

MAYOR OF LONDON

Mayor of London's response to the recommendations of the Education Panel of the London Assembly, 12 March 2020

Recommendation 1

The next mayoralty should lobby the DfE to enable a common process for all London boroughs and FE providers in terms of the submissions they are expected to put forward, by September 2020.

The Mayor agrees with the Panel's observation that the proportion of 16 to 18-year-old learners studying at school sixth forms in London is considerably higher (55 per cent) than the national average (39 per cent) and that enrolments at further education colleges are lower in London (23 per cent) compared to the national average (34 per cent).

The findings of some recent research on educational outcomes for 16 to 18-year-olds undertaken by Mime, commissioned by City Hall and London Councils, show that this disproportionately affects progression choices for learners who may not be ready to progress straight on to level 3 routes, in particular, learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This research was published by the Greater London Authority on 8 July.

As there is presently no common process for dialogue between all London boroughs and FE providers in how they place learners in year 12 and how they share information on students with an EHCP plan, the Mayor will ask the Young People's Education and Skills Board (YPES) – comprising local authority, City Hall and further education representatives – which examines the disparity of NEET and attainment rates seen across all London's boroughs, to look into how this could be addressed.

Recommendation 2

The next mayoralty should lobby the DfE to create a uniform standards and inspection body to provide uniform quality between sixth form colleges and school sixth forms, by September 2020.

The Mayor shares fully the Panel's view that all 16–19 education providers must ensure the best quality outcomes for their students. The Mayor notes that the Panel proposes that the mayoralty should lobby the Department for Education (DfE) to create a uniform standards and inspection body for school sixth forms and sixth form colleges. The Mayor thinks that in order to consider this request further, it would be useful to gain a greater sense of the Panel's concerns about the current arrangements that are in place with Ofsted, which has this responsibility.

Recommendation 3

The next mayoralty should consider allocating funding and support to small school sixth forms to merge and/or share resources effectively in cases where students may benefit, by September 2020.

The Mayor welcomes this proposal to see an improvement in the education offer for more young people through increasing the number of mergers of small school sixth forms and the sharing of resources where students may benefit. However, City Hall does not have jurisdiction over this area of funding, and as such the Mayor will bring the matter to the attention of the YPES to discuss further.

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Recommendation 4

The next mayoralty should lobby the DfE to increase the basic rate of support in line with inflation, to ensure a real term increase in 16-18 funding, by September 2020.

The Mayor shares the concerns of the Panel regarding funding pressures on London's further education providers. Our hard-working educators are doing everything they can to keep young people in education and engaged with their studies, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, but they are struggling because of a lack of support and funding from the Government. The Mayor has made and will continue to make the case to Government to fund early years, schools and colleges in London appropriately.

The Mime research, referred to above, also makes clear the need for fully-funded three-year programmes of study. This would ensure that the providers working with learners who need three years of study do not continue to be penalised by a reduced rate of funding in the third year of study.

Recommendation 5

The next mayoralty should lobby the DfE to increase levels of specialist training For T-Level teachers to ensure specialist teachers can build relationships between FE institutions and placement providers to ensure T-Levels meet student expectations, by September 2020.

The Mayor welcomed the introduction of T-levels as part of the recommendations made in the Government's Post-16 Skills Plan. These will allow more young people to consider technical qualifications as a recognised and important option alongside more traditional academic routes.

The Mayor understands that the DfE, working with the Education and Training Foundation, has undertaken subject specialist training for teachers who will be delivering the new T-levels, which go live in September 2020. Providers will receive £550 per learner to support the industry placement aspect of the new qualifications and it will be for each institution, rather than individual teachers, to determine how this is to be achieved.

What does remain of concern is that given the expected length of the industry placement requirement of the new qualifications (approximately 45 days), it will be important to get a sense of how well-placed employers are to offer such placements. This is especially important now, in light of the expected downturn following the impact of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic on parts of London's economy. The Mayor will ask the Skills for Londoners Board to work with its respective stakeholders to gain a better understanding of this position.