

## **Adult Education Budget Evaluation 2023-24: Overview of Findings and GLA Response**

The Mayor welcomes the key findings from the 2023-24 Adult Education Budget (AEB), now known as the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) evaluation report. This report marks five years of successful ASF delivery to Londoners following delegation of this budget to City Hall. Policy changes and flexibilities introduced each year by the Mayor continue to improve accessibility for Londoners to skills and have particularly supported those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, to benefit both economically and socially.

The report uses quantitative analysis of ASF Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data since the 2019-20 academic year, supplemented by data from the London Learner Survey, and qualitative insights from in-depth interviews with 20 ASF-funded providers, 8 learners and 3 stakeholders. This evaluation report outlines several key successes and areas for attention for the GLA which are summarised below.

### **Key Findings**

**In 2023/24 enrolments were at the highest level they have been since the ASF budget was delegated despite no real term increase in funding** standing at 488,000 in total. This represents a 15% increase in enrolments since 2019/20, showing the ASF is delivering strongly against aims by providing an increasing amount of provision for adults in London. For the first time since the ASF budget was delegated to the GLA, the total funding paid to providers in 2023/24 (£339m) exceeded the total funding allocation (£337m), driven by over-delivery in Adult Skills.

**Learners are taking on more training courses and at higher levels.** In terms of the goal to improve access to Level 2, 3 and 4 learning in key sectors, Free Courses for Jobs (FCFJs) (Level 3) delivered another increase in enrolments in 2023/24 compared to the previous year. The FCFJs fund has been positively received by providers, allowing them to develop higher level provision.

**Taking part in ASF-funded learning has positive benefits for learners.** The London Learner Survey (LLS) for 2022/23 shows that almost half of ASF-funded learners reported positive economic outcomes (46%), relating to moving into work, achieving better pay or a more secure job. Almost all ASF-funded learners (94%) reported a positive social outcome from learning, relating to factors like improved wellbeing, confidence and a wider social circle.

**The proportion of ASF learning delivery benefitting from GLA policy flexibilities has increased every year, from 10% in 2020/21 to 22% in 2023/24.** This demonstrates that a growing proportion of ASF-funded learning is being tailored to the GLA's specific priorities.

**Increase in participation from Londoners who are unemployed or earn below the LLW.** Full funding for learners earning less than the London Living Wage is a key flexibility for the ASF. Over the five years that this flexibility has been used, enrolments have grown from 34,460 to 49,600 between 2019/20 and 2023/24, expanding the opportunity for learners earning a low income to achieve a positive economic or social outcome.

**There is a continuing focus on learners from Black, Asian and other minoritised groups.** The proportion of ASF-funded learners from these ethnic groups continues to outstrip the proportion in London as a whole. LLS data also shows that Black learners report more positive economic outcomes from their learning compared to other learners.

### **Areas for attention**

1. **Increased collaboration** between ASF providers, employers, community organisations and public bodies. The Jobs and Skills for Londoners programme is an example of where this is being achieved.

**GLA response:** Increased collaboration between all stakeholders, especially employers is at the heart of our new guiding strategies. The new Inclusive Talent Strategy as part of the [London Growth Plan](#) will set out how London will grow its skilled workforce and get more Londoners into high-quality jobs and make it easier for employers to get the talent they need. This will be done by developing an increasingly employer-led and integrated employment system.

The GLA has received £30 million worth of funding granted by the Department for Work and Pensions to implement London's Get Britain Working Economic Inactivity and Youth Trailblazers trailed in the Get Britain Working White Paper. These Trailblazers focus on joining up existing local provision in the work, health and skills, and youth space respectively, with an emphasis on innovative approaches.

2. Supporting more Londoners to pursue learning that **supports wellbeing and mental health.**

**GLA response:** Latest (2023/24) London Learner Survey data shows that almost all (94%) of GLA-funded London learners experienced a positive social outcome. We will continue to monitor wellbeing and mental health outcomes through the London Learner Survey and work with providers to share best practice in what works to improve these outcomes. The Get London Working Plan, which will be published in Autumn 2025 will set out plans for integrating health services with skills and employment provision.

3. **Equipping more disadvantaged Londoners from migrant groups with English language skills**, and more disadvantaged Londoners to achieve vocational qualifications and develop work-related skills.

**GLA response:** The GLA continues to be committed to widening access to ASF-funded learning to Londoners from migrant groups. In 2023/24, the 3-year residency requirement was relaxed so that all Londoners with the right to be in the UK for at least 12 months could access ASF-funded learning. For 2025/26, residency requirements have been further simplified. Demand for language skills (ESOL) continues to grow and efforts are made to meet this despite cuts to ASF funding by national government.

The Skills for Londoners Community Outreach programme has funded 34 community organisations with grants from £10,000 to £35,000. These support outreach activity, targeting Londoners most needing adult education, and referring them to adult learning

opportunities. A recent evaluation found that the interventions had been effective in meeting its aims.

The GLA continuously reviews the impact that the Skills for Londoners Community Outreach Programme has on London and the Londoners it serves to identify opportunities to achieve a vision of enhancing the programme to better support Londoners to have the skills they need to improve their lives. As the GLA works to set out plans for its programme of delivery within the Inclusive Talent Strategy supporting the 'Supporting Londoners to benefit from Growth' Mayoral mandate, it's recognised that Community Organisations are uniquely placed to engage with the most disadvantaged Londoners who are most in need of support to access opportunities to embark on their journeys to improving economic stability.

4. Focus more attention on **learners with long-term health conditions and disabilities**. Participation data over time has shown only small increases in participation among this group.

**GLA response:** The [London Growth Plan](#), published earlier this year, acknowledges the wider challenges faced by Londoners with long-term health conditions and disabilities. The underpinning Inclusive Talent Strategy and its supplementary Get London Working Plan will aim to support Londoners with complex needs much more effectively, including through better collaboration between health, care, skills, employment and advice services.