AELP Submission: #125

AELP's Response to the Greater London Authority's (GLA) Inclusive Talent Strategy Consultation

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The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) have used insights taken from two roundtables, held in partnership with the GLA, relating to the Inclusive Talent Strategy (ITS). The strategy will focus on six overarching themes:

- **integrate jobs, skills, health and careers services** for Londoners

- **grow and diversify workforces in growth sectors**

- **support Londoners, facing barriers to work, get into quality jobs** and increase London's supply of workers

- **give Londoners the skills to be resilient to big shifts in the labour market** – Artificial Intelligence (AI), the transition to net zero, and fill the job opportunities that these generate

- **promotion of London's skills sector internationally,** making sure London remains attractive for the best talent in the world

- **make London a centre of excellence for fair pay and good work**.

As per the guidance from the GLA, AELP have only responded to the questions which are most relevant to our organisation and members.

Theme one: create an integrated jobs, skills, careers and health service for London

1.1 What further action is needed to better integrate skills, careers, health and employment support services? For example, co-location, community settings, job centres, integration of advice and support for low-income Londoners, data sharing, etc.
- Local multi-agency hubs: Co-location of services in trusted, community-based settings such as libraries and other community settings.
- Shared data management systems: Develop a single tracking platform, to prevent people falling through the cracks when moving between health, welfare, skills, and training support.
- Integrated funding and commissioning: This can often cause issues for providers and an integrated commissioning/procurement system would ensure that any siloed commissioning risk is removed. This funding model must also support a longer-term commissioning model; 12-month contracts or funding agreements are not long enough to see a sustained impact.
- Employer engagement: Services should include involvement with training providers and other key stakeholders, including strong employer links, to ensure training interventions lead to real job outcomes, via apprenticeships, adult skills funded programmes, skills bootcamps etc.

- Link advisory roles: Careers advisers, employability coaches, and health navigators should be trained to refer across services. This would help to support people from 'falling through the cracks'.

1.2 Where have you seen this done well?

- Youth Hubs co-located with Independent Training Providers (ITPs): Some ITPs have worked with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and local boroughs to create Youth Hubs where employability support, apprenticeships, and mental health services are under one roof.
- The Greater Manchester Combined Authority are integrating skills, careers, health and employment support services under the [LiveWell network](#). The aim of the programme is to look at the individual holistically by bringing together multiple support services in one location. This is part of the "Together We Are" Greater Manchester plan.

1.3 How could this be replicated and made systematic across London?

- AELP would suggest that GLA liaise with other Combined Authorities to understand how they are co-ordinating similar projects.

Theme two: grow and diversify workforces in the priority sectors

2.5 How can we better integrate transferable skills needed by employers (for example, problem-solving, digital literacy) across skills provision?

- Incentivising providers through funding and quality measures: The Adult Skills Fund (ASF) and other public funding streams should reward delivery of integrated employability skills through learning outcomes, rather than qualifications alone. De-couple performance measures from funding and fund the learner rather than the programme.
- Employer co-design and contextualisation: Engaging employers in curriculum design and implementation. Employers could help design real-world tasks and scenarios used in training and assessment, making skills like problem-solving relevant to growth sectors such as green energy, logistics, digital and health tech.

2.6 Do you have examples of employers being successfully incentivised to provide opportunities directly to the talent that London's skills system produces?

- Kickstart which ran between 2020 and 2022 provided incentives for employers to provide opportunities to learners directly.
- Data relating to the impact of Kickstart can be found within the [Kickstart impact assessment report](#).
- At present it is too early to tell what the impact of foundation apprenticeships will be, but they could incentivise employers to continue the employment of young people post completion of their apprenticeship. It is hoped that we will see positive results in the coming years.

2.7 Where have you seen successful employer and skills provider partnerships to address skills gaps? Why are they successful?

- Digital and tech skills collaboration (e.g. West London's Skills Escalator): Involving employers of all sizes (SMEs to larger firms) alongside skills providers like ITPs to align

provision across bootcamps, apprenticeships, and pre-employment to the region's needs.

- In construction, STC Group have recognised that ESOL provision needs to be tailored to the needs of the construction industry to make it more applicable for learners. They have worked with their employers to identify terms and topics to incorporate.
- Employer sector skills boards: for example, BPP Education Group has nine employer skills boards with independent chairs from the sector. This enabled employer to have direct involvement in the design of programmes.

2.8 How could careers and employment support be strengthened to enable more Londoners to consider careers in growth and priority sectors? are as inclusive as possible?

