



Association of
Employment and Learning
Providers

AELP Submission: #68

**AELP Response: Greater London
Authority (GLA) Consultation**

**Skills and Employment Local Industrial
Strategy (LIS) Vision**

AELP Response: Greater London Authority (GLA) Consultation – June 2019

Skills and Employment Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) Vision

Section A: Empowering all Londoners

1. All Londoners should have access to inclusive and good quality education from early years through to late adulthood. What more can London Government do to help deliver this objective?

AELP feels strongly that there are huge benefits to be gained from the power of the Provider networks who can access employers and apprentices for early careers guidance with proven practical approaches working with schools, employers and apprentices.

It is a known fact that Careers Advice needs to be better all round. The removal of the Connexions Careers Service to provide effective IAG to young people has been the start of a worsening position around careers and advice. This is common across the country where high quality careers advice is lacking. Most young people are now influenced by information given to them by their school - who are currently incentivised to encourage students to attend university. Young people used to be well supported through Connexions Careers Service, but since its demise, there has been a significant negative impact. Whilst the National Careers Service was established as a replacement, it is not a like for like replacement. Implementation of the Baker Clause was welcomed, but in practice still too many schools are either not aware of their statutory responsibility or are simply choosing to ignore it.

Please refer to the AELP's response to The Review of Post 18 Education and Funding:

<https://www.aelp.org.uk/media/2259/submission-50-aelp-response-to-the-review-of-post-18-education-and-funding.pdf>

DfE reported that just over 40% of students leave school every year with a pass in GCSE English and Maths ([Provisional GCSE and equivalent 2017/18](#)). This is a failure of the education system that mandates that students must re-take these until they pass. It demoralises young people and deters them from engaging in education, training and employment. Whilst English and maths is important, and often too much focus is on prior attainment, they alone do not equal 'work ready'. There needs to be a greater focus on the benefits that programmes such as traineeships can provide for those who may not be quite ready to embark upon an apprenticeship or other employment. A good quality traineeship experience will include employability skills development as well as valuable work experience leading to an apprenticeship. Traineeships provide steppingstones and pathways for young people to take their first step into the world of work allowing them to build confidence and learn through an approach that will suit their individual needs.

Ministers remain convinced that a compulsory GCSE resits policy for maths and English is a good thing despite 120,000 young people failing a resit each year and only 30,000 passing. The frustration is compounded by the fact that household name employers are perfectly happy to recognise the

acquiring of applied Functional Skills as an alternative in the new apprenticeship standards. A proper upfront assessment for 16-year olds who failed the GCSEs first time on which option they should follow would surely end unnecessary disaffection and enable them to get relevant maths and English development successfully.

September 2019 will see the introduction of a strengthened curriculum for Functional Skills, but the government has no plans to change the funding of their teaching within an apprenticeship even though it stands at half the classroom rate. Astonishingly the DfE tries to justify this on economies of scale when apprenticeship training providers are often teaching the subjects to one or two apprentices at an employer's workplace while a teacher in a classroom environment can teach 30 at a time. If the government wants apprenticeships at the lower levels to remain viable for delivery, fair funding of Functional Skills must be addressed.

AELP's position on Level 2 / entry level apprenticeships is also very relevant here as it is through the availability of Level 2 apprenticeships that young people develop the valuable, transferable skills for work in the early part of their career. Employers often complain that young people do not have the life skills required to enter employment resulting in them having to spend considerable time working on these skills before they can be taught technical knowledge and skills.

AELP wishes to emphasise the importance of work-based and community-based learning to deliver on what businesses are seeking in terms of early careers and learning on the job. It is essential to ensure that the appropriate levels of funding and support is accessible to those providers that deliver high quality work-based or community-based provision.

Schools should consider career readiness and employability by engaging more with local employers to support this, raise awareness of what they look for from young people and offer meaningful work experience programmes. As already mentioned, the provider networks are well placed to facilitate and support this, schools need to be more open to this and policy makers need to endorse and encourage this approach.

