

# **Skills for Londoners Framework Consultation 2021/22**

**Summary of responses**

**October 2020**

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Greater London Authority  
City Hall  
The Queen's Walk  
More London  
London SE1 2AA  
**[www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk)**  
enquiries 020 7983 4000  
minicom 020 7983 4458

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## Introduction

In February 2020, City Hall published a consultation seeking views on key policy areas related to the Adult Education Budget (AEB) in London, and on other skills and employment policies and programmes in the capital, for the 2021/22 academic year and beyond.

The consultation ran for just over ten weeks. It received 28 valid responses from a range of AEB providers, both in London and outside, as well as from other key stakeholders. The range of organisations responding to the consultation is summarised in the table below.

	Number of respondents
Local authority	7
Representative body or organisation	7
Independent training provider	5
Sub-regional partnership	3
Institute of adult learning	2
Charitable organisation	2
Further education institution	1
Higher education institution	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28</b>

The amount of detail in response to each of the consultation questions varied considerably between respondents. Responses have not been weighted.

## Background

From 1 August 2019, the Mayor was delegated responsibility from the Department for Education (DfE) for the commissioning, delivery and management of London's AEB for the 2019/20 academic year and future years.

As part of the preparation for the delegation of the AEB to the Mayor in 2019, the GLA published a **Skills for Londoners Strategy** on 10 June 2018 setting out the Mayor's vision for skills and education for London. Alongside the Strategy, a Skills for Londoners Framework was produced outlining how the objectives of the Strategy will be delivered in the context of the devolution of the AEB.

For the first year of AEB devolution (the 2019/20 academic year), the Mayor committed to make relatively few changes to AEB policy to provide stability to the sector during the transition to devolution. For the 2020/21 academic year, the Mayor began to phase in some of the changes to the AEB proposed in the Framework.

The Framework has been consulted on twice before since it was first published in 2018 alongside the Mayor's Skills for Londoners Strategy. Summary reports of previous Framework consultations can be accessed on the GLA website.

This consultation for 2021/22 sought views on key policy areas related to the AEB in London, and on other skills and employment policies and programmes in the capital. The findings from the consultation will be used to inform potential changes to the AEB Funding and Performance Management Rules in 2021/22 and beyond, as well as to support the ongoing development of the Mayor's long-term vision for skills in the capital.

### Timing of the consultation

The consultation was published online on 20 February 2020 and was due to run until the end of March. However, due to the onset of the Covid-19 the consultation was extended to 3 May 2020.

Two key points should be considered in light of this. First, given the consultation was still open during the outbreak of Covid-19 and at an uncertain time for the sector, it is not surprising that this experience has influenced the responses received. Indeed, towards the end of the consultation, there was a marked difference in the range of responses which referred to the pandemic, the challenges it created, and the steps needed to respond to it. These comments have been analysed and highlighted throughout this document.

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Second, the unprecedented nature of the crisis and the challenges it created for the education and skills sector, meant the consultation received fewer responses compared to previous years. Therefore, the sample size did not allow a more quantitative approach to analysis and cannot be assumed to be fully representative of the sector. However, there were some clear messages in the responses which are summarised in this report.

### **Content of the consultation and this report**

The consultation included 13 broad questions:

- Questions 1 to 6 related to the reporting and funding arrangements of the AEB.
- Questions 7 to 9 focused on emerging areas of interest that the AEB could be used to support.
- Questions 10 to 13 identified other skills and employment policy priorities.

This report follows a similar structure, with three key sections outlining the findings relating to the above questions and a summary of next steps for City Hall.

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## Summary of key messages

The following sections of this report provide the views of those responding to the Skills for Londoners Framework Consultation 2021/22. The analysis is based on 28 respondents representing a range of AEB providers and other stakeholders. A summary of key points is provided below.

### **AEB reporting and funding arrangements (questions 1 to 6)**

Respondents emphasised the need to retain and fund a range of lower level qualifications (from entry levels to, and including, level 3) and offer non-accredited, non-formal learning options and 'bite-sized' learning. They also requested greater flexibility in the funding system to enable providers to offer innovative delivery methods, out of hours delivery, and use of community venues. These were all seen as important in terms of inclusivity, helping learners to enter learning or employment and to progress in their careers. The qualifications and provision highlighted by respondents were mentioned in relation to in-work learners, those on low incomes or unemployed, those from disadvantaged backgrounds and for learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Pre-employment support and supported employment offers were specifically mentioned in relation to SEND provision.

Several respondents highlighted how they had moved rapidly to remote learning since Covid-19. Using blended learning approaches to enhance face-to-face learning and to make learning more accessible to a wider pool of learners was considered a developmental priority. This was said to require enhanced digital skills training, staff professional development, better infrastructure and connectivity, and the sharing of best practice in using digital tools and blended learning.

Questions around simplifying the funding system generated comments around streamlining funding, simplifying the procurement process, and using fairer funding rules and allocation processes.

### **Emerging areas of interest (questions 7 to 9)**

Respondents saw an opportunity to use AEB funding and increased flexibilities to improve access to learning, provide tailored support packages, and raise awareness of provision and support available. This was true of former unpaid carers and the digitally disengaged.

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Respondents provided many examples of how they were working to prevent and reduce violence, such as embedding the topic in the learning culture and curriculum, and working in partnership with a variety of agencies. They noted two main barriers that providers are faced with: funding limitations in meeting the costs of liaison and support, and the difficulties in identifying and accessing those at risk.

### **Other skills and employment policies (questions 10 to 13)**

Respondents commented on the need to improve awareness and perceptions of Apprenticeships by educating employers, promoting the benefits of Apprenticeships to give them parity of esteem, raising awareness of progression pathways, and providing better information and careers advice. Respondents also highlighted the need to introduce more flexibility into the funding system to maintain a focus on level 2 and 3 provision to widen access and participation, while also ensuring that degree-level Apprenticeships remain an accessible higher level learning option for young people not wishing to go through academic routes.

The Apprenticeship Levy was seen as a key driver in the trend towards higher level Apprenticeships where employers train existing staff who are suited to higher level learning. Concerns were also expressed about reforms to the Apprenticeship system resulting in the phasing out of some popular lower level frameworks. These drivers were said to lead to some groups having more limited access to Apprenticeships, where there are fewer lower level opportunities for disadvantaged, out of work, or low-income learners, and where young people are in competition with adults.

Responses to a final question around supporting providers to work with local communities beyond skills provision reiterated that key areas to develop were:

- improvements to the funding and procurement system to enable a wider range of provision and access to community groups.
- incentivise, facilitate and encourage collaboration of providers and services to enable more accessible services in community venues and multi-service delivery.
- develop publicity campaigns and information sharing to champion the broader benefits of adult learning and services beyond skills provision.

### **Responding to the Covid-19 outbreak**

As the consultation was open during the outbreak of Covid-19, many of the respondents identified the steps the Greater London Authority (GLA) could take to alleviate the impact.

Several suggestions were made in terms of prioritising future provision. These included:

- focusing on key sectors such as health and social care, and digital skills
  - developing capacity for online learning
-



- partnership working and collaboration
- offering health, social, and economic support for Londoners
- prioritising groups disproportionately affected by the crisis

Respondents also highlighted the need for emergency funding to mitigate against reduced income due to the lockdown restrictions. Additionally, respondents suggested research should be commissioned to capture the learning from recent changes to remote delivery and to understand changes in London's labour market.

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## AEB reporting and funding arrangements

This section of the consultation posed a number of questions on key policy areas related to AEB in London, with a view to making potential changes to the reporting and funding arrangements for the AEB from 2021/22.

### Prioritising qualifications at level 3 and below

The Government is currently reviewing post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below that are funded through the AEB, with a view to rationalising the current number of technical qualifications. This section of the consultation was designed to understand the impact the proposed changes could have on Londoners and London employers, and to identify the qualifications in scope for review which could be retained as part of London's wider skills offer.

#### 1a. Which qualifications at level 3 and below should City Hall continue to fund as a regional skills priority based on their importance to London's economy, and why?

