



CAPITAL

June 2020

Welcome to CAPITAL, AELP London's membership newsletter, designed to keep our members up to date with the latest developments across London's employability and skills sector.

An introduction from Nichola Hay

In our last edition of Capital, back in January, I wrote about the challenges facing the sector in 2020. I talked about 'unknown unknowns' and how the landscape would continue to evolve and change.

Well, it's obviously turned out that my words were particularly prescient, although I never could have imagined that something as serious and disruptive as Covid-19 would have hit us all. I'd like to take this opportunity to repeat the sentiments that I shared at this month's Strategic Forum, where I expressed my pride in how our members have responded to this unprecedented challenge. At a time of great stress, where Covid-19 has impacted on us all in a number of different ways, the commitment I have seen from our member organisations to supporting their learners and employers has been inspiring.



Perhaps unsurprisingly, the focus of media reporting has been on the negative impacts of Covid-19 on the sector and on our learners. But I think it is right that we reflect on the positive response of London's skills sector, and how it has reacted so quickly to adapt its ways of working, to bring in new innovations, and do everything it can to support learners.

Remember, we are here to support you. I can only encourage you to approach us for information, support or guidance as we move forward and work together to shape what the skills sector looks like for the rest of 2020 and beyond. Our next Strategic Forum is scheduled (virtually) for 16th September and will play a key role in how we work with you to continue that support into the autumn and beyond. We'll also be hearing from our usual range of invited speakers, including the GLA; ESFA Career Learning, Analysis and Skills Directorate; updates on funding programmes; Traineeships; T-Levels; Apprenticeships and new contracting opportunities. I look forward to seeing you all there.

Warm regards,

Nichola Hay
AELP London Chair

The AELP London Strategic Forum

As we get used to the 'new normal', and we all spend time Zooming and Skyping for most of our waking hours, it's perhaps no surprise that this month's Strategic Forum was held virtually.

We know virtual meetings can occasionally be a little awkward and be affected by the odd technical hitch (and this one was no different!), but we'd like to thank all of our members and presenters for making it a really successful meeting. And, of course, we got a little insight into what books people have on their shelves and, in some cases, the interesting pictures they have on their walls!

The following is a high-level 'canter' through the Strategic Forum although, as ever, we'd always recommend that our members 'attend' the Forum to get the most out of it.

Nicki Hay – AELP London Chair

Nicki kicked off the meeting by reflecting on some of the issues that we have all been facing this year, explaining that this is our first Forum meeting for some time due to Covid-19 and recommending that members dial into Mark Dawe's weekly Covid-19 updates. Details of these updates can be found on the [AELP website](#).

Nicki expressed her pride in the sector, specifically how London's providers have responded, at great speed, to ensure that, as much as has been possible, the needs of learners and employers have been met. Nikki also thanked the GLA for their speedy response to the sector with AEB contracts and flexibilities, opportunity for additional funding to support the Covid-19 impacts. The London Mayoral elections will take place in 2021, and we look forward to continuing our work with the Mayor's office and the skills and employment team at the GLA, particularly supporting the development of the capital's future skills strategies.

Looking forward, Nicki recognised that there is a challenge ahead in balancing our approach to returning to work and re-establishing face to face provision but expressed her view that the most important thing is safety, and where we can do things virtually then we should endeavour to do so.

Mark Dawe – AELP Policy Update

As expected at this time, Mark's updates centred on Covid-19 and its impact.

Centre openings

Mark outlined how the current Government guidance presented 'an opening' for adult apprentices (mainly 16-19) to recommence off-site learning, although he expressed that the key consideration has to be safety. He reiterated that this only applied to apprenticeships and that the guidance was continually evolving, so that before any provider makes a decision/change of approach that it is key that they check the latest guidance.

Government Support

AELP is continuing to lobby for further support across the sector. As members know, there are

variations in the support on offer depending on the programmes that providers are delivering. Levy providers are an obvious point of focus, with AELP looking to ensure that Government understands their importance in ensuring the right infrastructure is in place as we move forward.

