



SKILLS AND HEALTH INEQUALITIES IN LONDON

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION	4
1. INTRODUCTION	12
1A. REVIEW PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY	14
Purpose of this review	14
Methodology	14
1B. SKILLS PROGRAMMES AND HEALTH INEQUALITIES	16
1C. SKILLS PROGRAMMES AND THE ECONOMY	18
1D. NATIONAL SKILLS POLICY	19
2. THE DELIVERY OF SKILLS PROGRAMMES IN LONDON	20
2A. THE GLA	22
2B. LOCAL AUTHORITIES	28
2C. COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR	29
2D. EMPLOYERS	31
3. INEQUALITIES IN SKILLS AND ACCESS TO PROGRAMMES IN LONDON	33
3A. LONDON'S POPULATION	35
3B. LONDONERS' SKILLS AND SKILLS GAPS	36
Qualifications	36
Skills shortages in London	39
Digital skills	41
3C. POPULATIONS FACING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT AND ACCESSING SKILLS PROGRAMMES	45
Single parents and carers	46
People with disabilities	48
Ethnic minority groups	50
Older Londoners	53
Speakers of other languages	54
4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	57
REFERENCES	63

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SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

The development of skills in adulthood makes an important contribution to improving health and reducing health inequalities. To be effective for health equity, skills programmes need to be widely accessible to communities who are living in deprivation, experiencing exclusion and discrimination, loneliness and isolation, have caring responsibilities, low levels of skills including English language, or poor mental or physical health, and whose quality of life and confidence can be improved by participating in skills building programmes.

London has extensive skills programmes which contribute to reducing inequalities in key social determinants of health and health itself. There have been recent improvements which have made skills programmes more accessible and equitable, including offering free courses for a widening group of low income and excluded Londoners. Despite these positive outcomes, there is still much to do to strengthen skills programme design and delivery in the capital. There are persistent inequalities in levels of skills related to area deprivation, and among ethnic minority groups, migrants, parents and carers, disabled people and older Londoners. Parents and carers, people with disabilities and older Londoners also have relatively low levels of participation in skills programmes.

In London there has been a focus on programmes that improve skills for work. While employment-related skills are important for health, they are only one of the varied ways skills programmes can benefit health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities in the social determinants of health. These benefits include social mixing, reducing social isolation and better mental health. The health case can be further strengthened in order to make the case for increased investment and participation from the health care sector, public health and businesses.

This review is intended to support effective action to reduce inequalities in skills and makes the case that programmes and funding that support skills development among those who most need it is an important contribution to reducing inequalities in health and in the social determinants of health, and also brings economic benefits to deprived areas and communities.

There is scope to extend the provision of skills programmes to settings that are accessible to communities that are not currently accessing skills programmes, including early years and faith settings. Health care settings and those of other public services such as education should also be informed about skills programmes and refer people to them and offer premises for delivering skills programmes. Businesses can collaborate closely with local authorities to further support the building of skills for their own employees but also for the wider community. Given the necessity of skills building to health equity, public health at all levels has an important role in the assessment, design and delivery of skills programmes in London, but that role is currently underdeveloped.

Beyond London, this work will be relevant to organisations and sectors that have responsibility for health, for reducing inequalities in the social determinants of health, and for national policy makers related to reducing inequalities in health, education and training, employment and economic development.

KEY MESSAGES

THE LINK BETWEEN SKILLS AND HEALTH

- Skills programmes are highly effective in improving people's health at all stages of life. If effectively targeted towards the most excluded groups, skills programmes can reduce health inequalities.
- Skills for work programmes contribute to better health by increasing opportunity and access to good quality, well paid work, which can reduce poverty and improve health.
- Skills programmes can also reduce health inequalities for all age groups by improving individuals' confidence, building social networks, reducing isolation and promoting integration.
- English language proficiency is a particularly important skill for accessing good quality employment, and strengthening social integration and navigating services, including healthcare.

SKILLS AND HEALTH IN ENGLAND

- The repercussions of the period of austerity and the COVID-19 pandemic between 2010 and 2022 have been unequal, affecting more deprived communities and those already suffering exclusion and discrimination more severely. Overall, health has deteriorated and health inequalities have widened.
- Funding cuts have resulted in declining numbers of adult learners with the largest drop seen among those taking low-level qualifications, who would benefit most from skills programmes. This has harmed the development of skills in London and harmed health.
- There has been a focus on skills for employment rather than funding for programmes for enjoyment, wellbeing and social mixing. These programmes have clear health benefits and should be considered an essential part of skills programme design and delivery with further funding made available.
- Adults in lower socioeconomic groups are half as likely to participate in learning after full-time education compared with those in higher socioeconomic groups.
- There are barriers to accessing skills programmes among those who could benefit most, including parents and carers, older Londoners, those with physical and learning disabilities, some ethnic minority groups and those with limited English language skills.

DATA AND INFORMATION GAPS

- Monitoring and evaluations of skills programmes should include health equity impacts; currently, few skills programmes are evaluated for health impacts.
- More regular and up to date information on skills programmes is needed, with assessments made for ensuring greater equity in participation and access.
- The London Learner Survey shows positive impacts on social outcomes and economic outcomes, but there is a need for deeper analysis of the surveys with disaggregated data by age, ethnicity, gender, caring roles and disability.


THE DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF SKILLS PROGRAMMES IN LONDON

- There are an extensive range of skills programmes available in London and the devolution of the Adult Education Budget to the Mayor helped remove barriers and has increased participation with greater equity in access to programmes.
- London has a growing and ageing population, with increasing ethnic diversity with wide inequalities in skills and access to programmes.
- The majority of skills programmes available in London target skills for employment and there is a relative lack of investment in other skills programmes that have many positive health and equity benefits for participants. Evidence shows that skills programmes have impact on social, as well as economic outcomes.
- Partnerships between the GLA, local authorities, the CVS, service providers and employers are important to the success of skills programmes.
- Skills programmes need to be carefully designed to be accessible and appropriate for those with low skills and facing barriers to accessing programmes. Outreach is important with referrals from a range of settings.
- Given the necessity of skills building to health equity, public health at local, regional and national level has an important role in the assessment, design and delivery of skills programmes in London, but as yet this role is underdeveloped.
- In 2021/22, 52 percent of non-retired learners had a positive economic or educational change in the months following their participation in the AEB funded skills programme.
- The London Learners Survey reports that 96 percent of learners experienced a positive social change following participation in an AEB funded skills programme including improved health and wellbeing, improved social integration, improved self efficacy and participation in volunteering. 84 percent reported improved wellbeing with 43 percent reporting a very positive impact.