There was a wide range of responses to this question: some focused on specific qualifications to prioritise and others offered more general feedback around key levels, qualification types, and sector subject areas. The key messages were:

- **Lower level qualifications are important** as they offer progress and development opportunities, progression into work, and enable social mobility; particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Lower level qualifications were seen as significant in skills and knowledge development and suitable preparation for accessing a level 3 qualification. A few also commented that, in some sectors, they were an entry requirement or a requirement to practise.
- **Vocational and non-formal qualifications should both be prioritised** as they provide employment pathways and a 'stepping stone' to formal learning. Non-accredited qualifications, unregulated aims, soft skills, and short courses were also mentioned.
- **Basic and generic skills are a priority**, particularly English, maths, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and digital skills. Digital skills were seen as an opportunity to offer blended or more flexible learning to meet the needs of a varied cohort of learners. Some commented that the move to online learning during the Covid-19 had amplified the need for more digital skills provision. Some also highlighted work preparation (including work experience, employability and job support) as a priority. Although less frequently mentioned, some respondents highlighted the importance of British sign language (BSL) and provision for the deaf community, specialist provision

for those with additional needs, provision that develops confidence to learn, and leadership and management skills.

- **Some sector specific subject areas are a priority**, particularly, health and social care (e.g. qualifications in supporting those with a disability or learning difficulties, mental health problems and dementia care), as it provides opportunities for lower level learners to enter learning or employment and to start on the career progression ladder. Many of the respondents referred to the need to build skills and capacity in this sector given the current Covid-19 crisis. The construction sector was also seen as a key priority for development in London, as were the creative industries. Qualifications in childcare and education were mentioned a few times as were those which related to regulatory or legislative requirements (e.g. the Prevent duty, data protection, workplace harassment, and mental health first aid). Others subject areas mentioned by a small number of respondents included: business, administration and finance; hospitality and catering; retail/retail operations; sport, fitness and personal health; hair and beauty; and the green economy.

There were three key messages from the consultation feedback:

1. The qualifications highlighted are important for growing the economy, by reskilling and upskilling those entering or in employment and meeting skills shortages in key sectors or projected growth sectors.
2. Funding should be directed to where there is demonstrable demand (sectoral demand and demand from learners) and currency.
3. Funding should take account of London's changing economy and key drivers, for example, the green/low carbon economy, migrant workers and need for reskilling, automation, the impact of Brexit and Covid-19.

#### **1b. What additional funding flexibilities would support the delivery of these qualifications to priority groups, and why?**

Respondents commented on both funding increases and the need for more flexibility in the current funding arrangements.

Many of the comments related to **overcoming barriers to learning** such as accommodating the diverse needs of adult learners and removing financial constraints. A message around equality of opportunity also came through the feedback, with several saying that all adults should have access to learning to support progression into and within work. The most common suggestions were:

- Widen funding to include **more flexibility in delivery** to fund qualifications deliverable in shorter, 'bite-sized' units, to offer more flexible delivery modes (such as online/remote and blended learning), and to enable providers to offer out of hours access.
  - Enable more **bespoke locally designed learning** that can include both qualifications and non-regulated learning (to support progression to full level 2).
-

- Provide an **entitlement for all** to have a full level 3 qualification to enable social mobility.<sup>1</sup>
- Focus on **priority sectors** and shortage areas (or anticipated shortages).
- Increase funding of **non-qualification/non-accredited courses**, particularly for learners accessing ESOL or for those with SEND.
- Increase the **uplift for social mobility groups/those from disadvantaged backgrounds** (in addition to a geographical uplift).
- Enhance funding to compensate providers for the additional level of diagnosis and **support required for those with high needs**.
- Remove the **Advanced Learner Loan requirement** for level 3 courses, which was felt to be prohibitive for learners on lower incomes.<sup>2</sup>

### Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

Participation rates in AEB-funded provision of Londoners who reported a disability do not currently reflect London's disabled population. Achievement rates are also typically lower for those with a declared disability than those without. The following question explored how provision of adult education in London for learners with SEND can be improved.

## 2. How can City Hall further improve the provision of adult education in London for learners with SEND to increase participation and achievements?

There were many varied suggestions in response to this question although four key themes were prominent.

- The most common theme in the consultation feedback was around **providing greater flexibilities in funding and provision** to provide more supportive and inclusive opportunities and to ensure that the needs of this cohort are better met. Suggestions included:
  - Funding more employment preparation, job coaching, travel training, supported employment programmes and inclusive Apprenticeships.
  - Flexibility in AEB to fund non-accredited provision below level 3 with opportunities for taster/short courses.
  - Widening and enhancing funding to allow additional learning support (e.g. learning support assistants) in mainstream provision.
  - Enhanced support by specialist teaching staff and mentors.
  - Providing more mental health support for adults.

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<sup>1</sup> Currently, AEB funding rules stipulate that entitlements allow learners aged: 19 to 23 to be fully-funded if they study for a first qualification at level 2 and/or level 3; and, 19 and over, who have not previously attained a GCSE grade C/grade 4 or higher, to be fully-funded if they study for a qualification in English or maths, up to and including level 2.

<sup>2</sup> Advanced learner loans are available for individuals aged 19 or above to undertake approved qualifications at levels 3 to level 6, at an approved provider in England. The availability of loans at level 3 for 19 to 23 year olds does not replace an individual's legal entitlement for full funding for a first full level 3 qualification.

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- Broadening the types of providers offering SEND provision.
- Funding all entry level qualifications.
- Another common theme was around **supporting providers** (including providing capital funding) **to offer suitable facilities and support for learners with SEND**. This included:
  - Providing funding for reasonable adjustments and improving accessibility.
  - Investment in professional development of the workforce to upskill those working with SEND learners.
  - Facilitating collaboration between specialists, mainstream providers and other agencies (e.g. hubs to coordinate relevant training, share resources and offer support).
  - Simplifying the process for institutions to access learning support funds.

Some also highlighted a need to manage the aftereffects of Covid-19 to manage social distancing measures whilst meeting the support needs of these learners.

- Several respondents mentioned the need to provide **more funding to fill gaps in SEND provision to meet increasing demand**, including accessing those ‘not diagnosed’ or without education, health and care plans (EHCPs). Some also suggested a review of the use of EHCPs for indicating need and the use of more accurate assessment tools.
- **Raising awareness of SEND provision** was a clear theme in the consultation responses. Some saw an advocacy role for the Mayor in raising the profile of SEND provision with central government and better linking of wider services (such as health, housing, social care) with education. Respondents suggested developing a communication campaign directed to families, carers and practitioners and championing exemplary tailored provision, including community-based work which offers alternative entry routes for learners with SEND. A few respondents also commented on the need to increase the number of employers sensitive to the needs of these learners and who are ‘disability confident’ so that they can support work experience, Apprenticeship and employment placements.

## Supporting the FE workforce to meet the skills needs of the future

Responses to last year’s Framework consultation reinforced the need to upskill London’s FE workforce. The Review of Post-18 Education and Funding also recommended that investment in the FE workforce should be a priority. In this consultation, City Hall posed questions to further understand the workforce development needs of adult education providers in London and to identify their priorities and future training needs, focusing on two priority areas: digital transformation and green skills.

### **3a. How are you embedding skills for a green economy in your provision and ensuring staff have the necessary capabilities to prepare for the transition to London becoming a zero-carbon city by 2050?**

Respondents reported a wide range of ways that they were embedding the green economy into their provision and just two commented that this was an area to explore or develop further. There were five key methods mentioned (each by a few respondents):

- **Including green economy content into the curriculum** and providing short sessions, developing new courses (e.g. an environmental sustainability qualification), and including relevant topics in personal and social development sessions.
- **Training, development and awareness raising for staff** on the green economy, working on initiatives expanding relevant knowledge.
- **Review technology used for learning and assessment** in relation to blended learning and the need to reduce printing.
- **Inclusion of green economy in institutional policy and strategy**, such as regular reviews of environmental sustainability and encouraging zero carbon approaches.
- **Changes to transport infrastructure or behaviour**, such as, the use of hybrid or electric vehicles, and staff and learners being encouraged to use public transport or bicycles.

Other methods suggested were:

- Use of technology for communications and marketing.
- Online initial assessments and enrolment.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) training for staff with ongoing support for using portable devices.
- Engagement with employers, researching skills needs, gaps and emerging industries with a view to develop training to upskill and progress learners to meet the need in this arena.

The responses also identified a number of actions City Hall could take. These were:

- Fund an appropriate AEB green construction course for London-based construction providers.
- Collaborate with the Department for Education (DfE) to establish a mandatory requirement for education publishers to provide online software and versions of textbooks to prevent paper copies of materials.
- Set up a London wide commission to identify the jobs of the future to support providers to equip staff with the skills they need.

