

Len Duvall AM, Chair of GLA Oversight Committee

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Dominic Hastings

Deputy Director
Further Education Funding
Higher and Further Education Directorate
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(by email: dominic.hastings@education.gov.uk)

9 February 2018

Dear Dominic

Devolution of the Adult Education Budget to the Mayor

Thank you for your letter of 5 January 2018.

The London Assembly has long called for the devolution of the adult education budget (AEB) to the GLA. There is a significant body of evidence that indicates that the current adult education system is not providing those skills that are required by London employers. This is in part because the London economy changes quickly and information flows between employers, further education colleges, providers and universities are poor. Some colleges are not providing the right courses to help people get the skills they need to access the jobs that the local economy is generating. As employers can't find job-ready local people they look further afield to meet their needs.

Devolution of the adult education budget to the Mayor will enable a closer alignment of skills training with the needs of employers, which should help support more Londoners into employment, and support life-long learning to the benefit of in-work progression and the general well-being of Londoners.

We therefore agree in principle to the devolution of the AEB to the GLA in 2019/20 (your question 1).

In response to your question 2, we welcome your recognition of the Assembly's scrutiny role in holding the Mayor to account in his performance of delivering the AEB. The Mayor is proposing to establish an Adult Education Programme Board to steer and advise the Mayor, and the Assembly will ensure that the Board is held to account in a regular, open and transparent fashion. We will do our work to ensure devolution is a success and would expect to be included in any future stakeholder liaison or consultation.

Devolution will not be without its challenges. New staffing structures and systems will be needed. The GLA is working hard to deepen its understanding of the sector. Our understanding is that London's adult skills provision is delivered by 410 prime providers, of which 292 were grant funded and 118 had contracts for services. It is vital that the Department supports the GLA's transition work by providing all the data necessary for the GLA to be ready to run these contracts from 2019.

There are many opportunities for skills funding to be more effective in supporting Londoners into work, boosting productivity and supporting economic activity. In particular, there are strong arguments for shifting to a more outcomes-focussed funding regime and this will require strengthening links between the GLA, providers and businesses.

The GLA will also want to encourage providers to think creatively about how to engage with Londoners and about how they provide courses in an increasingly digital environment. Courses in English for speakers of other languages, for supporting the work and life chances of people with special education needs and disabilities, for those running small business (or looking to set them up) and for people looking to re-train are all specific areas where we would expect the sector to innovate. Business as usual is not an option given the challenges our residents face in a rapidly changing labour market.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Len Duvall', written in a cursive style.

Len Duvall AM
Chair of the GLA Oversight Committee