SKILLS IN LONDON

- There are persistent shortages in the skills appropriate for several key occupations in London and approximately 21 percent of all vacancies in London in 2019 were due to skills shortages. The construction and health and care sectors are particularly affected.
- London's workforce has the highest level of qualifications in the country and levels have increased in the last decade.
- Despite overall high levels of skills in London, there are clear inequalities between local authorities, with 82 percent of London's workforce having a level 4 qualification in the Borough with the highest level, compared with only 38 percent having a level 4 qualification in the Borough with the lowest level.
- The employment rate for Londoners with degree-level qualifications was twice that for those without any formal qualifications, a bigger difference than in other parts of the country.
- Many ethnic minority groups in London have low employment and high poverty rates despite increased educational attainment levels.
- There are relatively high numbers of people in London who do not have English as a first language compared with other regions in the UK, and the number has increased slightly since 2011.

INEQUALITIES IN SKILLS AND ACCESS TO PROGRAMMES IN LONDON



- In London there are groups with relatively low levels of skills for employment, including people over 50, some ethnic minority groups, people with a disability, people with SEND and those with low levels of English language skills. There are barriers to accessing skills programmes for these same groups and for parents and carers.
- There are significant differences between and within London boroughs in levels of skills and provision of skills programmes.
- Lack of childcare is a particular barrier to participation in skills programmes and digital skills are also a barrier for many, particularly older Londoners.
- There is a continuing need for more programmes and greater accessibility to programmes for people with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, including SEND and poor health.
- The GLA commissions a range of English for Speakers of Other Languages programmes but there remain persistent barriers in access for those with young children and for people over 50.
- Older Londoners are also less likely to say that they plan to take up adult learning than other residents. The biggest barriers to learning for this group were a lack of interest and feeling 'too old'.
- Digital exclusion disproportionately impacts older Londoners and those who are not in employment due to long-term illness or disability. This impacts their wellbeing, access to key services and ability for social interaction.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING THE HEALTH EQUITY IMPACTS OF SKILLS PROGRAMMES IN LONDON.

1. Target underserved populations

- Further invest in skills programmes that include developing hobbies, wellbeing and social mixing in addition to programmes developing skills for work.
- Ensure more investment in skills programmes in more deprived areas with higher skills needs and in areas with higher rates of low English language skills.
- Tailor courses appropriately to increase the proportion of learners with physical and learning disabilities, including SEND, and for those with health problems.

2. Tackle barriers to participation in skills programmes

- Create skills development programmes that are more accessible to parents by increasing the number of training locations that offer childcare facilities or support to access childcare.
- Improve outreach for advice and support accessing skills programmes among groups with low skills and low participation rates.
- Extend provision of English for Speakers of Other Languages programmes including in employment settings. Areas with higher numbers of people without good English language skills should be prioritised for investment.
- Support higher rates of entry into good quality employment by increasing the proportion of skills programmes offering individual support that continues after the learning element of the programme has ended.

3. Strengthen role of public health and partnerships with employers in skills programmes

- Strengthen the role of employers and service providers in offering skills programmes to employees, local communities and referring service users and consider offering space for skills programmes to be delivered.
- Strengthen partnerships between employers, service providers the CVS, local and regional authorities in identifying skills needs and delivering appropriate accessible programmes.
- Strengthen the role of public health in skills programmes, including:
 - > In the identification of populations who would benefit from skills programmes
 - > Linking with other sectors, including the CVS, health care, housing, education to support identification and referral to skills programmes
 - > Sharing information about the availability of skills programmes with particular communities and places in order to support uptake
 - > Carrying out assessments and evaluations to establish the efficacy of programmes and their impact on health.
- Ensure programmes are tailored appropriately and designed with specific communities initiatives who face a range of barriers and require specific solutions to skills building.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GLA

1. Target underserved populations

- Undertake mapping of all skills provision in London, related to area deprivation, skills levels, ethnicity, gender, disability and age, to identify gaps in provision and funding for key groups and areas.
- Further strengthen the involvement of low skills groups in identifying and addressing barriers to engagement with skills service programmes and in the design of the content of courses.

2. Tackle barriers to participation in skills programmes

- Extend fully funded programmes to those on relatively low incomes, even if above the Living Wage and to those with a disability and those with limited English language skills.
- Embed monitoring and evaluation of health impacts in the delivery of skills programmes and ensure that the health equity impacts of skills programmes are recognised and incorporated into the investment case for skills programmes.

3. Strengthen role of public health and partnerships with employers in skills programmes

- Extend provision of skills programmes in local communities as one of the criteria for the Skills and Progression pillars in GLA's Good Work Standard.
- Ensure that housing providers, small and medium-sized enterprises, primary health care, in particular social prescribers, early years settings and schools are aware of available skills programmes and refer people in.
- The public health system in the London Region to further engage in the development of skills programmes:
 - > Include local authority public health workforce in the assessment of need and design and delivery of skills programmes
 - > Work with public health in local authorities to support identification of need and build links with adult skills programmes within local authorities
 - > Public health representatives included in the Skills for Londoners Board.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM IN LONDON

The public health system at all levels to have a greater role within the adult skills landscape in London, including:

1. Target underserved populations

- Identify populations who would benefit from skills programmes.
- Link with other sectors, including the health care sector, education, housing, the CVS and faith based organisations to support access to programmes for those with low skills and those who would benefit from participation.

2. Tackle barriers to participation in skills programmes

- Share information about the availability of skills programmes with particular communities and places in order to support uptake.

3. Strengthen role of public health and partnerships with employers in skills programmes

- Participate further in the design and delivery of GLA Adult Education programmes.
- Carry out assessments and evaluations to establish the efficacy of programmes and their impact on health.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

1. Target underserved populations

- Maximise efforts to ensure that the adult education offer within each borough is well-advertised and reaches communities with low skills and low participation rates.

2. Tackle barriers to participation in skills programmes

- Conduct surveys and undertake community engagement to provide insights on local barriers to accessing skills programmes and devise plans to address these specifically in boroughs with low skills and low participation in skills programmes.
- Ensure that housing providers, small and medium-sized enterprises, primary health care, in particular social prescribers, early years settings and schools are aware of available skills programmes and refer people in.

3. Strengthen role of public health and partnerships with employers in skills programmes

- Work closely with the business sector, based on principles of economic inclusion, to encourage businesses to offer skills development to their workforce and the community as part of their social value contribution.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR

1. Target underserved populations

- Skills providers and employers to strengthen their relationships with the VCS in order to engage communities in the design and delivery of skills programme and in the identification of low skills areas and groups.

2. Tackle barriers to participation in skills programmes

- The CVS to strengthen their role in identifying and referring community members to skills providers.

3. Strengthen role of public health and partnerships with employers in skills programmes

- Strengthen partnerships and advocacy with local authorities and employers in the development of specific interventions for target groups they represent.
- Deliver skills programmes in faith and early years settings in addition to more traditional training settings.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

1. Target underserved populations

- Assess skills needs of employees and invest more in skills programmes for their own workforce, their contracted workforce and employees in their supply chain, including ESOL.
- Public services to work with service users to make referrals to skills programmes, including those offered by the CVS, and extend the No Wrong Door approach.
- Health care settings to extend their referrals into skills development programmes, including through direct referrals, social prescribing and offering space for provision of programmes.