### **3b. How are you bringing new digital approaches into the classroom, and supporting staff to develop their own digital capabilities?**

A range of **teaching and learning practices** were cited by consultation respondents. These were reported to be used to enhance learning in the classroom, offer a blended learning approach or to offer remote learning. At least half of the respondents reported that there had been some investment in, or a move to, interactive learning platforms/virtual learning environments and related operating systems. Use of videos, short recordings, social media platforms, communication and meeting tools, toolkits, e-portfolios, e-individual learning plans, apps, portable devices and whiteboards, were mentioned. The resources were said to be used for strategic and collaborative planning, teaching and learning, assessment, monitoring learning and measuring achievement, and providing web-based information, advice and guidance (IAG).

Several respondents noted how digital practices had grown due to Covid-19 forcing the closure of education establishments. This had led some to trial new digital approaches during the lockdown period *‘to identify which are the most appropriate for different subject areas and pedagogy.’*

Many of the respondents mentioned **developing and supporting staff in ICT/digital skills** for teaching and learning, and for learning management systems. This included formal training and short 15 minute continuing professional development (CPD) sessions. A small number also mentioned providing training for learners, signposting resources for staff to use, drawing on existing best practice across networks, and one mentioned developing a new post for a programme lead in digital skills.

Respondents also suggested some potential solutions and requirements to enhance the use of digital skills:

- Enhance CPD on digital skills/new delivery approaches.
- Investment in ICT infrastructure and equipment.
- Best practice guide for using digital tools/blended learning.
- Consideration of the support that students need for online course delivery and access to ‘digital kit’ outside the classroom.
- Include digital capabilities in professional teacher standards and teacher training.

### **3c. More broadly, how can City Hall support greater digital leadership and practices such as service design, data-sharing and collaboration?**

Responses to this question mirrored the solutions provided to the previous question. Most responses to this question focused on the need to:

- **Promote and share best practice and resources for online learning.** Suggestions included:
  - A central forum or network.
  - A digital leadership and learning hub/best practice hub.

- Communities of practitioners.
  - Project based multi-provider task and finish groups.
  - Case studies.
  - Leadership forums.
- **Enable more formalised and structured collaboration and support.** For example, from leaders in the digital arena, and facilitate the connecting of suppliers with providers.
  - **Incentivise projects** to deliver learning using innovative online approaches and support the testing and identifying of what works, particularly for hard to reach and priority groups.

### 3d. How could the Mayor support the professional development of London's FE workforce to be more responsive to the broader needs of London's economy and employers?

Two themes featured prominently in the responses to this question:

- **Enable more professional development and upskilling of staff.** Suggestions included:
  - Enhanced funding for staff training.
  - Ring-fenced funding for digital training.
  - Creating a bespoke CPD programme/workforce development fund.
  - Provision of insight CPD delivered by employers in growth sectors.
  - Promotion of core ICT competencies for teachers, linked to teaching standards or recognising ICT accreditation.
- **Champion/encourage links between FE, independent training providers (ITP), and industry/employers.** To fill skills gaps and better meet the needs of employers, this could involve the use of subject groups and developing a framework that supports a co-developed curriculum. Other suggestions included:
  - Working with providers and awarding organisation to build training systems.
  - Working with sub-regional skills and employment boards and London boroughs.
  - Providing paid industrial placements for FE staff.
  - Exploring initiatives to encourage industry professionals to move into FE teaching roles.

Other suggestions from a few respondents included:

- Facilitating the sharing of best practice and knowledge across all providers and incentives to encourage industry/digital experts to share knowledge and experience.
-



- Awareness raising campaigns to encourage and incentivise entry into the FE profession and promotion of degree and higher level Apprenticeships for upskilling or progression of the FE workforce.
- Funding, bursaries or grants to allow innovation and collaboration between providers.
- Subsidising access to hardware, equipment and connectivity.
- Managing the impact of Covid-19 on the adult education and skills sector with a comprehensive and inclusive skills strategy.

## Supporting in-work learners

Responses to last year's Skills for Londoners Framework highlighted the need for more flexibility in how provision is delivered to ensure it fits around learners' existing work and family commitments. This consultation explored how the AEB could support those working within London's increasingly flexible labour market to access training opportunities, and how to support providers to deliver provision outside of core hours.

### 4a. How are you currently delivering training to in-work groups, including provision outside of core hours, and how can City Hall improve access to learning for in-work groups who cannot access core hours provision?

By far the most common theme related to delivering to in-work groups was the **use of flexible approaches**:

- Employees attending outside of shift patterns/core hours.
- Evening and weekend classes.
- Part-time attendance.
- Blended learning - delivery supported by e-learning and e-tutoring.
- Distance learning and online learning packages.
- Accredited and non-accredited short or modular courses.
- Flexible enrolment (e.g. virtual interview at flexible times).

Several respondents mentioned delivery at the workplace or ensuring that classes were located close to the workplace to reduce travel time and make access more convenient. A few also mentioned community-based learning (particularly for those with few or no qualifications).

Comments also referred to providing information and support to learners, such as coaching and employment support to overcome barriers, free and impartial IAG (including one which mentioned virtual IAG out of hours), and reviewing messages to learners around the support that is available to them.

Several challenges and barriers to participation were highlighted:

- Attendance varies due to work patterns.
-

- Staff cannot be released in time to attend training (due to concerns over productivity).
- Lack of time for training.
- Cost of learning/lack of finance for training.
- Lack of learner confidence.
- Childcare responsibilities.
- Inconvenient locations.

Where suggestions were made to **improve access for in-work groups**, they tended to relate to allowing **more flexibility in funding** to enable more convenient delivery modes (e.g. blended learning with investment in technological resources), locations (community venues and in the workplace) and timings (e.g. outside of core hours). Some respondents suggested **raising awareness** of the benefits of investing in staff training/in-work learning, the national entitlements (English, mathematics and digital skills) and flexible provision available outside of core hours. An IAG service was also mentioned, and removal of barriers to participation through personalised support.

#### **4b. Recognising the challenges many workers in London’s increasingly flexible labour market face in accessing training opportunities, how can skills provision better support them?**

Responses to this question were similar to the above. The main theme was around **improving flexibility and accessibility**. Suggestions included:

- Encouraging and coordinating access to training in more accessible venues.
- Supporting adult education providers to set up infrastructures to offer more accessible learning.
- Encouraging more use of blended learning/flexibility in delivery methods.
- Widening AEB use for accredited and non-accredited programmes up to level 3 and with a wider range of providers and provider types. This included funding of portable, short courses and units or ‘bite-sized’ learning which are credited and linked to employment outcomes and employer needs, and which support progression to more formal in-work learning.

**Overcoming key barriers** was felt to be significant in enabling in-work groups to participate in training. This included soft skills provision to build confidence and offer initial steps to training, removing travel requirements by providing local offers, initiatives to increase digital inclusion for those not online or without digital skills, and encouraging employers to give workers time off to learn and train.

### **AEB funding systems**

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This section of the consultation explored whether there is a simpler approach to funding provision that would enable colleges, local authorities, and other providers to deliver a transformative teaching and learning experience.

## 5. How could City Hall create a simpler and more effective funding system?

Three main themes emerged in response to this question:

- **Streamlining the funding system** to simplify the procurement process (particularly for smaller providers), remove duplication of provision and fund according to need. Several suggested a single funding stream, *‘one allocation for revenue, capital, growth and innovation would be helpful’*.
- **Using fairer funding rules/processes** to reflect the true cost of delivery, linked to population needs and sector demand across different London locations, and consistency in commissioning to all provider types. Some suggested 100 per cent procurement of AEB for a fair and open competition.
- **Provide flexibilities in the funding system** to meet wider needs of learners, such as unaccredited, bite-sized provision and coaching and mentoring alongside training, thereby reducing inequalities by opening up access to disadvantaged learners.

## Data reporting

City Hall is aiming to publish a range of London AEB data in order to support policy development, inform and engage stakeholders, and encourage greater transparency. The consultation posed questions to provide City Hall with an understanding of the data requirements of providers.

### 6a. What AEB data extracts from the Individual Learner Record would be most usefully shared?

A wide range of fields were mentioned with data related to educational outcomes, destination and progression (relating to impact and performance) being most common.

