

MINUTES - DRAFT

Meeting Skills for Londoners Recovery Task and Finish Group

Date Wednesday 10 February 2021

Time 9.30am

Place Remote Meeting

Agendas and summary minutes of the meetings of the Skills for Londoners Recovery Task and Finish Group will be published at www.London.gov.uk/Skills-for-Londoners (except in those cases where information in the papers may be exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act). Meetings will not be held in public and are only open to those invited to attend by the co-Chairs.

Members:

Jamie Mitchell, All Together (co-Chair in the chair)

Anna Devlet, British Land and SfL Business Partnership Member (co-Chair)

John Bennett, London Borough of Lambeth

Cllr Nesil Caliskan, SfL Board member and Leader, London Borough of Enfield
Jordan Cummins, Confederation of British Industry

Arinola Edeh, SfL Board Member and HOLEX

Rupa Grahame, Deputy Chair of the SfL Business Partnership, and Sainsbury's
Sarah Hernandez, Department for Work and Pensions

Kirsi Kekki, Trades Union Congress

Helen Milner OBE, Good Things Foundation

Michael Morley, Department for Work and Pensions

Jon Rees, Inclusion London

Mary-Ann Stephenson, Women's Budget Group

Mary Vine Morris, Association of Colleges
Tony Wilson, Institute for Employment Studies

GLA Skills & Employment Officers:

Michelle Cuomo Boorer, Assistant Director – Skills and Employment

Phyllis Abebreseh, Senior Social Integration Officer, Social Integration

James Lee, Principal Policy Officer, Skills & Employment

Elizabeth Mahoney, Policy and Project Officer, Equality and Fairness

Laura Marshall, Senior Board Officer, Skills & Employment (Clerk)

Forogh Rahmani, Senior Manager – Strategy, Policy & Relationships, Skills & Employment

Atif Shafique, Senior Policy Officer, Skills & Employment

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Cameron Tait, Strategy Manager, Skills & Employment

Dianna Neal, Strategic Lead – Enterprise, Economy and Skills, London Councils
Inna Yordanova, Principal Policy and Project Officer - Employment & Inclusive Growth, London Councils

Others in attendance:

Tim Gallagher, Principal Policy and Project Officer, London Councils

1 Introduction and apologies

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies for absence were received from Sam Gurney¹ and Olivia Vicol.
- 1.3 The Chair welcomed two new members to the Group: Jordan Cummins, Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and Jon Rees, Inclusion London. Jordan and Jon introduced themselves and the Chair thanked them for joining the Group.
- 1.4 The Chair highlighted that Farah Mahammoud (You Press) had stood down as a Member due to work commitments. Members heard that officers were in the process of appointing another Member to replace him.

2 Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting

3.1 RESOLVED:

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

4 Actions arising from previous meeting

4.1 RESOLVED:

The actions arising from the previous meeting were noted.

5 Reflection on the effects of COVID-19 and the latest restrictions

- 5.1 The Chair introduced the item, noting that this was designed to be a discussion for members to reflect on the effects of COVID-19 and the latest restrictions on their organisations/sectors, and highlight any areas in which the Greater London Authority (GLA) could offer support.

¹ Sam Gurney and Kirsi Kekki attend the SfL Recovery Task and Finish Group meetings on an alternating basis, representing the Trades Union Congress (TUC).

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- 5.2 During the subsequent discussion, the following points were raised:
- The impact of the third lockdown² on colleges and other education providers and how the confidence of learners and education workers had been impacted.
 - An increase in stress and anxiety from parents that were home-schooling and educational staff that were trying to work from home and home-school their own children. Learners had also been impacted with concerns about their learning and there had been an increase in anxiety related to the uncertainty of examinations.
 - The importance of balancing the hope around the UK's vaccination programme and the challenge of COVID-19 recovery in the long term.
 - The negative impact of COVID-19 and the third lockdown on low skilled, low level learners, learners with learning difficulties and community groups, and the need for additional resources to support learners that were struggling.
 - The importance of harnessing hidden opportunities that have come from COVID-19, for example, changes in how city centres are used.
- 5.3 Mary-Ann Stephenson highlighted the negative impact of COVID-19, specifically the third lockdown, on women's employment. Members heard that reports were showing that employers that had been previously sympathetic, were showing less flexibility in the third lockdown. This waning flexibility was evidenced in data from the Trades Union Congress (TUC), which showed the number of mothers that had been denied furlough for childcare.
- 5.4 Members heard that data showed that many employers were not aware that they could furlough people for childcare reasons. It was noted that there was not a Government public messaging campaign on furloughing people for childcare reasons.
- 5.5 There were concerns around the Office for National Statistics (ONS) data on job losses, specifically how the data did not take into account the large numbers of non-UK born workers that had left the UK in the last year and the subsequent weighting that had been put on the workers that had remained. Members heard that there was a possible gap between the HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) administrative data and the ONS survey data, specifically in London, due to the high proportion of migrant workers that were working in sectors that had been closed due to the lockdowns.
- 5.6 The Chair questioned whether the GLA had a view on the concerns around data and the exodus of migrant workers. The Senior Manager – Strategy, Policy & Relationships, explained that the GLA had been looking at this issue as it was clear from the data that the losses were significant. She highlighted that GLA Economics were examining the data sets and this issue was being looked at.
- 5.7 Forogh Rahmani highlighted that COVID-19 had a disproportionate impact on certain groups within society, which included women. She explained that GLA recovery programmes would be tailored to ensure that heavily impacted groups would get the most access to opportunities. The GLA needed to make sure that the Adult

² HM Government confirmed England would start a third national COVID-19 lockdown in January 2021 with all schools and non-essential shops closing as the public were asked to work from home.