2. Tackle barriers to participation in skills programmes

- Provide training and skill development in the community as part of their social impact contribution and qualification for the Mayors Good Work Standard.

1

INTRODUCTION

SECTION 1: KEY MESSAGES

THE LINK BETWEEN SKILLS AND HEALTH

- Skills programmes are highly effective in improving people's health at all stages of life. If effectively targeted towards the most excluded groups, skills programmes can reduce health inequalities.
- Skills for work programmes contribute to better health by increasing opportunity and access to good quality, well paid work, which can reduce poverty and improve health.
- Skills programmes can also reduce health inequalities for all age groups by improving individuals' confidence, building social networks, reducing isolation and promoting integration.
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SKILLS AND HEALTH IN ENGLAND

- The repercussions of the period of austerity and the COVID-19 pandemic between 2010 and 2022 have been unequal, affecting more deprived communities and those already suffering exclusion and discrimination more severely. Overall, health has deteriorated and health inequalities have widened.
- Funding cuts have resulted in declining numbers of adult learners with the largest drop seen among those taking low-level qualifications, who would benefit most from skills programmes. This has harmed the development of skills in London and harmed health.
- There has been a focus on skills for employment rather than funding for programmes for enjoyment, wellbeing and social mixing. These programmes have clear health benefits and should be considered an essential part of skills programme design and delivery with further funding made available.
- Adults in lower socioeconomic groups are half as likely to participate in learning after full-time education compared with those in higher socioeconomic groups.
- There are barriers to accessing skills programmes among those who could benefit most, including parents and carers, older Londoners, those with physical and learning disabilities, some ethnic minority groups and those with limited English language skills.

DATA AND INFORMATION GAPS

- Monitoring and evaluations of skills programmes should include health equity impacts; currently, few skills programmes are evaluated for health impacts.
- More regular and up to date information on skills programmes is needed, with assessments made for ensuring greater equity in participation and access.
- The London Learner Survey shows positive impacts on social outcomes and economic outcomes, but there is a need for deeper analysis of the surveys with disaggregated data by age, ethnicity, gender, caring roles and disability.

1A. REVIEW PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

PURPOSE OF THIS REVIEW

The development of skills in adulthood makes an important contribution to improving health and reducing health inequalities. This is the case in London, the main focus of this review, although the findings have relevance for organisations and sectors outside the capital too.

This review is intended to support effective action to reduce inequalities in skills and makes the case that programmes and funding that support skills development among those who most need it is an important contribution to reducing inequalities in health and in the social determinants of health, and also brings economic benefits to deprived areas and communities.

To be effective for health equity, skills programmes need to be widely accessible to communities who are living in deprivation, experiencing exclusion and discrimination, loneliness and isolation, have caring responsibilities, low levels of skills, or poor mental or physical health, and whose quality of life and confidence can be improved by participating in skills building programmes.

This review provides a summary and overview of skills programmes across London, but is not comprehensive (see methodology outline below). It is relevant for the Greater London Authority (GLA), particularly those with responsibility for adult education and skills development programmes, health and business development; for local authorities; employers, including both public and private sector employers; for education and skills providers; and the community and voluntary sector (CVS). Recommendations are made to support the development of equity-focused skills programmes and for the organisations and sectors that provide them. Given the necessity of skills building to health equity, public health at all levels has an important role in the assessment, design and delivery of skills programmes in London, but that role is currently underdeveloped.

Beyond London, this work will be relevant to organisations and sectors that have responsibility for health, for reducing inequalities in the social determinants of health, and for national policy makers related to reducing inequalities in health, education and training, employment and economic development.

We recommend that a more widescale mapping of provision of different types of skills provision across London is undertaken in order to identify gaps in provision and to ascertain whether it is related to areas of highest need. This process should take account of the broader health impacts of all types of skills programmes, including those for older people and those that are not related to skills for work. Mapping can be undertaken locally and assessed from a London-wide equity perspective.

METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this review, the term 'skills programme' includes a range of training options available to adults aged 19 and over, including adult education, lifelong learning, vocational training and community-based learning. It does not include university education.

This is a rapid evidence review and includes:

1. A selective review of the literature searches based on widely used databases, including PubMed and Google Scholar. Given the wide-ranging nature of the review and multiple topics, this did not involve any pre-planned inclusion or exclusion criteria.
2. Citation searching from relevant literature. This involves tracing a topic backward and forward in time by using the references or sources that have cited a particular piece of work. This process of linking one source to another creates a chain of related sources that provide the evidence base for the research.
3. Searches for grey literature where a peer-reviewed evidence base was absent or lacking. This includes literature from government bodies, skills providers, the community and voluntary sector, and employers in the form of reports and evaluations.

It should be noted that most of the interventions reported in this review are summarised from reports published by different skills service providers, with limited data or information on impacts. There is a dearth of evidence that includes studies or published evaluations; evidence from interventions with controlled studies was absent.

In scope

- Summarising skills programmes in London for adults aged 19 and over.
- Assessing the health equity and other equitable impacts from the programmes.
- Providing evidence about groups with relatively low participation rates in skills programmes, who would particularly benefit from participation in such programmes.
- Proposing recommendations relevant for London and the sectors that deliver skills programmes.

Out of scope

- Young people aged under 18.
- Assessing national policy or providing an overview of UK-wide interventions for lifelong learning.



1B. SKILLS PROGRAMMES AND HEALTH INEQUALITIES

There is ample evidence that education is linked to good health and also a considerable evidence base to show that spending more years in skills development and adult education is linked to better physical and mental health, wellbeing and social integration, as reported in the 2010 and 2020 IHE Marmot Reviews and the 2019 *Review of Post-18 Education and Funding* (Augar Review) (1) (2).