- The ongoing work with the career's hubs and the Careers and Enterprise Company, within East London and the surrounding boroughs, to enable young people to engage with providers and employers could be expanded within other areas of the city. GLA should look at ways to support this activity particularly in light of the removal of funding for the Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge (ASK)programme which supported schools and colleges to meet their provider access legislation obligations.
- Targeted, contextualised careers advice: Careers education should reflect local labour market information (LMI), whilst providing young people with the breadth of opportunity rather than traditional post-16 routes. Integrating careers advice for adults with the local skills demand and matching this with the qualifications and training on offer at their most local provider (integrated data sharing).
- Use of role models: Sharing real stories of Londoners from similar backgrounds working in high-growth sectors (e.g. via video content, school visits, or social media) can powerfully challenge stereotypes.

2.9 How can we better enable schools, skills providers and higher education institutions to meet the demand for current and future skills in growth sectors?

- Greater data sharing and LMI alignment: Providers need live (real time) access to local LMI to effectively plan provision. Providers would find it beneficial to have an integrated data tool which includes vacancy data, future skills forecasts, and employer insights.
- Flexible, modular qualifications: Providers need to be given the opportunity to deliver a suite of skills and qualifications that match the LMI data. De-coupling funding from the qualification and size of the programme would encourage providers to build bespoke and innovative flexible training programmes to support a range of sectors. This could also encourage providers to take more risks in planning for future skills if they don't feel the weight of meeting the current inflexibility in the rules.
- Longer term funding strategies: Providing longer term funding strategies, with tapering of funding, as a strategy ends so that progress is not lost. For example, activity delivered under the Multiply banner could have continued to enable activity to be absorbed into organisation activity gradually.

Theme three: support Londoners that face barriers to work to get quality jobs or become self-employed, adding to London's supply of workers

3.1 What other barriers might Londoners face to accessing work or training?

- The main additional barriers that Londoners may face include caring responsibilities and being able to access support, which is required flexibility to enable them to work. For example, childcare or social care provision for older or disabled relatives. Recognising that through childcare support is being made available nationally and this is likely to be required to be topped up for parents who work non-standard hours or where the hourly rate doesn't cover the provider's costs.
- Transport: Whilst considerably better than in other parts of the country, could also be a challenge depending on where in the city Londoners are trying to travel between and at what time.
- Accommodation costs: Rent for example, even on the Living London Wage, can be challenging particularly if they have a family or are undertaking full time training prior to progressing into a good quality job.

3.2 What steps can London government, employers, skills, employment and health providers take to better address these barriers?

- Employer incentives with inclusive recruitment goals: Incentivise inclusive recruitment practices, potentially not via direct monetary contribution but by other integrated solutions e.g., business rate relief schemes
- Increase promotion of the Mayor's Good Work Standard to enable employers to obtain the standard and help local people to understand what it means to be employed by an organisation who has obtained the standard and how this can benefit them.
- Integrated data systems: As with previous suggestions, better data sharing would enable a more comprehensive and co-ordinated support system
- Co-location or services: Co-locating services in local community centred hubs would allow individuals and employers to access support and guidance in one place without the need for excessive travel and additional cost.

3.4 How can we create clearer pathways for Londoners to transition from lower to higher level learning and into employment?

- Modular and niche qualifications: Promote modular delivery and qualifications that allow learners to begin from Entry Level and progress up to Levels 3-5. These should be regulated and allow learners to pause and return to learning around life commitments.
- Clear career pathways: Promote career pathways and highlight how Londoners can scaffold their learning though joined and aligned programmes i.e. T-Level to apprenticeship.
- Innovative approach to funding: Decouple funding from programme size and qualification achievement to allow providers to deliver the skills required without the current need to satisfy a rigid and inflexible funding system in many cases.
- Bridge programmes: Specifically, fund 'bridge programmes' that allow providers to mix and match qualification and levels to provide individuals with bespoke training programmes
- Financial support: Provide additional financial support for adults re-entering training and education to overcome barriers e.g., transport etc.
- Guaranteed progression: Guaranteed interview and/or progression routes on employer informed programmes.

3.5 How can we encourage more people to gain basic skills (including maths, English and digital skills) needed for work and study? What other skills should we prioritise?

- Rebrand and contextualise programmes: Use employer input to design education programmes (with a qualification at its heart) that develops the specific local literacy numeracy and digital literacy skills needed by industry.
- Recognise distance travelled: The current system is too focused on a qualification rather than developing the skills and outcome measures should consider distance travelled and impact to individual learners.
- Workplace delivery: Support ITPs to access employers and delivery workplace programmes which develop and certificate basic and functional skills. GLA could look to fund access to free/digital devices as digital poverty can be a challenge to accessing training and obtaining work.
- Additional skills: Financial literacy, health and well-being, communication, problem solving. These could all be part of innovative, employer-provider co-designed programmes with funding constraints removed

3.6 How can we improve ESOL provision in London and encourage more employers to invest in ESOL provision for their employees?