- **Learner characteristics** (age, gender, disability, ethnicity, social mobility groups, diversity of learners (all protected characteristics), address/postcode, prior qualifications/educational starting point).
  - **Employment details** (employer name, employer sector, employer postcode, employer size, job title, employment status, learner income).
  - **Provision/training details** (start date, planned/actual end dates course name, training type).
  - **Provider level data** - (learner participation volumes, summaries of courses being delivered, sub-contractors used, amount of funding received).
  - **Performance and outcome data** (retention, pass rate, achievement, employment, health, culture outcomes, destination, progression).
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*‘Another set of reports would be valuable if the GLA reports could themselves report on the current Retention, Achievement and Pass rates within the year (both current actual and potential) instead of organisations, each individual having to purchase further software and expertise in order to derive this themselves. This would save a little more funding for each organisation which could go to the front line.’*

Some respondents suggested it would be useful to interrogate the data by:

- Geographical and provider breakdowns (pan-London, sub-regions, local authority, individual provider).
- Learner and learner characteristics (ethnicity, gender, and age group).
- Level, qualification type and qualification /course.
- Sector and occupation.

Several respondents commented that Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data should be streamlined by reviewing and simplifying ILR fields and using other data sources (e.g. DWP, HMRC, LMI) to reduce duplication.

#### **6b. How would your organisation use this information?**

The majority of responses to this question suggested that the information would be used for **curriculum planning**, to modify/tailor provision ensuring that **skills provision is more responsive to local economic needs**, and for **performance monitoring**, to improve services and quality of provision.

Other suggestions included:

- Measure impact and progression more robustly.
  - Gain sector insights/business needs analysis.
  - Inform and develop careers information and careers advice, in-work progression and skills policies and programmes.
  - Analyse learner demographics, identify those in most need and support all.
  - Contact learners to fill Apprenticeship vacancies.
  - Close participation and attainment gaps.
  - Show the value of adult learning.
  - Market courses well.
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## City Hall response

We welcome the detailed and constructive responses on the Mayor's medium and long-term priorities for the AEB.

On the Government's **proposed changes to post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below** funded through the AEB, the responses clearly highlighted the importance of retaining a diverse skills offer for adult learners, with a view to prioritising those courses where there is demonstrable demand from learners and employers.

We will work closely with government as it develops its proposals for these changes and make the case for retaining a wide range of qualifications for learners and employers, given the scale of occupational roles across London's labour market.

Responding to the challenges we face as a result of COVID-19, from the next academic year (2020/21) City Hall will fund any level 3 qualification that runs for a maximum of one year for unemployed Londoners and those on low wages, regardless of prior attainment, to help them access new employment opportunities.

Looking at how we build on the flexibility introduced for 2020/21 to support FE providers to upskill their teaching and support staff to better meet the **needs of SEND learners**, several responses highlighted the importance of improving facilities for SEND learners, particularly in light of COVID-19. This is a key focus for City Hall's skills capital investments: 5,400 SEND learners have been supported to date through City Hall investment, and, of all the providers we are in contract with, more than over 9,000 SEND learners will be supported across the lifetime of their projects. This is set to grow considerably over the coming months as we enter grant agreements with 30 more endorsed projects for 2020/21, as well as approving additional projects through the COVID-19 Emergency Recovery Support Fund.

Alongside this, we will be continuing to lobby government for a significant funding increase for learners with SEND. We will also explore ways to better communicate SEND provision and available support.

Responses clearly highlighted the good work that is already taking place across the sector to support **workforce development**. In particular, we note the increased investment providers have made as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic to trial new digital approaches during the lockdown period. This has been critical in supporting Londoners to keep learning during such a challenging time, and was a key element of the Skills for Londoners COVID-19 Response Fund in making sure all of London's AEB providers had additional funding to build capacity and improve their digital infrastructure.

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Ensuring the FE workforce is supported to continue providing relevant and high-quality training will be key to London's skills recovery. As part of the recovery digital transformation and green skills have been highlighted as priority focuses and City Hall will give full consideration to the consultation responses when developing relevant policy and programmes.

Clearly, COVID-19 will have a profound impact on London's labour market. While the focus over recent years has been on **supporting in-work Londoners** to access training opportunities to help them retrain and re/ upskill, the priority for AEB in the short-term will be to support the newly unemployed to find work, particularly those most at risk of long-term unemployment.

At the same time, we know the positive affect extending full funding of AEB courses to eligible in-work groups earning below the London Living Wage has had on supporting more flexible provision, particularly evening classes.

Building on the success of this change and City Hall's desire to give providers more flexibility—alongside extending full funding for certain level 3 qualifications for those unemployed or on in low pay—providers will be able to use up to 10% of their formula-funded allocation to deliver non-formula training targeted at supporting both the needs of those out of work and those in-work looking for opportunities to retrain re/ upskill to progress.

The Review of Post-18 Education and Funding identified the complexity of the current **national funding system** City Hall has inherited to deliver adult education in London. We were therefore keen to understand if there was a simpler approach to funding provision that would enable colleges, local authorities, and other providers, to deliver a transformative teaching and learning experience.

Responses highlighted the need for a more flexible system to deliver the range of skills outcomes needed by Londoners, including incentivising delivery, multi-year funding agreements to support stability in local skills planning, and recognition of the core costs of delivery. At the same time, responses emphasised the need to adopt an approach that avoids adding further complexity to the current funding system.

We welcome this feedback and will work with providers and other stakeholders to ensure that the funding system for London is developed in a way that prioritises simplicity and effectiveness. Any changes will be made incrementally, recognising the need for funding stability.

City Hall has prioritised publishing high quality **London AEB data** to support policy development, inform and engage stakeholders, and encourage greater transparency. GLA Economics has recently started publishing quarterly London AEB data. Responses

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identified a wide range of data extracts that could be usefully published, particularly where they relate to destination and progression outcomes.

City Hall's AEB data publication (published in June 2020 and available here: <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/gla-adult-education-budget>) included data on participation, achievements, and spend, broken down across a range of metrics. Future publications will also include sub-regional and borough data. Learner data has been disaggregated by sex, ethnicity group, age, employment status prior to enrolment, learning difficulty/disability/health problem, learner support, disadvantage uplift funding, and household situation. Summary statistics are also provided by 'Learner Home Local Authority District' (based on home postcode). While data is not provided on prior attainment due to questionable data quality, data has been released on entitlements, which, in some cases, require very specific educational prior attainments.

Additionally, statistics are provided by funding category and provider type. Volumes and achievements are broken down by provider, Local Authority, level of education, Sector Subject Area (Tier 1 and 2), and by Community Learning Type. Data on Mayoral priorities, such as British Sign Language and English and maths courses, is also provided.

Due to data limitations (i.e. missing or unreliable data) it is not currently possible to publish additional data on employment, performance and outcomes, sectors and occupations. City Hall is developing a London Learner Survey which it hopes will provide some of these insights.

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## Emerging areas of interest

The next few consultation questions focused on areas of interest that the AEB could potentially be used to support.

### Supporting unpaid carers

Through his Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, the Mayor committed to provide employability and skills support to carers to enable them to participate in, and benefit from, employment opportunities in London. The consultation explored how the AEB could be used to support carers to enter or re-enter work.

#### 7. How could the AEB be used to support unpaid carers unable to fully participate in work to enter/ re-enter employment?

A large proportion of comments related to **removing barriers** for unpaid carers. Respondents suggested two main areas to focus on:

- **Improving access to provision** through increased flexibility in delivery, support with travel costs, and use of convenient locations for skills training delivery. A few respondents suggested working with local carer organisations and networks.
- **Funding a tailored support package** to improve participation and completion of learning. This could include a wide range of wrap around support (e.g. mental health, wellbeing and confidence-building, essential/basic skills, coaching and mentoring, peer support groups, employability assessment and support, facilitating interactions with employers, IAG/career pathway advice, health and social care, and childcare). A few mentioned using funding to subsidise short-term carer support to provide respite cover alongside information, so that they can easily source good quality, reliable temporary carers who match their needs.

*‘AEB could support hyperlocal employment coaching and in-work wraparound support, similar to a sector-based work academy, developing training programmes that are developed around available jobs’.*

As with other responses to the consultation, to improve participation in learning and progress to employment, several suggested:

- Greater flexibility in use of the AEB to allow providers to offer ‘bite-sized’ units of learning.



- Full fee remission/use of AEB for carers and enhanced AEB funding to help carers access learning (particularly in the transition out of the Covid-19).
- An increase in initiatives to support digital inclusion and access to technology.
- A careers support programme and effective IAG. This included flexibility in use of funding to allow outreach work in community venues to offer IAG and course information. Benefits checks and signposting to services was also suggested as a way to relieve carers' concerns around the impact on benefits.
- A publicity campaign aimed at unpaid carers to raise awareness of skills provision available to them, promoting the successes and opportunities that participation may bring through case studies, mentors, ambassadors, local networks and organisations working with unpaid carers.

