

# Leaders

Adult Community Learning in London

Item no. 6

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**Summary:** This report outlines the findings and recommendations from a pan-London project about Adult Community Learning (ACL) in the capital. The project considered the future focus of ACL, how to measure its impact and how it might be commissioned, once the Adult Education Budget (AEB) is devolved to the Mayor from 2019/20.

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**Recommendation:** Leaders' Committee is asked to note the findings and recommendations of the report and comment on these.



# Adult Community Learning in London

## Background

1. Education and training for adults aged 19+ is provided by London boroughs, further education colleges and private providers. A distinctive part of this work has been community learning, which focuses on working within communities and engaging individuals in learning. This may include the basic skills necessary to function in society and at work; English; digital skills; numeracy and budgeting; health education; creative arts; and citizenship. It may also include pre-employability training, for example the behaviours, attitudes and expectations required by London's employers. Community learning is local. It is often short in duration, and may be supported by volunteers and other local public services.
2. Annual funding for community learning is provided to each of the 32 London boroughs, the City of London, the Institutes of Adult Learning (IALs)<sup>1</sup>, and to a small group of other providers<sup>2</sup> as a 'block' grant. To date, this has given those in receipt of funding the freedom to determine both what was offered and how it was delivered (for example, as a directly-delivered service, sub-contracted, fully outsourced, or as a combination of these).
3. This is not the only funding that London boroughs, IALs and others receive for adult skills. Most providers in receipt of a block grant for their current community learning also offer qualification-based courses in competition with the wider FE sector, doubling their allocations. Appendix 1 lists the community and other Adult Education Budget (AEB) funding that the main ACL providers in London receive.
4. Community learning was considered alongside FE provision as part of the Area Review process in London during 2016/17. A follow-on project was commissioned by London Councils, on behalf of the four London-sub-regional partnerships and the Greater London Authority (GLA), to take forward specific recommendations arising from the Area Review. Community learning is also part of the AEB that will be devolved to the Mayor in 2019/20, and therefore could be subject to changes in terms of its focus and funding in the future. The research therefore explored options for commissioning

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<sup>1</sup> City Lit, Morley College, Working Men's College (The Camden College), Mary Ward Settlement and the Workers' Education Association. IALs offer provision which attracts learners across London.

<sup>2</sup> The London Learning Consortium and a small number of colleges

community learning and the impact of any major changes in funding allocations might have. It focused on three areas:

- The future role and distinct focus of Adult Community Learning (ACL) in London
  - How outcomes and impact of ACL should be measured
  - Commissioning arrangements for ACL when the Adult Education Budget (AEB) is devolved to the Mayor.
5. Alongside this pan-London project, sub-regional partnerships undertook further work to address other recommendations arising from the Area Review.
6. FEA consultants delivered the pan-London project. This involved a literature review, mapping of current community learning catchment areas, modelling of potential changes to funding allocations and widespread discussions with boroughs, providers and key stakeholders. The final report and accompanying documents can be found [here](#).

## **Main findings and recommendations in the report**

### **Defining publicly funded community learning**

7. The report highlights how ACL is distinct from wider AEB provision. ACL provision doesn't always involve qualifications, but focuses on building confidence and skills through part-time learning. It is locally responsive and usually delivered in the community and in conjunction with other local borough-based support services, such as health, housing, employment and social services. The report identified seven key beneficiary groups for community learning:
- Those furthest away from work
  - Those working in very low paid work or insecure employment, and those falling outside the parameters of the benefit system and seeking a return to work. (Provision for low-paid workers should be planned with reference to DWP services).
  - English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)
  - Mental health service users
  - Adults with learning difficulties and disabilities
  - Older learners
  - Residents with multiple support needs.

8. The report recommends that the GLA adopts this definition of community learning and continues to allocate a 'block grant' to boroughs and current community learning providers, to support a locally responsive service that maximises the links to other public services. Ideally grants should be over three years. Boroughs should continue to access the wider Adult Education Budget (AEB) to support progression onto more formal learning.

