountability)

October 2022