There needs to be a standardised approach in London in engaging and educating schools, JCP Advisors and NCS to ensure this impacts effectively meeting Londoners needs. This could include setting up the London Ambassador Network of FE providers – ITPS and colleges, secondly agreeing a series of engagement activities to better educate schools, teaching staff and parents on vocational opportunities – these can be delivered by the London Ambassador Network.

The London Ambassador Network to provide training on approach with schools, JCP, NCS, other stakeholders, operate under a set code of conduct and principles ensuring key messages are delivered in a consistent and effective manner depending on the audience. To be a member all must undergo training on messaging and activities. Link into the AAN and YAN

Need to link all funding streams that support IAG to ensure consistent communications to young people, parents, teaching staff, adults seeking up-skilling/employment on opportunities through a vocational route

Use of the Knowledge Hub to provide a central information point that provides information on the various opportunities/courses/traineeships/apprenticeship providers/funding streams - available for programmes across London – this will support pointing individuals in the right direction and ensure London diverts any funding to support the right needs of Londoners. The Hub would support JCP,

NCS, plus other stakeholders to opportunities for Londoners and employers – it will become a centralised course of knowledge

2. London needs to improve the diversity and underrepresentation of certain groups in the labour market. Through schemes like the Good Work Standard, how can London Government support the most disadvantaged Londoners to access London's opportunities?

Through the Good Work Standard provide tools/tips to employers to help engage better with under-presented groups, provide a platform to share practices but ensure the sharing of practices suit all employers and are realistic i.e. SMEs being a large group in London

- Make sure the disadvantage data is accurate and responded to quickly with funding/incentives and programmes – often disadvantaged data is out of date and not in line with local authority's requirements as time moves on
- In particular, for disadvantaged learners the appropriate levels of support and resources must be relevant to the needs being addressed in the skills development journey. Providers should be able to access adequate funding for delivery of skills training, particularly additional support for the basics -maths, English and digital for this client group and must be able to demonstrate they have a robust infrastructure with skilled resources to deliver successful outcomes.
- It is critical to analyse and assess the level and nature of disadvantaged groups and how Londoners can be properly supported by specialist providers who are well funded, resourced and incentivised. Incentives will undoubtedly play a part, such as free travel for disadvantaged learners, uplift premiums attached to funding streams, wage subsidies and other incentives like the career premium in apprenticeships.
- Again, good IAG can support to improve underrepresented groups – starting from school, educating parents on the various opportunities for all – vocational learning, this option may not have been considered due to culture beliefs etc
- Explore other initiatives and develop effective partnerships, e.g. housing associations BAME 2020 – <https://www.bame2020.org/who-we-are/> - advocating progression for BAME professionals within the Marketing and Communications/PR sector and help employers attract and retain talent from a BAME background by working alongside their Diversity, Inclusion and Talent teams
- Benefit rules acting as a barrier may be relevant here and should be reviewed to understand what the impact is for Londoners. AELP's concerns are that the benefits system intended to support the most disadvantaged in society is, in fact, working against those seeking to improve their social mobility.
 - Families cannot claim child benefit after a child turns 16 if that child starts an apprenticeship. This is because the government does not define an apprenticeship as a form of 'approved education' for benefit purposes.
 - Training providers report that this makes many parents/carers reluctant to allow their child to pursue an apprenticeship for fear of losing some of their benefits. This was an important issue raised in the Education Select Committee's inquiry into the 'Quality of apprenticeships and skills training'. Responding, the Skills Minister said that it was primarily a DWP matter. Looked-after-children are at risk of losing their

housing benefit should they become apprentices. The removal of housing benefit also applies to young apprentices who often have a family.