### **Measuring outcomes and impact**

9. In its draft Skills for Londoners strategy, the GLA has stated that it will move towards an outcome based commissioning approach for the AEB. All providers currently measure aspects such as learner numbers, attendance, and retention to the end of the programme of study, achievement of individual objectives and progression (where data is available). But further information and evidence is needed to show impact.
10. The report proposes that in the short term the GLA should consider the following measures as a contribution towards measuring impact:
  - Reporting on the proportion of learners supported against the identified priority groups.
  - Measuring educational progression.
  - Measuring social metrics consistently across London. This means collecting robust data which measures improvements in health and wellbeing, levels of confidence and attitudes to progression, and social relationships.
  - Using judgements about outcomes made by external inspectors, primarily Ofsted.
11. The report recommends that the GLA works with providers to develop pan-London arrangements to measure the value of community learning using social metrics. Many London boroughs have indicated that they are willing to test these out during 2018.
12. In the longer term, it recommends that the GLA tracks actual individual progression from community learning activities to higher levels of education, training and employment, as a key measure of the success of all adult learning provision. This would require the government to share a dataset with the GLA that has linked HMRC and DfE data to enable tracking individuals who progress from learning to work.

## **Future commissioning**

13. As highlighted earlier, the report argues for the retention of 'block grant' funding<sup>3</sup> of community learning so that services can be locally responsive and well-integrated with other services. It then considers two different approaches identified during the course of the project – changes to funding allocations and robust business planning.
14. Funding allocations for community learning are historic, vary significantly across London boroughs and so could, potentially, be adjusted to better reflect need. This was highlighted as a key issue during the research, including by the GLA. AEB devolution could re-open discussions about funding allocations between boroughs. The researchers therefore undertook some modelling of modified allocations according to different definitions of need, using established data sets. Initial modelling shows that, even with safeguarding a percentage of each borough's current allocation, several boroughs would experience very sharp increases or reductions in funding (more detail is in Appendix 2). The unintended consequences of this would mean a focus on reducing provision, restructuring and redundancies rather than ensuring that boroughs improve quality and develop new, innovative provision. Should the GLA decide to change allocations, the report recommends the changes should be phased in over a period of time with transitional funding and the GLA should explore the option of developing more precise data that better reflects need and the specific priority groups identified in the report.
15. In the short term, the report suggests a business planning approach. Boroughs would produce a three year plan outlining how the service is meeting the needs of priority groups, a clear picture of what funding is spent on and the expected outputs and outcomes. These would be reviewed annually by the GLA. A failure to meet outcomes within pre-agreed tolerances would result in clawback, or in a reduced allocation for the following year. The plans would form part of the contract between boroughs and the GLA.

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<sup>3</sup> The block grant is a flat rate allocation, as opposed to an alternative formula-driven approach which funds providers primarily on numbers and hours of learning delivered.

## **Considerations and next steps**

16. The report outlines the distinctiveness and benefits of community learning; proposes common priority groups and makes recommendations to the GLA about how to approach community learning once the Adult Education Budget (AEB) is devolved. The full set of recommendations is attached at Appendix 3. Through the Adult Education Programme Board, the Mayor, the boroughs and other stakeholders will need to work together to ensure that the AEB is strategic, appropriately targeted and focused on outcomes. This could bring challenges and changes for ACL provision, as well as opportunities, as indicated in the report.
17. The GLA has been involved in this project, with officers sitting on the steering group. Cllr Peter John will write formally to the Deputy Mayor for Planning, Skills and Regeneration outlining the key recommendations of this report. The report should also inform the GLA's Skills and Employment Commissioning Framework that will set out the Mayor's initial approach to the AEB, including community learning. London Councils is also discussing with the GLA how borough providers can be involved in work to develop and measure social impacts consistently across London, alongside education and employment outcomes.

### **Recommendations**

Leaders' Committee is asked to note the findings and recommendations of the report and comment on these.

### **Financial implications for London Councils**

None

### **Legal implications for London Councils**

None

### **Equalities implications for London Councils**

There are no direct equalities implications for London Councils as a result of this paper.

### **Attachments**

Appendix 1: Funding allocations for key community learning providers, 2015/16  
Appendix 2: Details of modelling of borough community learning allocations

### Appendix 3: Recommendations from the report 'Adult Community Learning in the context of London's vision for skills'

The final report and accompanying documents can be found [here](#).