### Reaching the digitally disengaged

From this year, DfE will introduce an entitlement to fully fund eligible adults with no or low digital skills to enrol on specified essential digital qualifications at entry level and level 1. A question was asked in the consultation around raising awareness of, and encouraging access to, the new entitlement.

#### 8. How should City Hall raise awareness of the new basic digital skills entitlement and motivate digitally disengaged Londoners to access it?

Respondents' suggested that improving the awareness and participation of digitally disengaged Londoners could be achieved through **advertising, promotional campaigns and engagement with the community**. They said it would be necessary to use a variety of media channels (including paper-leaflets/letters for those without digital access) and social and community networks and agencies.

*'Create strong awareness campaigns with impactful collateral for publicising, for example transport, communal areas, reception areas and waiting rooms in shopping centres, leisure centres, hospitals, GP and dental surgeries, hotels, care homes, health and social care settings, supermarket chains etc where families, young people, adults, parents, carers and guardians will visit regularly.'*

Comments were that the profile of digital skills should be raised, highlighting the significance and benefits of digital skills as an enabler in *'accessing wider education and as a life skill'*. One respondent suggested developing *'a network of volunteer digital and community champions tasked with championing digital entitlement, increasing the number of residents digitally enabled and providing on-going practical support.'*

Related to a promotional campaign, several respondents also commented that City Hall could **encourage and facilitate further collaboration** with the provider network, and between providers and agencies/companies which have capacity to promote digital engagement.

To improve engagement with the digital skills entitlement, several respondents suggested that the key would be to **improve ease of access for learners**. This would include:

- Delivering digital skills in convenient locations such as community venues.
- Providing individuals with equipment and connectivity.
- Supporting the development of effective online learning materials which can be accessed by smart phone.
- Supporting new initiatives such as trials of digital skills delivery through apps and mobile phones, incentivised integrational support programmes, and Ambassadors who can identify adults that need digital skills support.

## Preventing future violence

As part of his approach to reducing and preventing future violence in the capital, the Mayor committed to tackling the root causes of violence. This consultation was used to gather feedback on the role the FE sector can play.

### 9a. What activities are FE providers currently engaged in to prevent and reduce violence?

A range of activities were reported through the consultation although there were two common examples:

- **Embedding the topic in the learning culture and curriculum** so that relevant local issues are addressed through learning, and raising awareness of issues through class discussions and course activities. Several mentioned the use of family learning provision and positive parenting courses.

*‘Our personal and social development areas within the curriculum work a lot on healthy relationship behaviour to help learners and us identify those at risk and also highlight how learners can identify when they themselves may be at risk and how to seek help.’*

- **Partnerships and collaboration with different agencies** to reduce crime or risk of involvement in crime and violence (or as part of wider projects). Respondents commented that this involves working with specialist partners to support vulnerable groups, disadvantaged groups, offenders and ex-offenders with targeted approaches to guide those who are disengaged to make positive choices.

Other responses were varied and included:

- Referring those at risk to support services.
  - Professional development of the workforce (e.g. in safeguarding and the Prevent Duty, reducing parental conflict).
  - Working with ex-offenders and learners in prison to continue their learning.
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- Developing positive aspirations and choices through learning and progression weeks.
- Providing dedicated personnel (e.g. community mentors who support groups and prevent escalation into criminal and violent behaviour, university police officer to enable information sharing and crime prevention advice).

### **9b. What are the barriers for FE providers in supporting learners at risk of violent crime?**

The two most prominent barriers identified by respondents were:

- **Funding limitations** in meeting the costs of providing additional support. This included:
  - Costs of liaison with families and relevant agencies.
  - Reduced funding for youth services.
  - Lack of funding for outreach, partnership and IAG work.
  - Insufficient funding for non-accredited wellbeing provision.
- **Access and identifying those at risk.** Issues identified included:
  - The time intensive nature of building trust in communities so they share their concerns.
  - The difficulty in accessing hard-to-reach learners.
  - The difficulty in identifying learners at risk (FE providers lacking information on the background of learners).

Other barriers (mentioned by two or three respondents) included:

- Low awareness or specialist knowledge and skills of the teaching workforce and along with this, limited relevant CPD/training for staff.
- Lack of access to structured support (e.g. police resources in neighbourhoods, enrichment activities and pastoral support).
- The complexity of risk where there can be many issues at play.

### **9c. How can City Hall support FE providers to overcome these barriers and support a public health approach to reducing violence?**

There were several suggestions on how to support FE providers in overcoming these barriers. The most common were around providing more funding to enable providers to offer the most appropriate support.

- **Funding and facilitating cross-agency collaboration** and multi-agency response, bringing together youth offending teams, schools, FE providers, local authorities, health

services, the police, IAG and relevant community and voluntary services for early identification of learners at risk of violence.

- **Funding to support those at risk/community groups** to improve resilience, including investment in college facilities and programmes (e.g. mental health support, bespoke programmes focused on reducing crime), access to health funding, additional family learning funding, and greater flexibility in the use of funding for outreach and partnership work.
  - **Providing resources and support for FE providers to overcome the barriers through interventions** such as case studies on a public health approach to reducing violence, toolkits for providers, a dedicated specialist "hotline" for specific advice, and guidance for providers.
  - **Targeted funding to upskill the workforce** to deliver appropriate support.
  - **Sharing good practice**, promote adoption of successful strategies.
  - **Monitoring, reporting and identifying what works**, and funding new approaches or trials utilising tried and tested methods from other regions or countries.
  - **Providing a co-ordinated approach** led by a single body, offering FE providers guidance on dealing with and reducing violence.
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## City Hall Response

We welcome the positive feedback on the emerging areas of interest the AEB could be used to support in future years.

Through his Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, the Mayor committed to provide employability and skills support to **unpaid carers** to enable them to participate in, and benefit from, employment opportunities in London. We were therefore keen to understand how the AEB could be used to support carers to enter/ re-enter work.

Given COVID-19 has exacerbated many of the barriers faced by unpaid carers, carers of both adults and children have been identified as a priority group for London's recovery programme. We are currently looking at how we can use the AEB and other funding streams to fund wrap-around support for carers. The Mayor's £6.5m ESF-funded Parental Employment Programme will launch this autumn to help parents facing disadvantages to gain skills, find jobs, and progress in work while accessing the childcare support. We will use learning from this programme to shape the support offer for parents and carers provided through the AEB.

We recognise the importance of involving Londoners in decisions that affect them and agree with suggestions to work with local carer organisations and networks in developing our policy and programmes. We will ensure all future work in this area considers the needs of the most vulnerable groups of carers, including disabled carers and BAME groups, whose vulnerability has been compounded by the disproportionate health, social and economic impacts of COVID-19.

While more Londoners than ever are online, a significant number remain '**digitally disengaged**', lacking the essential digital skills needed to benefit from, participate in, and contribute to the digital world. With the introduction of the new digital skills entitlement to fully fund eligible adults with no or low digital skills to enrol on specified essential digital qualifications at entry level and level 1, we were keen to raise awareness of this new entitlement and motivate and support London's digitally disengaged to access it.

The responses highlighted how the impact of COVID-19 has brought greater urgency to this work, and 'digital access' and investigating ways to combat digital exclusion in London are a key focus of City Hall's recovery work. We will look to collect granular data on the Londoners who are digitally excluded and the reasons why. In the immediate term, City Hall has launched a Digital Support Access Form enabling civil society organisations to register their digital needs and to be matched offers of digital support from across capital. City Hall has also funded [Keep London Learning](#)—a website led by Lewisham council consolidating Adult Community Learning (ACL) provision across 32 London boroughs—to support Londoners to continue their learning.

Looking ahead, City Hall is keen to work with providers to explore ways to promote the digital entitlement to ensure more Londoners can access digital skills given the accelerated shift in the digitisation of London's labour market.

The level of violent crime in London is unacceptably high and extremely damaging to individuals, families, and communities. As part of his approach to **reducing and preventing future violence in the capital**, the Mayor is committed to tackling the root causes of violent crime by adopting a public health approach and has established a new Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) to facilitate this.

Responses highlighted the powerful and wide-ranging work currently being done by providers and community organisations at a local level. We are keen to support this work and amplify good practice. Funding and facilitating cross-agency collaboration is an integral part of the Mayor's Violence Reduction Unit's strategy, and the Violence Reduction Unit is already funding skills-based programmes like the Social Switch Project and LDN Filmmakers, both of which provide young people with the opportunity to hone new digital and creative skills to enter futureproofed professions. Using learning from the Violence Reduction Unit's programmes and the suggestions in the consultation, we will consider how we can best support FE providers to play a positive role in their communities.

