

	West London Economic Prosperity Board 21 March 2017
Title	Adult Community Learning (ACL)
Report of	Mary Harpley, Chief Executive Hounslow
Status	All
Urgent	Public
Enclosures	Annex A: Outline ACL strategy for West London (draft) Annex B: Overview of ACL in West London Annex C: Summary findings of ACL Review for London
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Summary

At its meeting on 21st September 2016, West London Economic Prosperity Board (WLEPB) commissioned a Task and Finish Group to consider the findings of the review of Adult Community Learning in London and develop recommendations.

The review found that overall ACL provision is of good quality with high satisfaction, although there is room for improvement. Duplication, particularly in management and the back office, could be reduced, although the strongest driver for change is the devolution of skills funding. It recommended that a London Skills strategy be developed, informed by sub-regional priorities, supported by a series of pan-London policies. It also proposed that the existing provider base (i.e. local authorities) should remain in the short term, but explore sharing back office and other service. In the longer term, London Government (boroughs and GLA) should explore development of sub-regional community education hubs either through a single local authority, college or Institute for Adult Learning.

The WLEPB agreed in September 2016 to establish a West London Skills Commissioning function and Board to oversee the development of a sub-regional skills strategy. This commitment endorses and enacts four of the recommendations of the ACL review.

The task and finish group recognise and commend to the WLEPB the value of closer collaboration between ACL services in order to step towards a more coherent offer to West London residents and provide clarity on the role of ACL - ensuring public investment is used cost effectively to meet local need. It could also prove to be potentially vital to future financial resilience and sustainability post devolution.

The task and finish group has identified existing synergies between services and used these as a basis to develop and outline strategy for ACL services in West London. This includes a shared vision, mission statement, desired outcomes and principles under which ACL services should operate. The group has also developed a roadmap to enable the development and consideration of options for closer collaboration going forward.

Recommendations

The Board is requested to:

1. **Note and endorse the findings of the London Review of Adult Community Learning**
2. **Approve the outline strategy, proposed principles and strategic roadmap for the development of future Adult Community Learning services in West London and delegate authority to the lead Chief Executive for Skills with West London Growth Directors to oversee implementation and report back to Board on further proposals in due course.**
3. **To request that West London Alliance (WLA) officers work with West London Alliance boroughs to submit a request for Transition Grant funding from the Skills Funding Agency via a college within the WLA area to support implementation of phases 1 and 2 of the strategic roadmap. The Board will be updated on progress the application and implementation of this Transition Grant.**

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1. At its meeting on 21st September 2016, West London Economic Prosperity Board commissioned a task and finish group to consider the findings of this review and develop recommendations for West London boroughs in response. This paper reports on the proposals and recommendations of the task and finish group for consideration by West London borough leaders.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings of the London Review of Adult Community Learning

- 2.1. London has a set of good quality, vibrant and responsive adult education community learning services and providers delivering basic and life skills and demand for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Basic Skills outstrips supply. There are no failing services and they include much exemplar practice and high student satisfaction. However there were some areas of inefficiency and duplication and the context of changing funding arrangement makes a pressing case for change.
- 2.2. The merger of the Community Learning budget into a broader Adult Education Budget has reduced financial security for ACL services and means FE colleges are able to compete with (and duplicate) borough ACL services. Following the devolution of the Adult Education Budget (AEB) to London from 2019/20, The Mayor will have the ability to redefine how Adult Community Learning in London is commissioned and delivered. It is expected that as part of this process, funding available for adult learning delivered by boroughs in the capital will be reduced. A full summary of the review findings and recommendations is available in Annex C. In brief, the review recommended that:

2.1.1 The Mayor should publish a London Skills Strategy, informed by sub regional

needs and priorities, including adult community education, underpinned by a set of pan-London policies – adapted where relevant at the sub-regional level.

2.1.2 There should be a Mayor's post-16 education and skills board to oversee implementation, which **should liaise with sub-regional skills and employment boards and the GLA** should collect and publish relevant Labour Market Intelligence in a data store to support decision making.

2.1.3 The focus of public funding for adult education should include those furthest away from work, stuck in low paid employment, low qualified, those without basic skills and/or up to level 2, and/or with a health or wellbeing issue. The curriculum offer should concentrate on Basic English including ESOL, maths and digital skills programmes, health and wellbeing, family learning, retraining and enrichment programmes.