# APPENDIX 1

## Funding allocations for key community learning providers, 2015/15

Provider	15/16 CL funding	total 15/16 ASB, CL and dLSF funding (ie AEB in 16/17)	%age CL
TOWER HAMLETS LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL	£2,131,718	£2,470,378	86.3%
LEWISHAM LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL	£1,881,081	£3,310,515	56.8%
HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL	£1,684,202	£2,763,001	61.0%
ROYAL BOROUGH OF GREENWICH	£1,646,999	£1,779,397	92.6%
HACKNEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL	£1,626,865	£2,082,870	78.1%
WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL	£1,542,654	£8,068,268	19.1%
CROYDON LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL	£1,454,226	£4,096,001	35.5%
NEWHAM LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL	£1,425,788	£3,711,931	38.4%
LAMBETH LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL	£1,423,099	£2,068,172	68.8%
WANDSWORTH LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL	£1,369,125	£1,713,987	79.9%
REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL	£1,187,960	£2,249,150	52.8%
HOUNSLOW LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL	£1,145,210	£2,408,556	47.5%
HARINGEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL	£1,142,846	£1,764,288	64.8%
BRENT LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL	£1,129,016	£3,057,794	36.9%
BEXLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL	£1,124,874	£2,187,847	51.4%
CAMDEN LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL	£1,102,042	£1,204,849	91.5%
ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA	£1,053,999	£1,295,644	81.3%
SOUTHWARK LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL	£970,996	£1,471,434	66.0%
WALTHAM FOREST LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL	£966,915	£3,144,417	30.8%
BARKING & DAGENHAM LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL	£819,686	£1,704,084	48.1%
LONDON BOROUGH OF SUTTON (SCOLA)	£810,951	£2,519,598	32.2%
BROMLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL	£796,555	£1,532,673	52.0%
MERTON BOROUGH COUNCIL	£788,378	£1,380,496	57.1%
HILLINGDON LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL	£728,296	£1,523,809	47.8%
ISLINGTON LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL	£633,457	£1,007,434	62.9%
HAVERING LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL	£599,088	£1,263,174	47.4%
EALING LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL	£500,336	£590,858	84.7%
ROYAL BOROUGH OF KINGSTON UPON THAMES	£499,687	£1,481,433	33.7%
HARROW LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL	£482,581	£670,922	71.9%
COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LONDON	£428,043	£756,218	56.6%
ENFIELD LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL	£397,839	£643,817	61.8%
RICHMOND UPON THAMES BOROUGH COUNCIL	£225,355	£500,222	45.1%
Totals	£32,186,049	£63,852,055	50.4%
LONDON LEARNING CONSORTIUM COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY	£301,104	£2,759,871	10.9%
RICHMOND ADULT COMMUNITY COLLEGE (RACC)	£240,132	£2,746,379	8.7%
BARNET & SOUTHGATE COLLEGE	£500,662	£15,328,425	3.3%
MORLEY COLLEGE LIMITED	£1,092,113	£5,675,981	19.2%
MARY WARD SETTLEMENT	£543,481	£2,213,128	24.6%
THE CITY LITERARY INSTITUTE	£2,053,122	£7,417,098	27.7%
WORKING MEN'S COLLEGE CORPORATION	£230,540	£4,119,022	5.6%
	£3,919,256	£19,425,229	20.2%

## Details of modelling of borough community learning allocations

The modelling undertaken, available separately, consisted of three initial sets of parameters:

1. **A straight allocation on adult population of London only<sup>4</sup>.** *At extremes, this would mean changes in allocations for 3 boroughs (Barking and Dagenham, Ealing, Enfield) of 100%+ and a reduction for 8 boroughs (City of London, Greenwich, Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, Lewisham, Tower Hamlets and Westminster) of 30%+.*
2. **Allocations based solely on lower super output areas which fall into the lowest three deciles of IMD ranking.** *Again, at extremes, this would mean changes in allocations of 100%+ for 3 boroughs (Ealing, Enfield and Islington) and reductions of 30%+ for 13 boroughs (Bexley, City of London, Greenwich, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Hounslow, Kensington and Chelsea, Kingston-upon-Thames, Merton, Redbridge, Richmond-upon-Thames, Sutton and Wandsworth).*
3. **Allocations weighted towards the lower super output areas in the bottom three deciles of the IMD, but with a proportion of funding relating to the more prosperous LSOAs<sup>5</sup>.** *This is on the basis that within all LSOAs, there will be some priority beneficiaries. This would mean a change of 100%+ for 3 boroughs (Barnet, Ealing, Enfield) and reductions of reductions of 30%+ in 7 boroughs (Bexley, City of London, Greenwich, Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, Wandsworth and Westminster).*

To demonstrate the effect of changing allocations, but retaining a proportion of current funding to ensure service continuity across London, we modelled three further allocations:

4. **Retention of 50% of each borough's current community learning funds, with 25% modelled on the number of people aged 50+ and a weighting for the number of LSOAs in the bottom three deciles.** *This would mean changes for one borough (Enfield) of 100%+ and reductions in one borough (City of London) of 30%+.*
5. **A 'flat rate' grant of 50% of the total community learning funding pot to be divided equally between all boroughs, with 25% allocated in accordance with the number of LSOAs in the bottom 3 deciles of IMD, and 25% based on the population aged 50+.** *This gives 3 boroughs (Barnet, Ealing and Enfield) increases of 100%+ and 6 boroughs (Greenwich, Hammersmith and Fulham, Lewisham, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth and Westminster) reductions of 30%+.*

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<sup>4</sup> Derived from the 2011 Census data

<sup>5</sup> Here we used a weighting of 5 for the most deprived decile, 3 for the second and third decile and 1 for the number of LSOAs in the 4<sup>th</sup> or higher decile.

6. **As (5) but with a 25% flat rate grant, and the remaining two categories modelled on 37.5% each.** *This again benefits 3 boroughs (Barnet, Enfield, Ealing) to the tune of 100%+ and 7 boroughs (City of London, Greenwich, Hammersmith and Fulham, Lewisham, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth and Westminster) reductions of 30%+*

The detailed results of this modelling are available separately.

## Recommendations from the report 'Adult Community Learning in the context of London's vision for skills'

Our recommendations are:

- 1      **That the GLA adopts the definition of community learning set out in this paper, together with the allocation of a 'block grant' to boroughs and current community learning providers, who will plan and deliver provision.** The block grant will enable rapid 'integrated' action to tackle social and economic inequalities, help communities with complex and multiple support needs in learning, and directly contribute to the aims set out in *Skills for Londoners*. As an important part of the wider FE sector we expect that, in addition, Boroughs would continue to access the wider Adult Skills Budget alongside colleges, voluntary organisations, and the private sector.
  
- 2      **That the GLA adopts a model of business planning** rather than artificially adjust allocations at this stage. We believe that a model of business planning will produce results more quickly, it will provide continuity, and will focus providers on supporting priority groups. It will avoid the major disruption to community learning likely in the event of systemic redistribution of funding allocations.
  
- 3      **That the GLA supports providers in developing pan-London arrangements to measure the value of community learning using social metrics,** taking account of national developments. These should enable providers to benchmark both regionally and nationally and to exchange good practice. It will also provide clear evidence about the types of programmes and delivery styles which promote significant improvements in health and wellbeing, confidence, empowerment and which foster positive social relationships.
  
- 4      **That pan-London arrangements are put in place by the GLA to track actual individual progression from community learning activities to higher levels of education and training, and/or employment as a key measure of the success of all adult learning provision.** This to include working with HMRC to agree an MoU to cover data sharing. The government should share this data with the GLA as soon as possible.
  
- 5      **That the GLA liaises with Ofsted and the Education and Training Foundation (ETF).** A specific focus within the Ofsted framework commenting on the quality of community learning outcomes would provide a valuable additional evidence base to the other methods and approaches proposed in this paper. The ETF is the leading organisation driving continuous professional development for the post-16 sector and should be a key partner in supporting London's providers in curriculum innovation, quality improvement and the leadership of change.