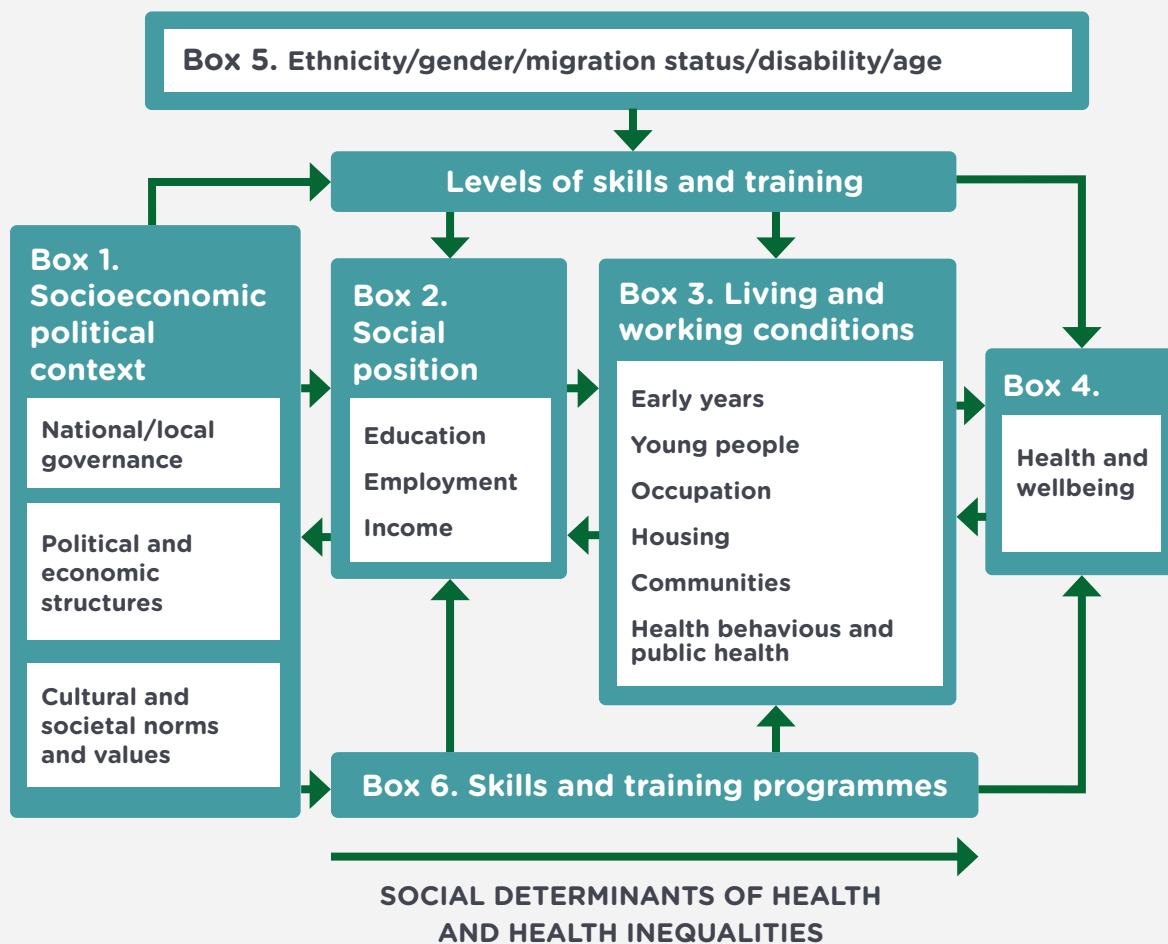
Skills development and adult education provide both direct health benefits and indirect benefits, as building skills leads to better employment, higher income and greater social interaction, all major drivers of good health. All these benefits can reduce health inequalities when targeted at groups who live in deprived areas, have low levels of skills, poor health and disability, experience discrimination and exclusion, and are socially isolated; they will also benefit parents and carers or those whose quality of life and confidence could be improved by participating in skills building programmes (3).

One of the main benefits of skills programmes is the development of skills to help people into good quality work. There is evidence showing the link between being unemployed and poor physical and mental health. Being in poor quality work can be just as damaging for health as not being in work (4) (5). Good quality work is characterised by features including job security; adequate pay for a healthy life; strong working relationships and social support; promotion of health, safety and psychosocial wellbeing; support for employee voice and representation; inclusion of varied and interesting work; a fair workplace; promotion of learning development and skills use; a good effort-reward balance; support for autonomy, control and task discretion; and good work-life balance (6).

In addition to supporting access to good quality employment, skills programmes also enhance physical and mental health and mitigate health inequalities by improving community cohesion, reducing isolation, promoting integration and developing digital skills and access to services (7). Adult learning delivered locally in community settings provides opportunities to build social networks, develop hobbies, reduce loneliness and develop confidence and wider abilities (8). Much of the literature on lifelong learning focuses on research on learning for economically active people rather than retired individuals (9) (10). Nevertheless, evidence also shows that engaging in learning post-retirement has social, physical and psychological benefits, including decreased social isolation and loneliness (11) (5) (12), improved intellectual function (13), and increased ability to cope with illness (14). These outcomes result in greater levels of self-confidence, self-fulfilment and improved health and wellbeing (15) (16), which enables people to enjoy many years of active life beyond retirement age (17).

Figure 1 illustrates how skills impact on inequalities in health and wellbeing. Adapted from the framework of the 2008 Global Commission on the Social Determinants of Health (18), it illustrates the importance of skills and lifelong learning to supporting better health through improving key social determinants of health.

Figure 1. Skills and health and wellbeing



The figure can be further understood as follows:

The socioeconomic and political context (Box 1) drives social and economic inequalities in society and relate to inequalities in social position, such as level of education, employment and income and wealth (Box 2). Social position can be directly influenced by skills and training programmes, which are an important way to raise educational attainment and improve opportunities for good quality employment and higher income. Social position shape peoples' living and working conditions (Box 3), including housing, community and environmental conditions, social cohesion, violence, stress and sense of control over one's life, and health-related behaviours. Skills and training programmes can directly support social cohesion, psychosocial factors and health-related behaviours, and can indirectly support better living conditions by offering improvements to education, employment and income.

Inequalities in health and wellbeing (Box 4) result from inequalities in the social determinants of health (Boxes 1-3). Skills programmes directly benefit health, as well as indirectly through improvements in social position and living conditions.

Characteristics outlined in Box 5 influence experiences of key social determinants of health and further shape inequalities in health. Ethnicity, gender, migration status, disability and age are characteristics that often lead to individuals and communities being subjected to persecution, discrimination and exclusion. Skills and training programmes can help mitigate the impacts of persecution, discrimination and exclusion and improve outcomes in social position, living conditions and inequalities in health and wellbeing. As shown in this report, many groups affected by these problems particularly benefit from access to skills programmes and programmes geared to the specific needs of these groups can help reduce inequalities in health.

The design and delivery of programmes to achieve progress in developing skills are important components in supporting the health of low skill communities, including people excluded from the job market, those who have not had the opportunity to develop skills and have not been able to access skills programmes and those who experience isolation, poor health, disability, discrimination and exclusion (Box 6).

1C. SKILLS PROGRAMMES AND THE ECONOMY

Skills are essential for a productive and thriving economy. According to The Open University Business Barometer, which monitors the skills landscape of the UK, skills shortages were estimated to cost UK organisations £6.3 billion in 2018, and they also lead to higher spending costs for training and recruitment and temporary staffing (19).