2.1.4 In the short term, existing provider base (ie Local Authorities) be retained, but LA services and providers to consider sharing backroom and/or curriculum led services. In the longer term, London Government to support the development of **sub-regional community education hubs** either through a single LA, College or Institute for Adult Learning and help facilitate the use of the transition grant.

Recommendation: To note and endorse the findings of the London Review of Adult Community Learning.

Work of the West London ACL Review Task and Finish Group

2.2 The West London Economic Prosperity Board has already agreed to establish a West London Skills Commission Function to develop and deliver regular West London Skills Commissioning Strategies, including an Adult Community Learning (ACL) service which directly responds to the first recommendations of the London strategic review of ACL. The Task and Finish Group therefore focused efforts to two strands of work:

2.2.1 To develop an outline strategy for ACL in West London, including shared vision and underpinning set of principles which, if approved, can inform future decision making.

2.2.2 To establish a roadmap to prepare ACL services for the shifting context of funding – enabling boroughs to identify opportunities for closer collaboration aligned approach with the potential to drive efficiency and quality and build future resilience.

2.3 The Task and Finish Group recognised, and commend to the Economic Prosperity Board, the importance of West London ACL providers collaborating during the transition of funding from the Skills Funding Agency to the Mayor to ensure financial protection and sustainability post devolution. As a foundation for closer working, the task force has developed a proposed outline strategy for Adult Community Learning for West London which includes a shared vision, mission statement and set of strategic objectives, based on the synergies between borough services recognised by the task force. A full draft of the proposed strategy is provided in Annex A.

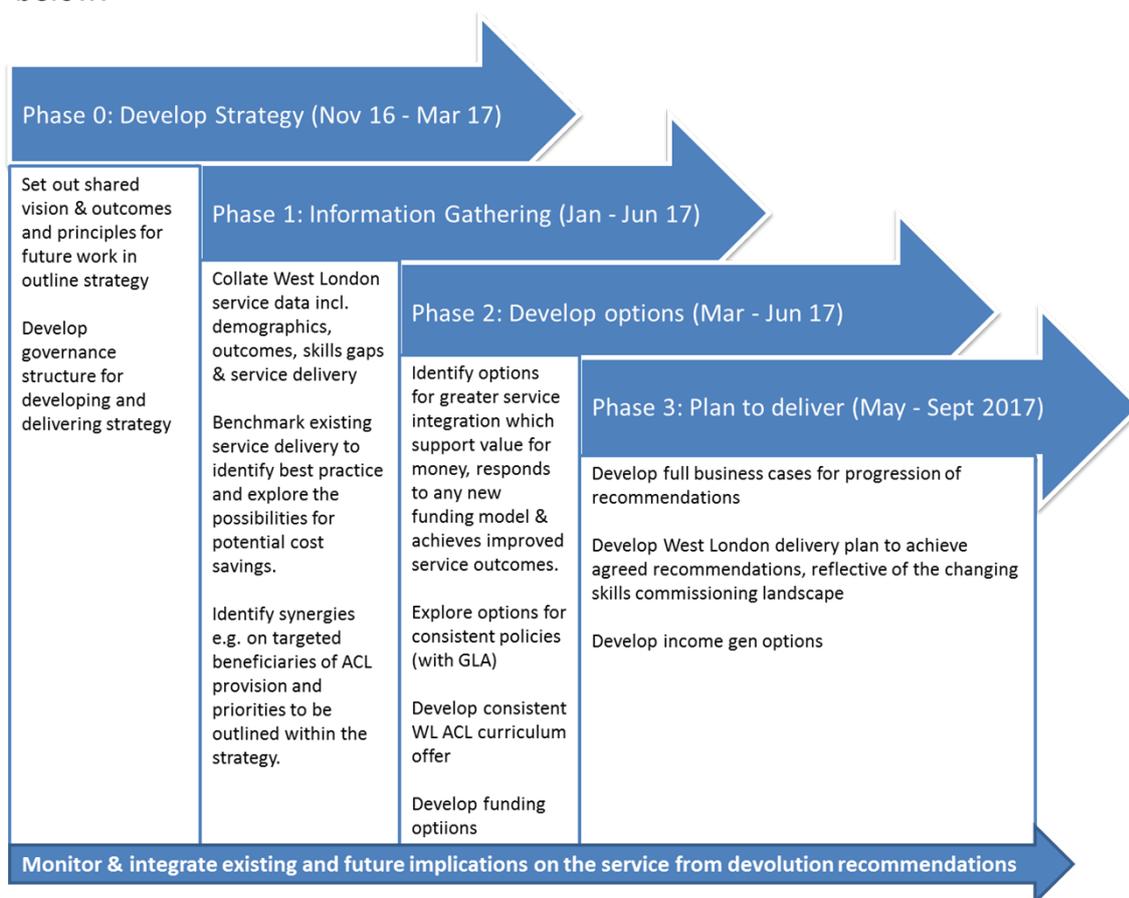
2.4 In addition, the task force have developed a set of eight principles for future delivery of Adult Community Learning Services in London. These reflect a core aim of all borough services which is to deliver excellent, fair, and responsive, Adult Community Learning built on the promotion of opportunity, resilience and social cohesion. These are that West London ACL services should be:

1. **STRATEGIC:** The West London ACL strategy should form part of a broad skills strategy to achieve shared outcomes, overseen by the West London Skills and Employment Board, liaising with the pan-London governance structure.
2. **FOCUSED:** ACL services should broadly focus on supporting the most disadvantaged residents over the age of 25 without basic skills, in low paid employment or furthest away from work, as well as enabling learners with health and well-being issues and/or learning difficulty or disabilities of all ages to take steps towards healthier, more independent lifestyles.
3. **RESPONSIVE:** Service delivery should support West London's 'Vision for Growth' and be responsive to current labour market and employer needs.
4. **MEETING BASIC SKILLS NEEDS:** The curriculum offer in West London should concentrate on Basic English including ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), maths and digital skills programmes, health and wellbeing, family learning, social inclusion, LDD (learning difficulties and disabilities), community engagement, retraining and cohesion programmes. Learners' views should continue to be sought, considered and used to influence and design the offer.
5. **ENABLING PROGRESSION:** ACLs across West London should work towards developing clear progression pathways, including into Further Education and Higher Education. All adult learners should be offered careers support. Learners should also be encouraged to be active citizens and be healthier, more self-sufficient and resilient.
6. **LOCAL:** Future ACL delivery in West London should enable variable delivery models. Learners should remain at the heart of the provision and there should be mechanisms to engage learners in the development of any proposed changes and to assess the impact of any proposed changes on all learners.
7. **JOINED-UP ON POLICY:** West London Boroughs should strive to develop joined up policies – making use of pan-London policies where they have been developed.
8. **FAIRLY FUNDED:** Funding for Adult Community Learning in West London should be fairly allocated while avoiding destabilising any one provider. Resources should be used to deliver ACL effectively in the broader context of funded skills delivery in West London.

2.8 Adopting this outline strategy and principles would enable West London boroughs to move towards a coherent, consistent offer to west London residents – recognising differing demand in different localities. It would provide a strategic framework for ACL in West London for future negotiation with the Mayor post-

devolution and be a first step towards a broad skills strategy for West London.

- 2.9. As part of the strategy, the Task Force has also developed a proposed Roadmap to guide our collective work towards safeguarding future community learning funding, and protect future outcomes for those residents in most need post devolvement of the Skills budget to the Mayor. The roadmap details the direction of travel required to move towards a more resilient and sustainable offer under any new funding model proposed by the Mayor, whether this is to be commissioned sub regionally, or a block grant direct from the Mayor.
- 2.5 The roadmap reflects the fact that ACL services in West London have already begun this journey through the work of the task force. It sets out a process through which boroughs can identify options for varying levels of service integration to support both on-going service resilience and sustainability whilst retaining boroughs ability to independently manage services.
- 2.6 It also sets out a pathway to respond to the task and finish group’s initial identification of synergies and variations across services, including common policies (e.g. on safeguarding, PREVENT and Equality and Diversity). There is potential for service efficiencies that could be realised by working together across West London, the roadmap aims to explore options for greater integration, and a plan to deliver any agreed recommended actions. The roadmap is summarised below:



Recommendation: To approve the outline strategy, proposed principles and strategic roadmap for the development of future ACL services in West London and delegate authority to the lead Chief Executive for Skills with WL Growth Directors to oversee implementation and report back to EPB on further proposals in due course.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 *That West London Local Authorities continue to provide segregated ACL services and do not pursue steps toward closer collaboration.* Given the changing context of reducing funding, removal of the secure grant and devolution of adult skills funding to London this would put service resilience at greater risk and the future of adult community learning for residents may be less influenced by local priorities.
- 3.2 *To accept recommendation of the London Review of Adult Community Learning to develop a sub-regional community education hub either through a single LA, College or Institute for Adult Learning.* While it is considered that there could be potential for a cross-borough ACL service operating in West London, further work is required to establish whether the benefits would outweigh the costs of such a move and whether this would improve outcomes for learners in West London. This will be considered alongside the implementation of the roadmap.

4 POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION (APPROACH AND NEXT STEPS)

- 4.1 The Skills Funding Agency has announced that Transition Grant funding is available for sub regions to help deliver the findings of the London ACL Review. Given the work already completed by the WLA ACL task and finish group, West London is well-placed to submit an application for funding to support the implementation

Recommendation: To request that West London Alliance officers work with boroughs to submit a request for Transition Grant funding from the Skills Funding Agency to support implementation of Phases 1 and 2 of the Strategic Roadmap

5 IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1.1 The proposals support the West London Vision for Growth and Growth Plan on employment and skills, as well as the WLEPB ambition for skills devolution and borough priorities for their ACL services.

5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- 5.2.1 This review is designed to optimise spend on ACL, particularly in the context of anticipated changes in funding arrangements, including potential reduction in funds for local government from 2019/20.
- 5.2.2 Boroughs are asked to continue to allow their ACL heads of service to commit time to working together to implement the roadmap. Support for this work will be provided by the West London Alliance and boroughs within existing budgets. No further contributions are sought at this time. Additional external resource may be secured through the use of the transition grant provided by SFA.

5.3 Legal and Constitutional References

- 5.3.1 The Joint Committee's role and purpose on behalf of the Participating Boroughs relates to ensuring appropriate, effective and formal governance is in place for the purposes of delivering the West London Vision for Growth and advancing Participating Boroughs' aspirations for greater economic prosperity in West London, including promoting "the Economic Prosperity Agenda", in partnership with employers, representatives from regional and central government, and education and skills providers. The purpose of the Joint Committee will be collaboration and mutual co-operation and the fact that some functions will be discharged jointly by way of the Joint Committee does not prohibit any of the Participating Boroughs from promoting economic wellbeing in their own areas independently from the Joint Committee.
- 5.3.2 The Joint Committee is not a self-standing legal entity but is part of its constituent authorities.
- 5.3.3 The Functions and Procedure Rules of the West London Economic Prosperity Board include representing the participating local authorities in discussions and negotiations with regional bodies, national bodies and central government on matters relating to economic prosperity for the benefit of the local government areas of the participating authorities.

5.4 Risk Management

- 5.4.1 There is a risk that GLA administration of the Adult Education Budget will be designed in such a way that sub-regional and/or borough involvement in delivery and influence over spend is restricted. WLA officials are working closely with the GLA to ensure governance and supporting mechanisms developed at regional and sub-regional level to support delivery of the devolved skills budget work well together and maximise leverage of the sub-regions.

5.5 Equalities and Diversity

- 5.5.1 The principles of future delivery of ACL learning in London include a commitment to assess the impact of any proposed changes to service delivery on all learners. The roadmap also includes a recommendation to develop a single Equalities and Diversity strategy for ACL in West London.

5.6 Consultation and Engagement

- 5.6.1 The principles of future delivery of ACL learning in London include a commitment to engage learners in the development of any proposed changes.

5.7 Insight

- 5.7.1 Annex B includes an initial overview of ACL service users and provision. The roadmap includes a stream of activity to continue to gather and analysis data on potential ACL service users and outcomes in order to support future prioritisation. As a step towards this, Hammersmith and Fulham insight team have been commissioned on behalf of the WLA boroughs to gather together and enhance existing data and analysis as an evidence base for consideration by the WL Skills and Employment Board.