- AELP are concerned that the current funding mechanism under the levy does not properly support notions of social mobility or address issues of disadvantage. Consequently, we are calling for a system of funding for the disadvantaged that will properly support the needs of such apprentices and encourage employers to recruit them.
- We would like to see central government define an apprenticeship as a form of 'approved education' for benefit purposes

Please refer to the AELP PAPER - Benefit rules acting as a barrier to training;

https://www.aelp.org.uk/media/2564/bp-57_sector-headlines.pdf

In addition to the Good Work Standard and suggestions above, raising more awareness through powerful case studies that illustrate learner success for underrepresented groups is essential.

AELP London Advisory Group member – The Forward Trust is a social enterprise and charity for ex-offenders, those in drugs recovery and wider disadvantaged groups. Working closely with employers, they encourage them to offer the London Living Wage or at least transition towards this in the next 12 months. The London Mayor should continue to promote this approach by working more closely with the FSB and also Employers Group/Board/London First.

It's important to encourage better progression between programmes, for example, The Forward Trust deliver the JCP Dynamic Purchasing System contracts, which are three-week employability programmes. Once learners get into a job, they then work with apprenticeship provider colleagues to help these clients or learners progress into an apprenticeship so they can receive high quality training and have a greater chance of career progression. Another area of focus is better careers advice and guidance to adult learners, linked to more informed job search which is also linked to up to date labour market intelligence.

The Forward Trust Case Study:

Stacey was referred to the Forward Trust Employment Services Division (ESD) from Job Centre Plus as part of our Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) contract. Stacey had spent five years in prison for a range of offences and was claiming Universal Credit after being released from prison. Stacey spent six months being unemployed before being engaged by the Forward Trust. Stacey had a limited work history and level 2 qualifications in customer service.

Stacey received intensive information, advice and guidance from our experienced Employment Coach (EC). Stacey had limited work experience and felt that his offending history would prevent him from getting a job. Stacey had received 200 job and apprenticeship rejection letters prior to working with the Forward Trust. Our EC identified during the assessment stage that whilst Stacey had good written communication skills, he lacked the confidence, positive body language and presence to impress employers at the interview stage. Following this, the EC and Stacey created a SMART plan together with actions to help Stacey succeed at the interview stage.

Our EC helped Stacey to identify the career and roles he wanted to pursue and then reviewed and updated his CV. After this stage, the EC identified that Stacey had an interest in hospitality, retail and ground maintenance/horticulture.

Stacey was also helped to undertake job search as well as reviewing the job and apprenticeship vacancies we had sourced. With this support, Stacey had the confidence to submit high quality job applications and prepare for interviews using our mock interview and assessment centre practice sessions. Our EC also spent time working with Stacey on his soft skills or mind set for work qualities, interview and positive body language he would need to gain and keep a job, for example team working, effective communication.

Stacey was offered an interview with the Norse Group (a Forward Trust employer partner) and was initially offered a one-week work trial. Our employer partners work with us because of our employability programmes, EC support and commitment to providing them with the best candidates.

Stacey enjoyed his work trial with the Norse ground maintenance team and was subsequently offered a full-time job.

Learning Curve Group – Case Study

Engaging with housing associations and other stakeholders and providing a flexible, impactful training programme to those who would otherwise fail to access these opportunities. The Learning Curve Group offer Pathways to Employment through supporting residents or tenants who are out of work by giving them the skills they need to forge a career in a wide range of sectors. Community and classroom-based delivery models are designed using feedback from employers, so they deliver the most effective employment outcomes possible. Using providers with a proven historical track record in unlocking and identifying people in underrepresented groups is an efficient way of progressing this objective



LCG-HousingBook.pdf

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3. In-work poverty is a challenge facing many Londoners. From this year, the Mayor will support low-paid Londoners access skills support via the devolved Adult Education Budget. What further steps could London Government and industry take to promote progression and support Londoners into better skilled and paid work?

AELP feels strongly that tackling in-work poverty should be about progression into sustainable work which encompasses better skills and better salaries whereby the traditional approach to just getting a job is not enough. For sustainability, it is critical to mesh together skills and employability. With the Good Work Standard in mind, also work with employers to:

- offer a fair salary for the role from the outset - those in work and borderline above the LLW may still be struggling - it's difficult to gauge depending on individual / household circumstances.
- address the huge swathes of people in employment but in roles that are below their skill set or fail to have reasonable progression routes. Londoners deserve to have access to high quality, flexible provision that enables them to move forward in their career and break down barriers to higher level positions.