London has significantly higher productivity levels than the rest of the country. In 2017 the What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth at the London School of Economics and Political Science attributed this productivity difference to the higher levels of skills in London's workforce (20). *The London Local Skills Report* found that gross value-added (GVA) per hour worked in London was around one-third above the UK average in 2018, with GVA at £46 per hour worked in London compared with £35 per hour worked on average in the UK (21). Although London continues to have higher levels of labour productivity than other regions, the rate of productivity growth in London has slowed since 2010, and the GVA per hour worked increased by just 1.8 percent per year on average in London between 2010 and 2018, below the UK average of 2.1 percent for this period (21). A skills survey by the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry in 2022 found that 40 percent of London businesses identified skills shortages as stunting economic growth (22).

As well as stunting economic growth, not having the required skills lowers the income of the workforce. There is a strong link between numeracy skills and earnings: low levels of numeracy skills are associated with a £2,900 per year wage differential in London, which equates to 3.2 percent of the average annual London wage (£47,300) in 2020 (23).



1D. NATIONAL SKILLS POLICY

The repercussions of the period of austerity and the COVID-19 pandemic between 2010 and 2022 have been unequal: more deprived communities and those already suffering exclusion and discrimination have been particularly affected. Health overall has deteriorated and health inequalities widened over this period (6).

In the UK funding cuts have resulted in declining numbers of adult learners, harming the development of skills, with the largest decline seen among those taking low-level qualifications, who would benefit most from skills programmes (24). Although numbers of adult learners increased in 2020 due to better access options during the pandemic, inequality did not decrease (25). In fact, the 2022 Adult Participation in Learning Survey shows that twice as many adult learners in lower socioeconomic groups did not participate in learning since leaving full-time education compared with those in higher socioeconomic groups (37 percent compared to 19 percent) (26). The cost-of-living crisis may further negatively affect the development of skills as more people are unable to access training courses that require payment or have to focus on paid work at the expense of skills development programmes (27).

In January 2021 the government published the *Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth White Paper*. The paper outlines proposals to support people to develop skills for work. However, the paper rather narrowly focuses on skills for work and overlooks the broader impacts of skills programmes on health and wellbeing, as outlined in Figure 1. These include the importance of skills programmes for building personal confidence, social mixing and improving mental health and more broadly supporting better outcomes in the social determinants of health. Overall, the paper was a missed opportunity to establish a strategy to focus on the potential for adult skills development to improve health and wellbeing outcomes and reduce inequalities (3) (4). This report recommends that there is strengthened national focus on skills programmes for enjoyment, hobbies and socialising, which have appeal and reach beyond programmes which focus on employment skills programmes.



2

THE DELIVERY OF SKILLS PROGRAMMES IN LONDON

SECTION 2: KEY MESSAGES

THE DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF SKILLS PROGRAMMES IN LONDON

- There are an extensive range of skills programmes available in London and the devolution of the Adult Education Budget to the Mayor helped remove barriers and has increased participation with greater equity in access to programmes.
- London has a growing and ageing population, with increasing ethnic diversity with wide inequalities in skills and access to programmes.
- The majority of skills programmes available in London target skills for employment and there is a relative lack of investment in other skills programmes that have many positive health and equity benefits for participants. Evidence shows that skills programmes have impact on social, as well as economic outcomes.
- Partnerships between the GLA, local authorities, the CVS, service providers and employers are important to the success of skills programmes.
- Skills programmes need to be carefully designed to be accessible and appropriate for those with low skills and facing barriers to accessing programmes. Outreach is important with referrals from a range of settings.
- Given the necessity of skills building to health equity, public health at local, regional and national level has an important role in the assessment, design and delivery of skills programmes in London, but as yet this role is underdeveloped.
- In 2021/22, 52 percent of non-retired learners had a positive economic or educational change in the months following their participation in the AEB funded skills programme.
- The London Learners Survey reports that 96 percent of learners experienced a positive social change following participation in an AEB funded skills programme including improved health and wellbeing, improved social integration, improved self efficacy and participation in volunteering. 84 percent reported improved wellbeing with 43 percent reporting a very positive impact.

In 2019 the Mayor of London received the delegation of the Adult Education Budget (AEB) and in 2022 the *Skills Roadmap for London* was published, setting out the skills offer for London's communities and economy (45). This includes Mayoral actions to ensure that skills provision, learning and adult education are accessible, locally relevant and make an impact. Participation in skills programmes in London is recovering after the COVID-19 pandemic period, with a total learner participation increase of 11 percent in 2021/22 compared with the previous year (28). From August 2021 to July 2022, there were 221,280 GLA-funded learners in London, up from 199,000 learners in the same period in 2020/21 (29). The figures, from August 2022 to January 2023, show there were 156,550 GLA-funded learners in London, however, these are provisional data for the first two quarters of the 2022/23 academic year. Total learner participation increased by 8 percent compared to 144,870 in the same period in 2021/22 (30).

In London there are a range of providers funding and delivering skills programmes. The AEB funds the majority of skill provision initiatives across London, targeting groups facing inequalities in access. Local authorities, public services, the community and voluntary sector and businesses sector also play a role in delivering skills at a community level. It is critical that all work in partnership for the commissioning and delivery of skills-building programmes.

Notably, public health is not always centrally involved in the design or delivery of skills programmes, despite their significance for health and health equity. We recommend that the public health system at all levels has a higher profile within the adult skills landscape in London. There are several important contributions that public health could make:

- In the identification of populations who would benefit from skills programmes
- Linking with other sectors, including the health care sector
- Sharing information about the availability of skills programmes with particular communities and places in order to support uptake
- Carrying out assessments and evaluations to establish the efficacy of programmes and their impact on health.

Some other sectors that could support the identification of populations that would benefit from skills programmes and host programmes are not apparently doing so in London, including housing providers, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), primary health care, in particular social prescribers, early years settings and schools.

2A. THE GLA

The Adult Education Budget (AEB) funds the delivery of education and training for adult learners aged 19+ in London, aiming to equip them with the skills and learning needed for work, apprenticeships or other learning.

The AEB was delegated to the GLA in 2019 and provides an important opportunity to build a skills system that is more accessible, locally relevant and impactful. The GLA budget for the AEB in London was £306 million for 2019/20 and increased to around £337 million in 2020/21 (funding by academic year). In an effort to create a more integrated skills and employment system for London, the AEB has been embedded into wider skills and employment programmes across the city.

The AEB supports four legal entitlements to full funding for eligible adult learners based on levels of qualifications and skills, set out in Box 1. Since the delegation of the AEB, the fully funded eligibility has been widened beyond levels of skills and now also covers those earning less than the London Living Wage, those without long term residency, people seeking asylum and those with no recourse to public funds.

BOX 1. AEB FULLY FUNDED ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- English and maths, up to and including level 2, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have not previously attained a GCSE grade C, grade 4, or higher, and/or
- First full qualification at level 2 for individuals aged 19 to 23, and/or
- First full qualification at level 3 for individuals aged 19 to 23, and /or
- Information technology ('digital') skills, up to and including level 1, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have digital skills assessed at below level 1.