## Other skills and employment policies

The final questions in the consultation focused on wider skills and employment policies: the Apprenticeship system, use of edtech, and capital funding.

### Apprenticeships

Between 2015/16 and 2017/18, the number of higher level (levels 4 and 5) Apprenticeship starts has increased three-fold, while intermediate and advanced level Apprenticeship starts have reduced by 50 per cent over the same period. The consultation asked two questions to explore this trend.

#### **10a. How can the Mayor work with providers and employers to support progression routes into and from higher level Apprenticeships for young people as well as low income and disadvantaged Londoners?**

A large proportion of the consultation feedback related to **improving awareness and perceptions of the Apprenticeship system** for employers and learners. This included:

- **Educating employers** on the Apprenticeship system and supporting them to navigate the system. Respondents suggested a need to encourage, incentivise and support employers to invest in Apprenticeships by helping them to recognise the benefits of taking on Apprentices or upskilling the existing workforce via Apprenticeships, and to understand the role that Apprenticeships can have in diversity, inclusion and talent development.
- **Changing perceptions of Apprenticeships** by promoting the benefits for employers and learners, giving them parity of esteem with other training routes.
- **Raising awareness of** progression pathways from lower to higher levels of learning with links to career progression and publicising these to teachers and employers; and encouraging employers to consider local progression pathways.
- **Providing better information and careers advice** (including an Apprenticeship pay calculator app) for learners, using accessible channels for dissemination to priority groups (such as those not going to university through schools).

Another common theme related to the **inclusivity** of the system. Suggestions were that more **flexibility is required in the funding system** to ensure that Apprenticeships are accessible for all, giving equality of opportunity. This included supporting initiatives for low income and disadvantaged groups, with a particular focus on level 2 and 3 provision to widen access and participation, while also ensuring that degree-level Apprenticeships

remain an accessible higher level learning option for young people not wishing to go through academic routes. Responses around developing more flexibility in the funding system also included:

- Widening availability to a range of providers.
- Simplifying eligibility criteria, offering more flexible entry requirements (e.g. progression pathways that include experience gained, informal skills and knowledge and overseas qualifications).
- Flexible delivery modes (e.g. part-time options) for ease of access.

Other suggestions included:

- **Review progression pathways** into and from Apprenticeships to identify gaps in provision, working with employers and representatives to ensure current, changing and future sector demand is met. This included consideration of changing requirements due to the Covid-19 outbreak.
- **Facilitate and encourage progression** for learners, facilitating pathways from traditional and Apprenticeship routes and from lower to higher and degree level Apprenticeships. A few suggested introducing a *'right to progress'* for apprentices who have completed a level 2 Apprenticeship.
- **Support employers to provide a quality Apprenticeship experience** for apprentices and improve retention. A key concern was the need to encourage employers to pay above the minimum Apprenticeship wage and support learners with travel expenses. Suggestions to improve the quality of provision were around:
  - Incentivising employers to commit to longer progression pathways.
  - Helping employers to access information, support and funding to provide the internal structures needed.
  - Offering adequate support to apprentices to improve retention.

A few also suggested the need to improve the Apprenticeship offer, providing a platform where providers and employers can work together to create good quality Apprenticeship offers and ensure they are attractive and stimulating. Some commented on the need to educate employers on their responsibility towards Apprentices.

*'Develop a Good Employers Standard for apprentices, making sure that apprentices have access to the right employment environment and deliver a good Apprenticeship manager toolkit'.*

- **Facilitate and support collaboration** between local authorities, training providers, employers, schools, supported employment providers, unions and other relevant agencies to help engage potential apprentices, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds.



- **Provide support for learners** to prepare them for Apprenticeships (e.g. pre-employment training, work experience/placements) and to manage key challenges.<sup>3</sup> Challenges mentioned included:

- Navigating the Apprenticeship system and application process.
- Travel and financial constraints (particularly for those with low income or from disadvantaged backgrounds).
- Lack of high quality careers advice.
- Lack of appropriate entry requirements (for those in work).
- Poor perceptions around the prestige and value of Apprenticeships.

*‘At the moment the Oyster discount scheme offered to 18+ London apprentices is limited to the first year of the Apprenticeship. Those aged 18 and over living in a London borough and in their first year of an Apprenticeship can get discounted travel with an apprentice Oyster photocard. This allows you to get a 30% discount on travelcards and season tickets covering all modes of transport in the capital. However, in the second and subsequent years of the Apprenticeship, individuals have to pay full adult fares on all public transport, unlike full-time FE/HE students who have an entitlement to this discount for the duration of their course.’*

*‘Financial support is required to support those adult learners on low incomes or from disadvantaged backgrounds. Such funding would help those in part time and flexible (and potentially insecure) work. [It would be useful to provide] Apprenticeship bursaries to support [the] most disadvantaged to take on [an] Apprenticeship (income is usually prohibitive), targeted at specific cohorts, such as care leavers’.*

- **10b. What are the drivers of recent trends in London’s Apprenticeship system (growth in higher level Apprenticeship starts and decline in lower and intermediate) and what impact are they having on learning and employment opportunities for Londoners?**

Respondents reported several drivers although reference to the Levy system was most common. They said that the **Apprenticeship Levy drives employer behaviour**.

*‘The impact of the Apprenticeship Levy has resulted in Levy paying employers putting existing staff on developmental Apprenticeships (level 4, 5 and higher) in order to spend their Levy without the additional cost of taking on a young apprentice and paying their salary.... Therefore opportunities for Londoners, particularly young and unemployed, are narrow.’*

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<sup>3</sup> Although not mentioned by respondents, Traineeships are available for: those who have little or no work experience but are motivated to work; and, who are aged 16 to 24 - or 25 with an EHC plan - and qualified below level 3.

Respondents commented that higher level qualifications tend to be funded in a higher band which results in employers using levy funding on existing higher level staff and higher level training. Some noted that employers are choosing to upskill the existing workforce, which is often likely to be beyond requiring entry level Apprenticeships. A few also mentioned the lack of flexibility in the system which prevents small employers particularly from spending the Levy and taking on Apprenticeships.

Several called for **reforms to the system** to prevent the Levy driving employers' investment decisions. Suggestions included increased flexibility in the Levy system to encourage employers to employ apprentices and to stimulate more high quality and accessible Apprenticeships. One respondent noted that:

*'Employers should be allowed to spend a portion of their Levy funds on innovative pre-Apprenticeship programmes and other initiatives aimed at widening access to Apprenticeships by under-represented groups (e.g. outreach programmes to disabled and BAME [black, Asian and minority ethnic] learners and women in under-represented industries).'*

Another suggested that those who already hold a degree level qualification should not be eligible for funding, which would help to reverse the trend towards higher level qualifications. One respondent also suggested that Levy gifting could be maximised to help generate benefits for local communities.

Additionally, several also noted that the **replacement of Apprenticeship frameworks** with standards had driven a growth in higher level Apprenticeships due to the **phasing out of some at lower levels**. Level 2 business and administration was commonly mentioned, and many of the respondents thought this was inappropriate.

Respondents were clear that these trends had a disproportionate effect on those at lower levels, and young people. Many commented that **those at lower levels, out of work or on a low income are overlooked** due to the trend towards higher level Apprenticeships.

*'[This] leads to the exclusion of young people as well as low income and disadvantaged Londoners missing out on entry level opportunities to begin with and therefore [they are] not able to start the career path to higher levels due to the absence of entry level Apprenticeships and relevant progression pathways.'*

Several also noted that young people are missing out due to having to compete with adults.

A few respondents recommended some solutions to improve the Apprenticeship system:

- Reforms and introduction of flexibilities to the Levy (as noted above), widening access to underrepresented groups.
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- Related to the above, focus on encouraging individuals onto a clear learning pathway to higher level learning, with a starting point that is appropriate.
- Increase the delivery of pre-Apprenticeship provision to help bridge the gap for young people and those with low levels of skills and attainment.<sup>4</sup>
- Consider options for lowering entry requirements and building in mechanisms to support learners to develop functional skills over the course of their training.

## Education technology (edtech)

Edtech has the potential to transform teaching, learning, and support in adult education. The consultation gathered feedback around where edtech is currently being used, where it has been shown to be effective, and opportunities to support the adoption and use of edtech, including in delivering AEB-funded provision.