- highlight the benefits of investing in staff development and training and not shy away in case of losing staff – think about how to retain and create a strong and loyal workforce and create a talent pipeline and make employers less risk averse
- provide effective short courses to help bridge a steppingstone for those in work to move to the next stage – a full apprenticeship may not be the immediate answer but some of the units maybe, with the opportunity to complete the full apprenticeship at a later date

Benefit rules acting as a barrier may also be relevant here and should reviewed.

AELP PAPER - Benefit rules acting as a barrier to training:

https://www.aelp.org.uk/media/2564/bp-57_sector-headlines.pdf

AELP's London Advisory Group member – The Forward Trust emphasises that the AEB lot 2's focus on people in work will give employers and learners a chance to access qualifications and employability programmes. There also needs to be a sector approach including those industries that are not prioritised by the Mayor or Government's industrial strategy. Some sectors such as hospitality are talking about a 'labour shortage', so part of their solution to attracting people from low paid/disadvantaged or social mobility groups should be to adopt the London Living Wage. The employers need to also use apprenticeships and tailored or sector specific AEB qualifications or non-accredited learning to prepare learners or clients to be promoted or progressed in the work force. Currently the AEB funding rates tend to favour higher-level qualifications when non-accredited learning developed with an employer can also help someone to progress in work.

The Forward Trust also believes that the Mayor should be doing more to encourage employers to remove barriers to work or being promoted at work. For example, with ex-offenders there is still a focus on 'risk assessments' rather than accepting ban the box as a principle and focusing on the talent and mind sets of individuals to do a job. Their new campaign in August 2019 - 'More than my past' will be promoting ex-offenders as individuals with talent to bring to the world of work and wider community.

Some employers (including some FTSE companies) are keeping some ex-offenders on agency or casual contracts (through a third party) so that they do not need to 'employ them'. As a charity, Forward Trust employ ex-offenders on permanent or fixed term contracts in their organisation and social enterprises.

Section B: Meeting the needs of economy and employers

1. London is expecting a growing need for higher skilled jobs. How can London meet the current and future pipeline of talent for its high skilled sectors/ occupations?

It's important to be specific in the future skills needed and creating a clear line of progression support from providers with experience of delivery in London.

Clear mapping of skills shortages versus available provision at higher levels would help to grow or refocus the higher skills offer.

Aligning the apprenticeship standards to what the industry needs and develop new standards in line with demand.

We would encourage working with employers to ensure their apprenticeship programmes offer progression routes to higher level opportunities, again build into the Good Work Standard as good practice.

Effectively promote the higher level apprenticeship standards and opportunities.

Working with schools to provide talent pipelines at all levels, university may not be suitable for everyone but a higher apprenticeship maybe the answer.

To maximise the funding available at all levels, evaluate all funding options for higher skills training and shift levy employer behaviour.

2. London has historically low levels of apprenticeships. What more can London Government do to support employers to create quality apprenticeships?

The apprenticeship reforms have helped improve the skills system, but poor implementation has hampered the impact being greater. With issues identified with the financial sustainability of the apprenticeship model highlighted by the National Audit Office (NAO) [report](#), we are approaching another key crossroad in regards the policy position of the reforms of providing “employer choice” verses government diktat of how best to allocate or ration the finite funding resource. The government’s fall-back position is that the apprenticeship levy maybe paid for by employers, but ultimately it is a tax and belongs to the Treasury which gives government the final say on how it gets spent. See AELP’s response:

<https://www.aelp.org.uk/news/news/press-releases/aelp-press-release-below-on-the-nao-report/>

With funding for apprenticeships anticipated to be significantly overspent, one area which we have proposed is the removal of level 6 and level 7 apprenticeships from being in scope for government funding. In its place these programmes should be funded either commercially by the employer and/or through a student loan taken out by the individual or whatever combination of student / employer / government grant contribution the government proposes for degrees following the Post 18 Education and Funding Review.