2019/20: Full funding for learners earning less than the London Living Wage allowing people in low-paid employment to participate free of charge (49). This change removed a significant barrier to accessing adult education and the funding helped about 10,780 (42 percent) more learners than in 2018/19.

2019/20: Full funding for British Sign Language (BSL) qualifications up to and including level 2 for individuals whose first or preferred language is BSL, or who cannot access spoken language because of their deafness and would benefit from BSL and for those who are unemployed or in low paid work (below the London Living Wage).

2020/21: London Factor, Providing a 10 percent funding uplift for all provision at level 2 and below, unlocking more funding per learner to increase the quality of provision and reflect the higher delivery costs in London, whilst also supporting the FE workforce to manage rising costs.

2020/21: Upskilling of teaching staff to deliver improved specialist provision for learners with SEND, fully funding eligible learning which support the upskilling of teaching or learning support staff to deliver improved specialist provision for learners with SEND within the adult/further education sector.

2020/21: Level 3 Flexibility enabling providers to fully fund Adult Skills fundable Level 3 vocational qualifications beyond the legal entitlements, on learning programmes of less than 12 months duration which are designed to provide progression into work.

2020/21: Non-formula funding flexibility, enabling AEB grant providers to use 10 percent of their AEB formula-funded allocation for non-formula-funded provision, for example, to respond to local skills needs, or provide wrap-around and employment support.

2021/22: London Factor uplift, providing a 13.5 percent funding uplift (increased to 15 percent for the year 2023/24) for all provision at level 2 and below, unlocking more funding per learner to increase the quality of provision and reflect the higher delivery costs in London, whilst also supporting the FE workforce to manage rising costs.

2021/22: Fully funding AEB-eligible people seeking asylum to enrol on skills courses where previously there was a co-funding requirement.

2022/23: Removing long residency requirements for migrant Londoners to access training so they can more easily support London's economy and improve social integration. Previously, migrant Londoners would need to wait three years to access support. This has particularly benefitted new arrivals from Hong Kong.

2022/23: Full funding for Londoners who are not working and wish to seek employment but fall outside benefit arrangements, and therefore cannot evidence full funding eligibility. This will support more Londoners to benefit from provision that can support them to find good work or support social integration. This is particularly the case for Londoners with 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NRPF).

The number of learning aims at Level 3 has been boosted significantly since the introduction of Level 3 flexibility (Box 1) and National Government's Free Courses for Jobs offer¹, increasing by 40 percent in absolute terms compared with 2018/19. The AEB defines a learning aim as a single episode of learning. In 2020/21, 930 learning aims were started from those who were unemployed or in receipt of a low wage (31). In 2021/22, the Level 3 flexibility supported 2,290 adult learners (29). These policies have also particularly benefitted ethnic minority learners, who accounted for 70 percent of the learning aims funded via the Level 3 flexibility in 2020/21 (32).

While the fully funded offer to those earning below the London Living Wage is an important contribution to skills building and health equity, there are still large numbers of people who would benefit from skills programmes for whom skills programmes remain unaffordable. Extending fully funded provision to people who are earning just above the London Living Wage but are still classed as 'low-income', particularly in the context of the cost-of-living crisis, would further increase participation and extend skills development for London's residents.

The GLA pioneered the inclusion of fully funded BSL courses. Initially, participation was relatively low on these courses, possibly due to a lack of information about their availability and workforce limitations owing to the shortage of qualified BSL teachers (31). However, in academic year 2022-23, eligibility for fully funded courses in BSL was opened up to anyone who is unemployed or on a low income (under the London Living Wage). Mid-year data for 2022/23 suggests that this has driven a rise in participation, with the number of learners taking BSL courses tripling since the previous academic year.

There has also been lower than expected use of the SEND flexibility. In 2021/22 there were 30 learners enrolled on courses under this flexibility, a reduction on 2020/21 in which there were 70. This may also be driven by issues with awareness and a lack of clarity on what providers can use the flexibility for. Mid-year data for 2022/23 suggests there is slight increase on the previous year with 40 learners enrolled so far. The GLA is considering how to improve engagement with the SEND flexibility from AEB providers.

There are many other programmes available in London and funded by the GLA that complement the AEB, some examples of which are set out in boxes 2-9 below.

The Mayor's Academies Programme (Box 2) was set up post-Pandemic aiming to support the hardest hit Londoners into good work in the sectors key to London's recovery and long-term economic growth.

BOX 2. MAYOR'S ACADEMIES PROGRAMME (33)

The Mayor's Skills Academies (MAP) are designed to support Londoners into good work in creative, digital, green, health, hospitality and social care sectors. The total investment of the programme is £44 million in January 2022 and it is funded by the Mayor of London, the London Economic Action Partnership (LEAP), the NHS and Health Education England.

In addition to increasing access to good quality work for Londoners, MAP is intended to support employers and further education colleges to address structural barriers to engagement, recruitment, retention and progression for under-represented groups in their industry/workforce, building on the work of the Workforce Integration Network (WIN) toolkit (34).

The Mayor has funded a number of Mayor's Academy hubs which bring training providers and employers together to ensure training, work experience and advice and guidance helps to provide a clear pathway into sustainable employment in the growth sectors for Londoners looking to progress their careers in these sectors.

The hubs also focus on engaging and supporting Londoners who are underrepresented in the sectors to gain the skills they need as well as providing employers with the tools they need to address workforce diversity (33).

¹ Free Course for Jobs Offer fully funds adults aged 24 or over to study for their first full Level 3 qualification from a list of courses that reflect national priority sectors. The GLA's own level 3 flexibility covers additional sectors that are a priority for London.

The London Skills Bootcamp, described in Box 3, is designed specifically to increase skills for employment for adults who are in employment, as well as those who are unemployed.

BOX 3. THE MAYOR OF LONDON SKILLS BOOTCAMP FOR LONDONERS PROGRAMME

In 2022 the Mayor of London secured an allocation of £19 million from the Department for Education (DfE) to support London residents into good jobs through the Government's Wave 4 (2023-24) Skills Bootcamps for Londoners programme (36). The programme is open to all adults aged 19 or over who are full-time or part-time employed, self-employed or unemployed, and adults returning to work after a break.

The programme aims to help eligible Londoners to progress in work by giving them access to skills training and a guaranteed interview for a more sustainable, higher-skilled job and higher wages over time. The bootcamps run for up to 16 weeks and focus on higher level training (level 3-5), although the green and construction sectors also include level 2 training.

The programme is also intended to benefit employers by increasing productivity within their organisations in filling specific skills shortage vacancies. One of the main objectives is ensuring that participating employers commit to interviewing candidates for their identified skills shortage vacancies from the pool of trained individuals.