### 11a. In what ways are you currently using edtech?

Several respondents commented on the changing nature of teaching and learning delivery during Covid-19 and the need to quickly move to online approaches whilst learners and staff were remaining at home. They viewed this positively:

*‘The momentum created by the rapid deployment of edtech within the adult education sector offers some potential for positive progress in the medium term.’*

One commented that when social distancing is lifted, most adult learning providers might return to a high proportion of face-to-face learning but with *‘edtech as a powerful complementary option.’* They felt that there were areas of good and innovative practice in the use of edtech resulting from the need to work remotely, which could be captured for future reference and development.

*‘Through the Adult Flexible grant from the ESFA [Education and Skills Funding Agency] we were able to effectively test the potential of using edtech to greater capability with our adult learner population. We were able to improve achievement rates with the greater flexibility in learning this afforded as well as reduce classroom based teaching by 40% without a reduction in quality of provision. This also reduced associated costs for learners including travel.’*

Respondents listed a range of **teaching and learning tools** which are currently being used. This included:

- Online learning tools such as online quizzes, used to enhance the learning experience and for access outside of the classroom.

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<sup>4</sup> Although not mentioned by respondents, Traineeships are available for: those who have little or no work experience but are motivated to work; and, who are aged 16 to 24 - or 25 with an EHC plan - and qualified below level 3.

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- Subject-specific apps.
- Discussion boards.
- Communication tools.
- Websites, videos, photographs, and presentation software.

Some mentioned blended learning approaches, delivery of course and tutorials via edtech, assessment and examination. Use of hardware such as computers, laptops, tablets and smartphones were noted.

Various **interactive platforms** for teaching and learning delivery, electronic completion and submission of work, and monitoring progress, were highlighted. This included:

- Social media platforms to share resources and demonstrations.
- Learner portals and virtual learning environments, which support the delivery of courses through interactive materials and videos.
- Virtual meeting and communication systems and education platforms to teach and assess classes remotely, engage learners and provide feedback or for tutorials and support sessions.

Respondents also mentioned the use of document sharing packages that enable teachers and learners to share documents online, edit them instantly and project and share them on a whiteboard screen; websites and platforms that provide learning resources; and learning logs, course and outcome management tools to track learning and achievement.

Other uses of edtech identified included:

- Online professional development and training and CPD resources which have ease of access.
- Administration (e.g. class register, learner induction checklist, exit surveys) and tracking progress and achievement of learners).
- Student recruitment (e.g. learner application, interviews, assessment of needs and online enrolment (particularly used during the Covid-19 pandemic)).
- Support for students such as online IAG, for access to work places and guest speakers from industry.

### **11b. Where do you think edtech has the most potential?**

Two main areas were identified where edtech has the most potential:

- **Enhancing traditional face-to-face learning using blended learning** approaches, giving flexibility in learning and more personalised learning.
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- **Making learning more accessible** to learners (who cannot always attend typical classroom-based delivery), giving access to a wider pool of learners and particularly hard-to-reach groups, thereby improving inclusion, and reducing inequalities.

Other potential uses included:

- Providing accessible CPD for staff.
- Empowering learners to research, select and follow their own learning journeys.
- Collaboration and document sharing online, collaborative development of resources and quality assurance.
- Allowing a community of practice for tutors when in different venues.
- Enabling social networking.
- Reducing administration burden, streamlining management information systems (MIS).
- Use of virtual reality and simulating environments.

### **11c. How can City Hall support the effective use of edtech?**

The most common suggestion in response to this question was around the need to **enhance providers' edtech resources** through enhanced capital funding, joint purchasing, and support in the procurement process to achieve value for money. Some highlighted a need for more equipment, infrastructure and training for both learners and staff. Other suggestions included:

- Capturing examples of what works through trials and tests of edtech.
- Promoting good practice through facilitating workshops and seminars.
- Setting an overall strategic vision, including longer term planning with the sector, and working to create a 'standard and smarter' approach across London (such as one MIS system, one blended space).
- Enabling edtech training, provided by a market-leading edtech training provider, developed in consultation with education providers.
- Encouraging learners to participate, encouraging online enrolments and ease of access.
- Providing a repository of digital resources for teachers/tutors to adapt.

## **Capital funding**

Questions on capital funding gathered views on what providers' priorities were for future capital investments, and the impact of investment to date on the condition of the wider estate.

### **12a. How would you rate the condition of your current estates / facilities and what are the implications of this on staff and learners?**

There were a variety of respondents to the consultation, including different adult learning providers using different infrastructure, and various representative bodies and organisations. Some highlighted that they are not funded by GLA capital funding and therefore did not answer the question. Of those who responded, several noted that they do not own their own buildings, instead venues are leased or rented.

Most commonly, responses suggested that the **condition of estates, facilities and venues (e.g. community settings) varies** where some are excellent/good due to being newly refurbished and others are poor, requiring refurbishment. Concerns were mentioned in relation to where there is limited internet connectivity and equipment and where buildings are outdated, old or listed, which can prevent suitable refurbishment.

The condition of some estates and facilities has various implications (both positive and negative were mentioned).

The poor condition of accommodation can distract resources (repair work can use teaching and learning funds) and leadership from the focus of providing teaching and learning. Some also noted that, particularly where older or listed buildings are concerned, this can limit access for those with a disability, and they often have poor ICT infrastructure which can compromise teaching and learning.

Conversely, where refurbishments are made and facilities are updated regularly to meet learner needs, this provides an effective and inspiring learning environment. It can also offer more capacity for greater learner numbers.

*‘Spaces are very inflexible and it’s very difficult to get multiple uses and enable agile learning and working.’*

A few respondents suggested that there is a need to **invest in estates to future proof them**, to make them flexible for modern curriculum and delivery methods and digital approaches. Some comments were specifically around digital infrastructure, which respondents felt was in need of significant investment so that remote learning could become more common (particularly an issue when transitioning out of the current Covid-19 lockdown).

*‘It would be helpful to plan alongside the GLA now to prepare for the relaxation of lockdown measures and to explore the possibility of capital funding upfront to cover costs of urgent adaptations and also to support longer term capital projects at a time when budgets are under pressure.’*

**12b. Do your physical estates/ facilities allow you to meet local skills priorities? If not, what physical improvements are needed to enable skills priorities to be met?**

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Only a small number of respondents commented that the estates/facilities allow local skills priorities to be met. Several however, suggested that **there needs to be investment to meet demand** and fill gaps in provision. Examples were given of creative media, health and social care, digital technology and entry level roles in construction, where investment in facilities was particularly needed. Several also mentioned the need to develop ICT enabled hubs and **equip community venues** with suitable equipment, connectivity and facilities.

### **12c. How resilient are your current estates/ facilities to climate change and its environmental impact?**

As with the previous questions, respondents highlighted how **the more dated facilities were, the less resilient they are to climate change and environmental impact**. Some said that resilience varies across London or that they are dependent on the managers of venues to put the necessary arrangements in place. Several commented that investment had been made to reduce environmental impact, or that refurbishment was planned. As with earlier comments about the condition of estates, a few reported difficulties in adapting ageing estates to modern requirements and specifications.

### **Skills providers as anchors for local communities**

Skills providers have a valuable contribution to make in the communities they serve or are located within. The following question explored how City Hall can strengthen this activity and the positive impact that skills providers have in their wider communities.

### **13. How can City Hall support the work providers do with their local communities beyond skills provision?**

Three key themes emerged in response to this question.

Respondents commented about the need to **access more AEB for London, simplify the application and procurement process, and allow flexibility or a shift in the funding balance**. This would enable more community learning and outreach work, non-accredited learning with social and educational outcomes, and employment support. They also referred to improving access to additional funding for local charities and small anchor organisations which are trusted by communities and have limited capacity for bidding, despite being a key source for advice and guidance for Londoners.

Respondents identified the need to **incentivise, facilitate, and encourage collaboration between providers and services**. This included enabling co-location (particularly of FE provision with local services) to provide more accessible services in community venues. Some mentioned the need to create a collaborative, not competitive education and skills system. They referred to the need to foster partnerships in multi-service delivery of AEB where models of sub-contracting can involve the voluntary and community sector. Working

locally and in partnership across localities was also suggested, convening local stakeholders to engage hard-to-reach communities.