London’s richness of opportunities across all sectors attracts people to the London jobs market, which is a great thing, however employees change jobs a lot more in London than anywhere else. Specifically, for apprenticeships this movement between employers can have a negative impact on provider retention and success rates where the new employer is not supportive of the employee continuing their apprenticeship. This can discourage providers from apprenticeship delivery in London. Along with this comes the added complexity of levy / non-levy funding. London Government should explore ways of addressing this from all perspectives – employers, employee apprentices and providers.

The Public sector target of 2.3% of workforce in England to be apprenticeships could be reviewed for London. Has the 2.3% been achieved with high quality apprenticeships? If not, consider greater engagement with public sector stakeholders. Make an agreed percentage of apprenticeships mandatory in public sector areas (including the supply chain) and provide additional case studies demonstrating their value. Weigh up the benefits of productivity apprenticeships in management against social mobility benefits of lower level apprenticeships and ensure an appropriate blend.

SMEs are a large part of London's economy – they need to be switched back on to apprenticeships irrespective of the levy. Now that all employers will be using the apprenticeship service, it's important to 're-launch' apprenticeships for the SME market with some robust support and handholding. AELP will continue to support and lobby to secure non levy funding to be ring fenced.

AELP'S discussion paper provide more details on Sustainable Future Funding Model

<https://www.aelp.org.uk/media/2997/a-sustainable-future-funding-model-discussion-paper-march-2019-final-080319.pdf>

The last spending review announced the Apprenticeship Levy Transfer increasing from 10% to 25% whereby large levy employers with unspent levy budget can transfer up to 25% to any employers. It is great to hear that the Mayor is dedicating resource to piloting a levy transfer approach for London based businesses. AELP London has already engaged with some big-name employers who are keen to get going; AELP is producing an outline model of how this could work. By maximising levy transfer more of the levy funding will remain with employers rather than being clawed back by central government.

AELP would also support the acceleration of apprenticeship opportunities and take up through other approaches drawing on the expertise of training providers who already have established relationships with large levy employers who will struggle to utilise their funds.

- Greater use of case studies and employer / learner apprenticeship ambassadors. AELP is exploring closer working with apprenticeship ambassadors at a local, regional and national level.
- Parental influence has a tendency to push young people towards university as parents are unaware of alternative options such as apprenticeships and what opportunities these bring with them over Higher Education provision.
- Benefit rules acting as a barrier may also be relevant here and should reviewed.

AELP PAPER - Benefit rules acting as a barrier to training;

https://www.aelp.org.uk/media/2564/bp-57_sector-headlines.pdf

3. Technology is rapidly changing the economic landscape. All Londoners will need a basic level of digital proficiency. How can the education and skills system respond to this?

To begin with, ensure everyone understands what is meant by digital proficiency

It's critical to get a clear understanding of the needs through thorough initial assessments of individuals' needs so that the right level of provision is offered.

Be flexible in the provision of training and skills in this area. Enable remote learning, pop-up classroom-based sites as well as more traditional fixed site delivery and encourage full access for learners.

Digital skills along with maths and English underpin all occupational areas and should consider embedding into apprenticeship standards.

Section C: Creating an integrated city-wide skills offer

1. How can we make better use of impact data to plan for skills and employment provision in London?

Impact data to be made available through one platform that is:

- Regularly updated
- Simple to navigate and interpret.

It should be used to:

- evaluate patterns and trends and shared quickly so old data is not used for planning.
- direct funding and provision towards the areas requiring greater focus. This could be to in-work and economically inactive individuals who will all impact upon a better performing region

Hold round table discussions with relevant stakeholders to review data and compare to what ITPS, and the wider FE system is seeing/hearing on the ground, for example, is it reflective of data, this will help to ensure funding is supporting the correct groups in need.