- Workplace delivery: Support ITPs to access employer's premises to deliver some ESOL provision on-site. This would demonstrate employer support and enable access without employees having to spend additional time travelling.
- Contextualise ESOL: Support providers to develop accredited contextualised ESOL programmes. E.g., ESOL for care, construction etc., to support the development of technical vocabulary alongside qualification outcomes.

3.8 What more could we do to support the FE workforce to deliver our essential skills offer, and adapt to new priority sectors?

- Fund Continuous Professional Development (CPD): The GLA could offer targeted CPD funding focused on digital literacy, green technologies, and other emerging skill areas.
- Work with training providers to engage individuals from industry; provide incentives for employers to second employees to support training providers with aspects of delivery.
- Enable all types of FE providers to have the devices, software, and connectivity to support interactive and remote learning.
- Build a London-wide hub for lesson plans, toolkits, and assessment models, especially tailored to diverse learner backgrounds.
- Provide funding to enable providers to invest in learning support roles (e.g. digital navigators or literacy coaches) to bolster classroom delivery and engagement, particularly for those furthest away from education who will need additional support.

Theme five: give Londoners the skills to be resilient to big shifts in the labour market – AI, the transition to net zero and increased climate resilience – and fill the job opportunities these generate

5.1 What work are you doing to consider how jobs and talent pipelines are changing due to big shifts in the economy such as AI and the green transition?

- Most training providers have developed roles within their data teams to look at skills data and have devised frameworks to support the development of skills solutions for now and the future.

5.2 How can a more employer-led skills system act as an early warning system for identifying and adapting to key skills needs resulting from shifts in the labour market?

- Provide real-time signals of forthcoming changes, for example where employers can immediately flag emerging skills gaps, they observe in hiring, onboarding, and day-to-day operations. Alongside analysis of changes in job descriptions, qualifications, and advertised salaries to highlight shifts in demand.
- Industries like logistics, healthcare, or manufacturing can provide granular insights into technological adoption or regulatory shifts driving demand for new capabilities. This helps providers plan their curriculum offer more effectively and be more responsive to changes.
- Data and insight information should be reviewed centrally by GLA and then tested with employers to triangulate how the data aligns with the challenges they face and provide solutions. This could happen by sector, utilising a similar approach as to that taken by Skills England.

5.3 What changes are needed in the skills system to support emerging skills requirements?

- A more flexible funding model: Funding rules need to better support shorter, modular, and stackable qualifications that can quickly upskill or reskill individuals, particularly in fast-moving sectors.
- Provider investment: Ensure parity across any provider investment opportunities. For example, many ITPs can scale quickly and don't always require capital investment, and any are experts at agreeing short and medium term leases, however revenue investment is needed to ensure providers can access and provide the contemporary and high-quality equipment required to deliver skills training for future industry.
- Enhanced employer engagement: Engage employers of all sizes in discussions linked to future skills and workforce needs to design skills training programmes to meet the demand.

5.6 What interventions might help to increase apprenticeships starts, completions and work experience placements in these priority green sectors in London?

- Improved careers information and guidance: Invest in promoting green career pathways to young people and adults, with clear links to available apprenticeships and local labour market needs. Awareness of green careers remains low, and this limits uptake.
- Employer engagement: Early engagement from employers to support a pipeline of interested individuals. A London wide skills matrix could be be produced which encourages young people to rate their skills and hold 'talent identification' days across all boroughs with employer engagement.
- Streamline processes: In collaboration with providers develop a London wide levy share programme which matches large employers with SME's and apprenticeship providers to maximise the number of apprenticeship opportunities and progression routes that are made available (limiting the impact of a bureaucratic system from SMEs)

Any other comments

This section will allow you to provide any further comments, evidence, case studies, examples of innovative practice or feedback you may have to support the development of the Inclusive Talent Strategy.

What is your sector or organisation able to contribute to the ITS to make the proposed changes a success?

Please include any links to relevant research or work where appropriate.

- AELP is willing to support GLA in implementing the ITS by providing opportunities for sharing information with our members and highlighting opportunities for them to get involved with projects linked to the ITS. For example, we have convened two roundtables for GLA linked to this consultation and can provide opportunities to update members via AELP London meetings.
- In addition, the chair for the AELP board, Nicki Hay MBE (and Skills for Londoners board member) is happy to gain views from BPP's employers at their employer skills boards, and she is also happy for GLA's ITS team to come along to speak with their employers.

About AELP

The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) is a national membership body, proudly representing its many member organisations operating in the skills sector. AELP members deliver a range of training and vocational learning, including the majority of apprenticeships as well as Skills Bootcamps, 16-19 Study Programme, Adult Education Budget and more. AELP members support thousands of businesses and millions of learners in England by delivering a wide range of training, vocational learning, and employability programmes. Our members include independent training providers, colleges, higher education institutions, employer providers, awarding bodies and end point assessment organisations. They support learners of all ages, in every community, and at every level of post-16 study.

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