**Marketing and publicity campaigns** would need to champion the broader benefits of adult learning and the importance that skills can have on social mobility and underemployment within local communities. Promoting the range of work already undertaken by providers above and beyond skills provision, could serve to improve engagement of learners in priority groups. Effective IAG in community locations would also engage hard-to-reach groups and could become a trusted source of support. Sharing good practice was also thought to be important, celebrating and showcasing the successes on an ongoing basis.

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## City Hall Response

There were a wide range of responses on the Mayor's other skills and employment policies, particularly around **apprenticeships**. Many of the responses highlighted the importance of educating employers on the apprenticeship system. City Hall, in partnership with IPPR, has launched the London Progression Collaboration, a programme designed to support employers to navigate the apprenticeship system and better utilise apprenticeship levy funds through levy transfer. The programme will run until September 2021.

The current apprenticeship system was designed during a period of high employment and focused on in-work progression. In light of COVID-19, and the economic and social consequences, the apprenticeship system will form a vital role in providing new employment opportunities. City Hall is examining what flexibilities will be required within the current system and how a London Apprenticeship Service could support the creation of apprenticeships that aid London's economic recovery and provide employment and training opportunities for Londoners.

Unsurprisingly, many of the responses highlighted the significant role **edtech** will play now and in the future given the rapid shift to online learning as a result of COVID-19. Recognising that not every provider has the digital infrastructure to meet this demand, the Mayor launched the COVID-19 Response Fund to support providers to meet the up-front costs of building capacity to adapt their provision to keep Londoners learning. As social distancing restrictions are lifted, more blended learning approaches will be introduced as well as a return to face-to-face delivery. City Hall will continue to support best practice in utilising edtech, including through the forthcoming Learner Survey and national research being carried out by Jisc.

The Mayor and the London Economic Action Partnership have made significant **capital funding investment** in the further education and training estate in recent years. While a full evaluation of the impact of the capital investment programme is due to commence, we were keen to hear providers' views on what their priorities are for future capital investments, as well as to gain a sense of the impact of investment to date on the condition of the wider estate. Again, responses focused on the impact of COVID-19 and the importance of upfront investment to cover the cost of urgent adaptations to deliver more online learning. Responding to this, City launched a £6m capital emergency response fund, to support skills providers with the costs associated with increased online and remote working and the equipment needed to make COVID-safe learning environments. Looking ahead, we also recognise the challenges providers face in adapting ageing estates to be more resilient to climate change and its environmental impact.

**Skills providers make a valuable contribution in the communities they serve** or are located within. Responses rightly highlighted the need for more AEB funding in London,

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and the Mayor will continue to lobby government for this, as well as for further devolution of skills and employment funding to support London's recovery from COVID-19.

Responses also emphasised the need for providers to work with VCS groups and local stakeholders, and supporting a strong civil society is a key priority for London's recovery. The Mayor has invested £5m in the London Communities Response fund (LCRF), a coalition of over 60 funders working together to support organisations and communities affected by Covid-19. To date, £23m has been allocated to support more than 1,600 organisations providing food and essentials and other services across all 33 London boroughs. It has also supported organisations to adapt their delivery. City Hall will explore how it can use the AEB, alongside other funding streams, to continue to improve access for local charities and small organisations.

The consultation highlighted the need to champion the broader benefits of adult learning, including work carried out by providers above and beyond skills provision.

The Mayor has now agreed a set of key social outcome areas for skills provision placing much more value on wider set of activities beyond the classroom to encourage providers to be more flexible in their response to challenges faced by communities.

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## Equalities assessment

This final question invited respondents to identify any potential impacts of the Mayor's priorities for change on people with protected characteristics. Five comments were recorded and are presented below.

- Underfunding means that areas with high black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) populations, and many women, are unable to access ESOL and other entry level vocational provision that they need.
  - There are long waiting lists and not enough community-based provision, which unfairly discriminates against BAME groups
  - It is important to bring forward fully funded ESOL provision.
  - Consideration and support is needed to meet access requirements for learners with learning and physical difficulties, including understanding how they interact with the technology available in the classroom.
  - Ensure the ILR records all protected characteristics allowing providers to better understand the demographic of their learner cohorts and target any gaps in provision.
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## Any other comments

At the end of the consultation, respondents were asked if they had any other comments related to adult and further education and training in London.

A few responses were received re-emphasised responses to previous questions. These included:

- The need to recognise and champion the value of adult and community learning (especially for basic skills, ESOL and personal development).
- Greater focus placed on adult provision and FE in education policy and funding.
- The need for a review of the current funding system to compensate for inflationary pressures and provide an uplift in the base rate.
- Reviewing the allocation process to eradicate any perceived unfairness.
- The importance of good IAG and careers advice and support.

The clearest message from the responses was that **further dialogue and collaboration is welcomed**. Several offered their services to support development in this arena, particularly planning around Covid-19 implications and in the longer term.

Unsurprisingly, several respondents focused on the impact of Covid-19.

*‘The current crisis will completely transform the skills policy landscape, as we move into a period of recession and high unemployment.... The skills system will need to adapt to this changed economic landscape, with training targeted towards sectors with a demand for labour during the recovery.’*

*‘The current crisis highlights a more pressing need to address the resilience of the sector in order to respond to the future economic and social needs of the capital.’*

A number of suggestions were made on how to manage the situation. These included:

- Offer support programmes which alleviate the health, social and economic impacts on vulnerable Londoners, including mental health and wellbeing courses.
  - Prioritise groups which have been disproportionately affected by the economic shutdown when making funding decisions – using data to inform those decisions.
  - Provide advice and information relating to public health through adult and community learning (ACL) providers.
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- Embark on a campaign to encourage London residents to step up to the skills needed to survive and prosper post-Covid-19, advocating learning through London's FE sector.
  - Provide additional support for the development of online learning provision, especially for those who have remained isolated for long periods of time.
  - Support provision which brings communities together when social distancing measures are relaxed, particularly to minimise any tensions and anxiety about returning to social settings.
  - Incentivise partnership working between ACL providers and health providers, particularly where this may reduce pressure on the health service, including use of social-prescribing methods.
  - Develop skills pathways (including confidence to learn and functional skills) which support new or returning health workers to enter the health and care services.
  - Loosen reporting and consultation processes (as with Ofsted) to reflect the impact of the outbreak on the ACL workforce.
  - Conduct research to understand what impact the shutdown is having upon London's economy and to understand what sectors have been disproportionately affected. *'We need a shared understanding of the impact of the pandemic on London's economy, including how this might vary in different parts of the capital.'*
  - Provide emergency funding for providers whose income is severely reduced due to reduced learner numbers, and urgent capital funding to adapt buildings to accommodate a phased transition from social distancing. Suggestions included an increase of funding rates on all qualifications and adult education activity, and relaxing funding rules for *'online learning, secondary qualifications at levels 2 and 3, location of learning, age restrictions on level 3 and above for students 24 years and over, college accredited courses'*.
  - Campaign for a significant increase in the AEB and bring together one devolved budget line - the National Retraining Scheme, the National Skills Fund, the Shared Prosperity Fund and the AEB.
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## City Hall Response

As many of the responses noted, COVID-19 will completely transform the skills policy landscape and test the resilience of the London's FE sector.

We would like to pay tribute to the actions the sector has taken to date in keeping Londoners learning. We understand the significant financial pressures that COVID-19 has brought for AEB providers and that is why the Mayor prioritised securing their immediate financial security to give providers the reassurance and flexibility to continue to deliver learning to Londoners.

The launch of the Skills for Londoners COVID-19 Response Fund was also designed to support AEB providers in the immediate term to expand their online provision, adapt courses, and build capacity to ensure they were equipped to support more Londoners to learn remotely.

Alongside this, the introduction of two significant flexibilities to the AEB funding rules will enable providers to support those Londoners most at risk of long-term unemployment to retrain and re/ upskill to access new training opportunities.

Looking ahead, City Hall is leading a huge amount of work to support London's recovery. Through its London Recovery Board, which is jointly chaired by the Mayor and the Chair of London Councils, a number of ambitious missions have been set to mobilise joint action across London. Developing skills and creating employment opportunities is an integral part of this work, particularly where it can support London's transition to a low carbon economy.

We also know the disproportionate affect this crisis is having on BAME communities and how vital it is that our response recognises and addresses this inequality in shaping a skills and employment system that promotes inclusivity and uplifts communities.

Once again, we would like to thank everyone that has responded to this consultation and we look forward to continuing to work with you as future AEB policy for London is developed and shaped to ensure it meets the needs of Londoners and London's communities and businesses.

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## Other formats and languages

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Greater London Authority  
City Hall  
The Queen's Walk  
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