



# Skills and Adult Education Strategy for London

The Mayor's Skills and Adult Education Strategy for London, Skills for Londoners, was published on 6 June 2018. This briefing provides an overview of the Mayor's plan for the post-16 technical and vocational education and skills system in London.

## Overview

Skills for Londoners is the first standalone strategy for post-16 skills and education by a London Mayor, in anticipation of the devolution of the Adult Education Budget (AEB) to the Mayor in 2019/20. It sets out the skills challenges facing London along with the priorities and actions to achieve the Mayor's vision: A city for all Londoners<sup>1</sup>.

London has major skills challenges; almost a quarter (23 per cent) of all vacancies in London are due to a lack of applicants with the right skills and one in three Londoners leave school at age 16 without a standard pass in GCSE English or Maths. Some 210,000 working-age adults in London cannot speak English well and inequalities persist, with young people, disabled adults, BAME group and women under-represented in the labour market. Too many Londoners are stuck in low-paid, low-skilled jobs.

Brexit has the potential to reduce labour supply to sectors such as construction and hospitality that are particularly reliant on EU workers who account for a third of all employees in these sectors. Automation will change the future skills of the capital as well. Those on low incomes are likely to be most affected by the disruption of new technology<sup>2</sup>.

The Mayor will follow the strategy with the publication of the Skills for Londoners Framework in July 2018. This will outline and consult on the Mayor's approach to the devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB). Boroughs are encouraged to anticipate and respond to the consultation on the framework when it is published. The consultation window is likely to be short due to the tight timeframe with the AEB being devolved from April 2019.

## Analysis

The strategy emphasises the role of London boroughs and sub-regional partnerships throughout. It outlines the Mayor's intention to work collaboratively with London local

government in order to deliver on the aims of the strategy. Skills for Londoners aims to support local economic growth by forging links between local employers and skills providers, utilising the local insight and expertise of boroughs and sub-regions. It is recognised that sub-regional priorities such as digital and STEM skills have shaped the strategy. London Councils welcomes the strategy's recognition of the role of boroughs' sub-regions in the devolved AEB, both in the shaping of the strategy to-date and its delivery from April 2019.

The Mayor commits continued support for the devolved Work and Health Programme. London Councils welcomes the strategy's support our recommendation that government should take a 'local-first' approach to new services and funding streams aimed at supporting people to enter or stay in work. The Mayor will explore how devolved skills funding could be better aligned to the Work and Health programme, delivering a more coherent and effective skills system.

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Skills for Londoners contains three key priorities:

### **1. Empower all Londoners to access the education and skills to participate in society and progress in education and work**

The Mayor will achieve this through reducing barriers to participation in life-long learning, increasing targeted support to the most disadvantaged groups and increasing the number and diversity of adult learners gaining the skills they need to participate in society.

Some of the activity that is of most interest to boroughs includes:

- Establishing an **all-age careers offer** for Londoners and expanding access to the London Enterprise Adviser Network for schools and colleges.
- Continue to **support the devolved Work and Health Programme** and support London Councils' "local first approach".
- Drive up participation and progression outcomes in the provision of English and maths and make adult learning provision more accessible and flexible through the **devolved AEB**.

### **2. Meet the needs of London's economy and employers now and in the future**

The Mayor will achieve this by supporting employers to improve productivity and make use of their workforce's skills, working with employers to ensure the devolved AEB delivers for the London economy and to improve the relevance and quality of training available in the capital.

Some of the activity that is of most interest to boroughs includes:

- Lobby government to devolve the apprenticeship levy to create a **Skills Levy** for London.
- Work with industry in London to develop and **promote high-quality apprenticeships**.
- Establish the **Mayor's Construction Academy** with the housebuilding industry.
- Create an **occupational skills board** with business/employers to advise on aligning skills provision with industry requirements for London industries.

### **3. Deliver a strategic city-wide technical skills and adult education offer**

The Mayor will achieve this by improving the access to information for learners to make informed decisions, enable a more strategic approach to commissioning skills provision, improve progression pathways to intermediate and higher-level skills and raise the quality of facilities, teaching and leadership in London's further and adult education sector.

Some of the activity that is of most interest to boroughs includes:

- Publish a **Skills for Londoners Framework** providing more detail on delivery arrangements relating to how City Hall will fund and measure its various skills programmes.
- Create a more **collaborative and strategic skills system** in London, which considers London's specialisms, particularly in key growth sectors, in preparation for implementation of the new Technical-Level qualifications.
- Help spread best practice across London's schools to **improve attainment at 16**, so that more young people are equipped with the skills needed to achieve a Level 3 equivalent qualification by age 19.

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A full list of the objectives and activity in the Skills for Londoners strategy can be found in the Useful Links at the end of this briefing.

## Commentary

The devolution of the AEB to the Mayor is welcome. London Councils has long argued that the boroughs, working with the Greater London Authority (GLA), providers and employers are best placed to help deliver a flexible skills system that better responds to local needs and addresses the challenges London faces. The strategy creates the potential for a unified platform across London government, calling for more powers from government beyond AEB.

London Councils supports the position that unspent apprenticeship levy funds should be devolved to London in order to be targeted effectively at London's skills challenges and that funding for 16-18 skills and careers in London should also be devolved to the capital. London Councils will be working with the GLA to jointly lobby for a more ambitious devolution deal for skills in London.

There is an emphasis on close work with London's boroughs and sub-regional partnerships throughout the strategy. Evidence and analysis provided by the sub-regional partnerships to the Mayor also features in the strategy. Key elements of this strategy will only be achieved through close cooperation with London local government. Sub-regional partnerships are in the process of establishing Sub-Regional Skills and Employment Boards. The chairs of each of these boards, and London Councils Executive Member for Skills and Employment, will sit on the Skills for Londoners Board that will advise the Mayor on the use of the devolved AEB and the wider skills system in London. Leaders will be represented, alongside employers and providers. This should provide Leaders with the opportunity to give early strategic input into the approaches taken.

Moving to outcome-based commissioning for the devolved AEB is a welcome step. The current financial incentives for providers are focused on outputs rather than outcomes. The new system will reward value for money but more importantly measure the impact of adult education on a learner's quality of life, as well as job and progression outcomes. Shifting to this evaluation will be challenging for both the Mayor and providers delivering services. However, this approach will better support quality of provision and lead to a better understanding on how adult education can be most effective. London Councils, Sub-Regional Partnerships and the GLA are exploring how local knowledge and expertise can add value to all stages in the commissioning process.

The strategy acknowledges the benefits of Adult Community Learning that is primarily delivered by London boroughs and Institutes of Adult Learning. A key challenge will be

to measure the social impact of this activity and ensure the Adult Community Learning provides effective progression routes to further learning and employment opportunities.

#### **Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup> [A City for All Londoners](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Human Capital: Disruption, opportunity and resilience in London's workforce, Centre for London, April 2018](#)

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#### **Links:**

[Mayor of London: Skills for Londoners, A Skills and Adult Education Strategy for London](#)

[Priority 1: Empower all Londoners to access the education and skills to participate in society and progress in education and work](#)

[Priority 2: Meet the needs of London's economy and employers now and in the future](#)

[Priority 3: Deliver a strategic city wide technical skills and adult education offer](#)

#### **This member briefing has been circulated to:**

**Portfolio holders and those members who requested policy briefings in the following categories: Economic Development, Children and Young People**