2. London's skills and education system is suffering from a shortage of quality and experienced teaching professionals. What changes are needed to recruit and retain quality teachers in London?

AELP urges London Government to equally support the skills and education system across all provider groups – schools, colleges, ITPs, ACL, IAL, HE etc. A shortage of quality and experienced teaching professionals in London is a problem faced by all groups. Currently there is little support for ITPs available from the Education and Training Foundation (ETF). ITPs are at the heart of the learning that takes place in the workplace which is valued by London businesses of all sizes.

The conditions of working in London are perceived to be worse when compared to other parts of the country. London is a vibrant region with fantastic diversity which should be celebrated and promoted to attract the best possible teaching staff.

Cost of living and working in London to be better understood - housing costs and the availability of housing along with childcare costs which could be significant barriers to retention. Salary to be realistic for living and working in London or travelling into London

Targeted recruitment campaigns in specific boroughs where the greatest issues exist and more promotion of positive case studies in London.

Identify and share best practice from boroughs that successfully recruit and retain.

Review from a diversity perspective – e.g. target more males into teaching campaign

Enhance government retention incentives e.g. Maths and Physics -

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-mathematics-and-physics-teacher-retention-payments>

Set clear expectations for teaching staff with workload, KPIs etc along with the resources and support available to them to be able to keep it manageable.

Change management – leaders implementing too many changes – stability is needed otherwise can be overwhelming with challenging and unrealistic deadlines.

Promoting and exercising wellbeing and adequate support structure for teaching staff in the most challenging areas and explore opportunities for flexible working.

Promote Teaching Apprenticeships but make the offer attractive enough for career changers:

<https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/teacher/>

3. What steps can London Government take to create a more integrated skills and employment support offer in London?

[Better communication and understanding of programmes, funding streams, projects and providers etc available in London with linking up of all activities to ensure needs are being met through a high-quality service for a joined-up service.](#)

Engage with providers and employers as widely as possible to help shape the planning and mechanisms of the future, and ensure the procurement of skills provision is based on meaningful, high quality measures, track record etc

The skills sector has undergone a significant transformation over the past couple of years - through apprenticeship reforms, the development of new technical qualifications otherwise known as T levels and a more robust functional skills curriculum due to be implemented in September 2019. These programmes all have similar objectives in that they aid to support young people to become work-ready and addressing long-term challenges on low productivity and social inequality. Whilst these changes are well-intentioned by their designers, poor implementation with little consideration for young people has disrupted the intended outcomes of, for example, apprenticeships. This is especially so with the removal of many incentives to prioritising the training and employment of young adults which must be reviewed urgently.

Specifically, T levels will bring new expectations of employers, particularly due to a lack of understanding of what they are, and the increasing number of work placements and the extended duration required from employers. Our very own research in partnership with City & Guilds last year highlighted employers and education providers voice serious concerns over T Level work placements with almost half (49%) rating their understanding as poor. Refer to the following link for details:

https://www.aelp.org.uk/media/2308/tlevel_research_final.pdf

In addition, 74% of employer's surveyed support work placements saying they are willing to play a greater role in helping students apply their learning in the workplace setting. However, both employers and training providers expressed concerns around the implementation of the work placements with 85% of employers felt that financial support would be necessary to enable employers to offer the required quantity and duration of work placements, to support learner access and to support learning providers. Currently the system is fragmented and piecemeal, however, if we see proper government support, the proposed T level programmes provide an incredible opportunity for the FE sector to work more closely with employers and have a single conversation with them about apprenticeships, traineeships and T level work placements. In general, there is the raising of disconnection between devolved and national policy e.g. SEND

Please refer to the AELP's response to the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Youth Employment Inquiry: Series 5 – Employer support for youth employment:

<https://www.aelp.org.uk/resource-and-information-centre/resource-and-information-centre/submissions/submission-59-aelp-response-to-the-all-party-parliamentary-group-for-youth-employment-inquiry-series-5-employer-support-for-youth-employment/>



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