Furlough

Any provider wishing to furlough staff must have done so before 10th June. Mark recognised that the furloughing process is 'winding down' over the coming months and that this will mean providers have a number of challenges to overcome. It is expected that further guidance will be made available by the Government in the short-term, and AELP is pushing for this guidance to be released on an ASAP basis. Again, it is the case that it is a rapidly changing situation and we recommend members check the latest Government guidance to support their planning.

The Skills Agenda

It is becoming clear that Treasury and Number 10 recognise that Skills has an important role to play as we move forward. AELP has developed a discussion paper, 'Covid-19 employment challenge', which outlines the challenges that sector and individuals face in the coming months. It also considers some of the programmes and responses (employer-led) that can help to deliver effective skills development for learners and employers.

Mark provided the Forum with an update of the different funding programmes and approaches that are being discussed by Government. We'd recommend that the best way of accessing this information, and AELP's recommendations for how funding can be used most effectively to meet learner and employer needs, is by downloading and reviewing our paper – ['Covid-19 – employment challenge'](#).

Questions and Answers

We are always keen to enable our Forum attendees to ask questions, so Mark asked for any questions from members. The following is a paraphrased summary:

'Is there anything that London providers can do to help shape the AELP response?'

AELP involved all combined authorities, including London, in the development of the Covid-19 paper mentioned above. The approach was to try and create a joined-up approach/response so that there is a 'meshing in' between the response from central government and combined authorities. Any members that have insight or input should contact us directly.

'Is dialogue taking place between Jobcentre Plus/DWP and DfE?'

Yes. There is a recognition that a joined-up approach is needed, and our understanding is that regular discussions are taking place. In short, they understand there has to be a clear link between the skills training that is on offer and newly created jobs – for example, people in the aviation sector in London will require re-skilling to move from one sector into another.

And finally...

Mark pointed out that while, quite rightly, our collective focus is on Covid-19 and our direct short to medium-term response, that as we move forward there are a number of related longer-term challenges that we will need to overcome, not least those linked to the anticipated recession. 'Now is the time' to begin to think about those challenges... for example Apprenticeship Levy transfers... and we would welcome approaches from members to share their views with us, so we can begin to talk to Government.

Michelle Cuomo-Borer and Cameron Tait – An update from the GLA

Michelle advised that the focus of the GLA at the start of the Covid-19 crisis was, moving at great speed, to develop support programmes for the sector.

Recently the GLA announced the [Skills for Londoner's Covid-19 Response Fund](#), a £9m programme of support available to help skills providers offer their courses online, as well as targeted support for learners who may have difficulties accessing such services. Michelle reiterated that AELP London members are encouraged to apply.



Michelle continued to say that the GLA is now considering the medium-term development of the sector (in a post Covid-19 world) to make sure the right support is in place for London's skills sector. They recognise that the new academic year will present providers with a further series of challenges and are looking to amend their funding rules to ensure flexibility of provision is possible. Michelle asked for input from AELP London members on how they can best achieve those funding changes.

The second round of ESF funding is now underway for organisations interested in bidding, and full details can be found through the [GLA website](#).

Cameron provided an update on how GLA is working, in conjunction with other combined authorities and central government, to develop their longer-term response to Covid-19 issues.

Unemployment is obviously a key issue, with organisations already making redundancies and further redundancies expected as the furlough scheme is wound down through late summer and autumn. Strategic planning is at an early stage, and the GLA is planning to consult with all relevant stakeholders in the development of their recovery response.

The GLA has been working closely with the M9 (Metro Mayors) group, who have in turn been meeting with Number 10 and Treasury to develop a joined-up response. This includes a focus on Skills with a meeting scheduled for the week commencing 10th June for the M9 to discuss this particular issue.

Cameron outlined the 6 proposals to support London's recovery:

- Supporting financial sustainability providers
- Funding for the AEB
- Coordination of employment and careers services
- Access to Apprenticeships
- Safeguarding the future of FE capital funds
- Live labour market data

Questions and Answers

Michelle and Cameron were keen to get feedback from the Forum and collected a number of questions during the call, including:

“Some programmes would benefit from other providers being brought into the ‘GLA family’, potentially as subcontractors... can the GLA provide some guidance on contracted providers being able to add new subcontractors?”

“Can we ensure that we remain joined-up in our local and national approach?”