The programme gives unemployed adults or those in low-income work a chance to learn and upskill in specific sectors, including digital. The focus on ensuring that participants get an interview with an employer from these key industries is particularly beneficial. Two evaluations are planned once the programme finishes operating.

The GLA conducted an assessment, reported in 2023, of local needs based on qualification levels by local authority district, through this analysis the GLA is working to respond to local need (37).

The Mayor of London's Multiply programme aims to tackle numeracy skills gaps across London; see Box 4.

BOX 4. THE MAYOR OF LONDON'S MULTIPLY PROGRAMME (38)

In 2022 the Mayor of London launched the London Multiply Programme to tackle the gap in numeracy skills across London by building numeracy confidence and skills needed for work and everyday life, including learning how to manage money, secure a good quality job, or progress into further learning. Commissioned by the DfE, London has been allocated a £40.9 million budget to deliver the programme, which was nominally allocated as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, for three years, ending in March 2025.

Multiply is available to adults aged 19 and over who have limited qualifications in maths, below the GCSE pass grade (level C/4 or equivalent). The programme is free and flexible, with training being run with employers, schools and community organisations. Multiply aims to support a minimum of 31,000 Londoners through 300 courses across 57 providers (39).

The Mayor has developed a programme (Box 5) to plug the growing digital skills shortage in London, with particular focus on supporting young ethnic minority groups and women to develop skills in the digital sector.

BOX 5. THE MAYOR'S DIGITAL TALENT PROGRAMME (40)

The Mayor's £17 million Digital Talent Programme was launched in February 2018 to offer training opportunities for young people aged 18-24. It was intended to support young Londoners by offering work placements, creating tailored learning opportunities, assisting university students and helping businesses access the skills they need (41). Funding was available for FE colleges, private skills providers and universities to deliver digital skills training co-designed with industry. Delivery of all strands ended in December 2021 (42).

The programme focused on supporting women and ethnic minority groups into tech to gain the skills needed to find employment within London's digital, technology and creative sectors. Particularly, the programme aimed to help increase female participation in an industry with only 17 percent female employees, increase opportunities for Londoners from disadvantaged communities and increase the number of black, Asian and other ethnic minorities working in the digital industry.

The GLAs No Wrong Door Programme (Box 6) aims to reduce the fragmentation of services in adult skills provision and employment services by encouraging joined-up skills and employment services. Other public services, and businesses can join the approach and ensure currently excluded people are aware of and encouraged to participate in skills programmes.

BOX 6. NO WRONG DOOR (43)

The programme, launched in July 2022, is a £2.06 million initiative and a key part of the London Recovery Board's mission to help Londoners into good work. It intends to support collaboration and integration between London's employment and skills funders and providers, as well as other public services, and to lead to improvements in the access and the quality of support Londoners receive in local skills and employment provision. The programme, focusses on supporting Londoners disproportionately impacted by the pandemic – including disabled Londoners, women, refugees, young Londoners and older Londoners

No Wrong Door is delivered by City Hall in partnership with London Councils, London's four sub-regional partnerships, and Jobcentre Plus. The programme includes initial investment into the establishment of four new Integration Hubs to boost coordination and partnership working between skills, employment and other support services, such as careers and health. Delivery of each Hub is led by London's four sub-regional partnerships (43).

Funding is also invested in a research and innovation programme to help City Hall understand the challenges facing Londoners, identify ways to better connect Londoners to skills and employment opportunities, and design innovative solutions to scale No Wrong Door across the capital (44).

The European Social Fund (ESF) was part of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) for 2014-2020. Approximately 10 percent of the AEB funding is being used by the GLA as match funding to draw down some of London's remaining European Social Fund (ESF) allocation. Through this grant award process the GLA is seeking to award grants for the delivery of employment and training provision in accordance with the Project Requirements published for the Mayor's European Social Fund (ESF) 2019-2023 Programme Round 2 (Box 7) (46).

BOX 7. THE MAYOR'S EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND (ESF) 2019-23 PROGRAMME (46)

Round 2 of the Mayor's ESF 2019-23 Programme comprises a mixture of youth and adult skills and employment projects with an allocation of up to £71m (including management and administration).

The ESF Priorities are:

Priority 1: Inclusive Labour Markets - aims to increase participation in the labour market and thereby improve social inclusion. Funding can be used by ESF Providers to support unemployed and economically inactive people to gain the skills and qualifications they need to enable them to enter and sustain employment.

Priority 2: Skills for Growth - focuses on improving the skills of individuals to meet their employment goals and the needs of the local economy, as well as activities to improve the skills and education infrastructure. Accordingly, funding can be used to provide skills and training to those who are in work but at risk due to skills deficiencies and to deliver activities that improve the relevance of education and training to the needs of employers and businesses.

The GLA will award grants for three projects for a maximum of three years:

- Parental Employment: support for parents to access childcare, find work and progress in work.
- Ex-Offenders: holistic support for people who have been convicted of an offence to gain skills to help them into work.
- Homelessness: holistic support for people who are homeless to gain skills to help them into work (47).

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) was launched in April 2022, and it provides £2.6 billion of new funding for local investment by March 2025, with all areas of the UK receiving an allocation from the Fund via a funding formula rather than a competition (48).

BOX 8. UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (UKSPF) (49)

The GLA, working with London's boroughs, will prioritise London's UKSPF allocation to support Londoners who are furthest away from the labour market to progress into training, or who need support to access the help that they need.

London has been allocated £145 million for the period 2022-25, £38.1m of this is being invested in the UKSPF People and Skills investment priority, to help reduce barriers faced accessing employment. In London there are two target groups: young people and economically inactive Londoners (50). This investment is intended to complement existing skills provision in the capital, including the Adult Education Budget, Skills Bootcamps, Free Courses for Jobs, the Mayor's Skills Academies, and Multiply, helping young people who are NEET, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds, to progress into education, employment or training.

Investment of London's UKSPF focuses on the following priorities;

- Career Hubs, to provide young people with the support and guidance that they need to succeed into education, employment or training.
- Provision of target support for unemployed adults, excluded and economically inactive groups, such as people with experience of the justice system, disabled people, homeless people, refugees/asylum seekers, and carers.
- Continuing the delivery of the No Wrong Door Integration Hubs to provide join up between skills and employment services across London to meet the needs of different groups of Londoners (49).

The GLA also funds local authority-delivered programmes to increase employability, aimed at those who are not working nor are in full-time education, such as Connecting Communities - Bridge to Success (Box 9), which operates in various London Boroughs. It is important to conduct and build on the evaluation to ensure the programme is reaching the people who would benefit the most and that people without strong English language skills, and those who having caring responsibilities and disabilities, are included in the programme and have beneficial outcomes.