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Education Budget (AEB) supported as many people as possible, especially those groups that had been most impacted by COVID-19.

- 5.8 Tony Wilson agreed that there were issues around survey data, explaining that population weights from the ONS would not include recent migration statistics. This was because the UK did not collect information on who entered and who left the country. He felt that there had been some job growth in relatively skilled work and service industries, for example job roles related to NHS Test and Trace,³ contact tracing and health & social care.
- 5.9 Members heard that the impact of COVID-19 on London had been very pronounced. London had seen the largest growth in unemployment and significant falls in employment. London had also been hit the hardest in terms of job creation. Tony Wilson explained that this was not surprising as the lockdowns had impacted on footfall and business activity in London's service economy with relatively high private sector employment. There had also been a collapse in tourism, hospitality and leisure which were industries that brought people into London.

5.10 RESOLVED:

The Skills for Londoners (SfL) Recovery Task and Finish Group noted the discussion.

6 'No Wrong Door' Workshop

- 6.1 Members received a presentation on the 'No Wrong Door' approach, which aimed to coordinate skills, careers and employment support so there was 'no wrong door' for Londoners and to ensure that employment and enterprise provided a secure route out of poverty. The 'No Wrong Door' approach formed one of four project work strands of the 'Good Work for All' mission. This mission aimed to "support Londoners into good jobs with a focus on sectors key to London's recovery." Sarah Hernandez also gave an overview of the employment support landscape in London and outlined key Department for Work and Pensions provision.

[Jordan Cummins and Helen Milner OBE left the meeting]

- 6.2 During a workshop session, Members were asked to discuss four key questions:
- 6.2.1 What should 'no wrong door' mean for Londoners, employers and front line practitioners?
 - 6.2.2 Were there gaps in actions/activities?
 - 6.2.3 What was missing and what else could the GLA/London Councils do?
 - 6.2.4 Which actions/activities do the GLA/London Councils need to prioritise for 2021/22?
- 6.3 On discussing the question outlined at point 6.2.1 above, several key themes were highlighted as being important. These themes included:
- the need for a truly person-centred approach;
 - the importance of accessible provision;

³ NHS Test and Trace is a government-funded service in England, established in 2020 to track and help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

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- the need for a tailored journey that could support anyone, whatever their starting point was;
- the importance of linking with other front line, non-employment related services;
- an alignment and connection between the public and private sector; and
- the idea of a simple to follow and easy to understand, digital one-stop-shop.

- 6.4 Members discussed the need to make the 'No Wrong Door' approach a truly person-centred approach. The Chair highlighted that there was a tension between a personalised, tailored approach and keeping the approach simple and easy to follow. Cllr Nesil Caliskan agreed but explained that the London Borough of Enfield had tried to adopt a standard, easy to follow 'front door' after which the person-centred approach would kick in, allowing the person to speak to someone that could help with their specific needs/questions.
- 6.5 Jon Rees explained that the tailored approach to provision needed to be accessible to everyone, including disabled people or people with impairments. He highlighted that deaf and disabled people organisations were best placed to help with accessibility provision. He also pointed out that there were increasing issues with mental health as a side effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. Supporting mental health would be an additional challenge that would need engagement with the right organisations.
- 6.6 Related to the point made above, Mary-Ann Stephenson highlighted that it was important to ensure that support services were properly funded in order to deal with providing the additional support. She highlighted that the Women's Budget Group had been involved with a project in Coventry which started by linking up organisations working with women experiencing violence and employability support projects.⁴
- 6.7 Anna Devlet highlighted that a tiered approach across all sectors could be useful, depending on where a person was in the labour market so support and intervention available was clear and accessible. Tony Wilson agreed with the above point, explaining that generally there was a focus on dealing with the cyclical crisis rather than the longer-term, structural problems.
- 6.8 Arinola Edeh explained that there was a need for a universal 'No Wrong Door' offer with clear pathways for those who would need more nuanced and personalised support. She pointed out that Londoners were at different stages on their journey, so the 'No Wrong Door' offer could not be a one size fits all approach.
- 6.9 Kirsi Kekki highlighted that employability was important, but job retention and building skills were just as essential.
- 6.10 On discussing the questions outlined at points 6.2.2, 6.2.3 and 6.2.4 above, several key themes were highlighted, including:
- the importance of understanding service user engagement, voice and experience;
 - the need for employer feedback and views;

⁴ <http://www.fwt.org.uk/social/coventry-womens-partnership/>

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- the need to build in skills support so that there was a clear route for progression;
- the importance of priority group focused support (women, Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME), young people and disabled people);
- the need to understand the future skills needs in London and the importance of building a plan around supporting these future skills needs;
- the need for onward employment support, particularly for those more removed from the labour market; and
- the need for a service which was funded to support disabled people through their entire work journey, including in-work and progression support.

[Mary-Ann Stephenson left the meeting].

- 6.11 The Chair stressed that the last question highlighted at point 6.2.4 above was important, especially for GLA and London Councils officers. The Chair highlighted that there was a need for the recovery work to not get lost in the detail. There was also a need to address problems in the short term, as there were issues that needed to be tackled urgently due to the impact of COVID-19.
- 6.12 Forogh Rahmani and Dianna Neal thanked Members for their contributions to the 'No Wrong Door' workshop.
- 6.13 **RESOLVED:**
The Skills for Londoners (SfL) Recovery Task and Finish Group noted the discussion.

7 Date of next meeting

- 7.1 The next meeting of the SfL Recovery Task and Finish Group was confirmed as 9.30am on Thursday, 11 March 2021.

8 Any Other Business the Chair Considers Urgent

- 8.1 There was none.

9 Close of meeting

- 9.1 The meeting ended at 10.58am.

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