“Access to technology and online learning is not uniform, particularly in disadvantaged communities. Can support be looked at to make sure that all learners can access online learning, and online support?”

The intention was not to provide responses to these questions at the Forum, rather that they be taken away by Michelle and Cameron and considered in detail as part of the GLA's response planning. We will provide further updates through the Capital newsletter.

Upcoming events



Business Recovery
Conference

Headline sponsors



A graphic for the AELP Autumn Conference 2020. It features a background of purple and blue wavy shapes. On the right, there is a collage of several video call windows showing various people. The text on the left reads: 'The AELP Autumn Conference 9 - 10 September 2020 The 'Business Recovery Conference''. At the bottom, there is a button that says 'REGISTER YOUR INTEREST NOW!' with a right-pointing arrow.

AELP Business Recovery Conference – 9th September 2020

Covid-19 means there will be a 'new normal'. We may not know what exactly what that 'normal' looks like yet, but we know that the skills sector will need to change and adapt to support business recovery.

We have therefore taken the decision, in these unprecedented circumstances, to re-brand our autumn conference as the Business Recovery Conference.

Throughout the Business Recovery Conference, we will:

- Focus on training providers, colleges and any other provider that is working to support employers to get back on track through the recruitment and training of new staff, or of retraining their existing workforce.
- Focus on making sure we can help young people and unemployed adults into apprenticeships, traineeships and pre-employment programmes to maximise their chance of securing and sustaining employment.
- Focus on how all skills and employment providers can optimise their delivery model.

- Focus on ensuring providers have the very latest government guidance updating providers on a safe and effective return to work, giving the best chance of business recovery and success

Full details, including how to register are available on the link above.

Useful information, guides, resources and more

[Covid-19 Employment Challenge paper](#)

This paper looks at the elements that need to be considered as we go through and come out of the Covid-19 crisis to ensure we have an employment, re-employment and upskilling programme that supports employers, sectors and individuals.

[Covid-19 \(Coronavirus\) Guidance and Patron Support](#)



AELP has pulled together set of resources to help support providers, their employers and their learners in the response to the Coronavirus pandemic.

[Lockdown Lift-Off: Bouncing back after COVID-19: Training Qualifications UK - Patron Think Piece](#)

After months of virtual pubs, family quizzes and video conference calls, the national lockdown is slowly lifting... In this Patron Think Piece, Andrew Walker considers how the sector can bounce back after Covid-19.



[AELP News](#)

AELP's latest press releases provide a great summary of the latest news and responses to what's happening in the Skills sector. They often link to useful AELP papers and other sources of guidance.

[Ask Ashworth](#)



Simon Ashworth is the Chief Policy Officer at the Association of Employment and Learning

Providers (AELP). Through the Ask Ashworth blog, Simon provides answers to the questions that providers are posing.

[AELP Webinars](#)

AELP hosts regular webinars that address the key issues and challenges of the day. Unsurprisingly, at the moment, there is a focus on Covid-19, including Mark Dawe's weekly Covid-19 webinar. Please use the link above to check in on the latest webinars.

AELP Best Practice Guidance

There are a range of best practice guides available through the [AELP website](#).

The AELP London Strategic Forum

Our next Strategic Forum will take online on Wednesday 16th September at 9.30am -11.30am.

Please be aware that only full members of AELP London are able to attend our Strategic Forum meetings.

Date	Time	Venue
Wednesday, 16th September 2020	9.30am – 11.30pm	Online
Thursday, 3rd December 2020	9.30am – 11.30pm	TBA

Please continue to let us know your thoughts on the Strategic Forum, and advising of us of agenda items that you'd like covering by emailing aelp london@aelp.org.uk

Continuing the conversation

We're committed to engaging with our members, working with you to understand how we can best support you and designing services 'with you, not for you'.

You can also talk with us via Twitter @AELPLondon, or the more 'old fashioned' way by email at aelp london@aelp.org.uk or over the phone at 0117 440 9525

Best wishes,

Jane Hickie
AELP COO
janehickie@aelp.org.uk



We want to make sure that CAPITAL evolves to meet the needs of our members. If you have any feedback, or are interested in writing a comment piece, then we would love to hear from you. Please email us at aelp-london@aelp.co.uk.



AELP London

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