BOX 9. CONNECTING COMMUNITIES - BRIDGE TO SUCCESS (51)

Connecting Communities was launched in 2022 and operates in Camden, the City of London, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth and Westminster. It is an employment service funded by the GLA and the European Social Fund. It works with local people aged 18 and over who are not working full-time nor are in full-time education or training.

The purpose of Connecting Communities is to improve recipients' confidence and life chances by developing employment skills. Every person is assigned a dedicated caseworker whose role is to help with confidence building and overcoming barriers to employment. There is no evaluation of the programme, which ran until June 2023.

London Learner Survey 2021/22 (52)

The GLA measures how participation in adult learning impacts participants through the London Learner Survey (LLS) which consists of two linked surveys, one when the learning starts and one seven months after completion of the course. This is an important instrument that measures seven economic and social outcomes. The economic outcomes include progression into employment, progression within work and progression into further learning, while the social outcomes include improved health and wellbeing, improved social integration, improved self-efficacy and participation in volunteering.

Amongst learners participating in AEB funded programmes in 2021/22:

- 69 percent were female
- 59 percent were from an ethnic minority background
- The majority were aged 24-49 (63 percent)
- 14 percent consider themselves to have a learning difficulty and/or disability and/or health problem.

In the academic year 2021/22, 52 percent, or nearly 100,000, non-retired learners had a positive economic or educational change in the months following their participation in the AEB. Of these, 33 percent experienced a change in economic activity status with almost half of this subset moving into employment. Of learners not in work, 29 percent moved into employment, 52 percent of whom stated that the course helped them get their current paid work (52).

Evidence also suggests that the AEB funded programmes contributed to an increase in earnings, with one third of those in employment reporting a pay increase. Overall, there was a 10 percent increase in mean annual income amongst those reporting earnings, although this could also be attributed to an increase in hours worked. Further, the AEB is an important instrument for progression into further learning with evidence showing that 68 percent of learners proceeded into further training (52).

In terms of social impact, which is vital for health, the LLS reports that 96 percent of learners experienced a positive social change, covering improved health and wellbeing, improved social integration, improved self efficacy and participation in volunteering, following their AEB course. In terms of wellbeing, 84 percent of learners reported a positive impact, with 43 percent reporting that participation in courses had a very positive impact. This includes a 6 percent increase in life satisfaction, a 4 percent increase in feelings of things being worthwhile, a 3.8 percent increase in happiness, and a near 5 percent reduction in anxiety levels. Further, there were increased levels of self-efficacy, with 90 percent of AEB courses leading to learners improving confidence levels. The LLS also monitors social integration and the survey reveals that 79 percent of AEB courses helped learners meet new people, despite only 30 percent of learners citing this as one of the reasons for enrolling in their course. This highlights the health benefits of participating in skills programmes, unrelated to employment outcomes (52).

While the LLS is an important first step in aiming to assess the social as well as economic impact of adult learning in London, deeper analysis is required in order to effectively evaluate the extent to which social, health and wellbeing outcomes are impacted by accessing skills programmes. Particularly, results of the survey based on disaggregated data by socioeconomic position, ethnicity, age and disability would improve understanding of equity impacts and further help in locating where targeted action is most needed.

2B. LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Adult Community Learning (ACL) is funded by the AEB through London Boroughs and delivered by further education colleges, local authority education services, and voluntary and community organisations (53). ACL provides a range of formal and informal learning, including support with interviews and confidence-boosting programmes (7).

ACL improves access to skills-building programmes by providing opportunities for learning in local settings. Provision usually takes place in familiar environments such as community centres, giving participants greater confidence to engage (53).

As part of the London Recovery Programme funded by the Mayor, all London boroughs have been involved through the four sub-regional partnerships in the development of the 'No Wrong Door' (NWD) approach, outlined above (Box 6). A 2022 London Councils survey investigating London's borough-based employment and skills services reports that 87 percent of boroughs have adopted the NWD approach. This includes: closer interaction with adult learning providers and employers (74 percent), providing multi-agency employment and skills hubs (59 percent), and providing digital platforms to guide people to the right services (56 percent). Further, 84 percent of the surveyed boroughs said that their ACL service is linked to their employment service, while 68 percent said they provide skills support to residents in addition to the ACL service (54).

While the NWD approach is strengthening partnership working around skills programmes, there are still many services, including health, where participation and referrals into the programme are low.

WorkPath (Box 10) is a coordinated local authority-funded programme that offers a 'one-stop shop', free employment service.

BOX 10. WORKPATH, TOWER HAMLETS (55)

WorkPath provides a specialist team of professional advisors to help mentor and train residents to overcome difficulties in achieving training and employment goals. It hosts and delivers a variety of training packages to help residents of Tower Hamlets upskill and obtain sector-specific qualifications and feel more confident in applications for employment. It brings together a range of different courses, services and training providers, and is therefore able to direct residents towards accessing the most relevant and appropriate opportunities for them.

The programme is available to all residents of Tower Hamlets but has a focus on women returning to work and the over-50s. Specific barriers to employment faced by participants include childcare, physical, mental health or disability, language and basic skills, coping as a single parent, and substance abuse. Although the Centre does not offer childcare facilities, it identifies appropriate childcare services and availability in the borough. While 60.6 percent of residents in Tower Hamlets belong to ethnic minority groups (56), with 44.4 percent Asian (57), WorkPath does not mention targeted support for this group.

The potential benefits of the programme include a stable job and increased income for residents, but also wider social and health benefits. In 2021, WorkPath's Supported Employment programme led to high job retention rates for residents who face multiple barriers to employment and are on low incomes, with 76 percent of participants securing and retaining work (58).

2C. COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR

The CVS also plays an important role in delivering skills-building programmes. However, it could offer more with added sustainable funding from the AEB, local authorities and businesses.

As well as delivering programmes, the CVS has an important role around supporting access to skills programmes. The CVS organisations support population groups and they are well trusted by potential participants in skills programmes. Highlighting and monitoring the positive impacts to health from participation in skills programmes can help make the case for the CVS to be commissioned by employers, local authorities and the GLA to develop skills.

In recognition of the role that community organisations play in supporting an adequate and fair skills offer in London, the Mayor developed the Skills for Londoners Community Outreach Programme, to increase participation in adult learning for those most in need of adult education (59). In 2022/23 the first round of the programme supported 12 organisations to engage learners, and across 2023/24 the Mayor is extending funding to reach up to 40 London-based community groups. For the 2023/24 second round of the programme, grants of up to £27,000 are available to community organisations who can work with local communities and help signpost Londoners to adult education opportunities. While this is an insufficient amount, it does indicate an awareness of the importance of outreach around skills programmes.

Newham's Renewal Programme (Box 11) demonstrates the vital role that CVS play in supporting the delivery of training and education among communities with low skills or language barriers. The programme, with funding from the National Lottery, has had a significant impact within the Borough as a result of the CVS strong links with the community and their capacity to meet the needs of communities appropriately.



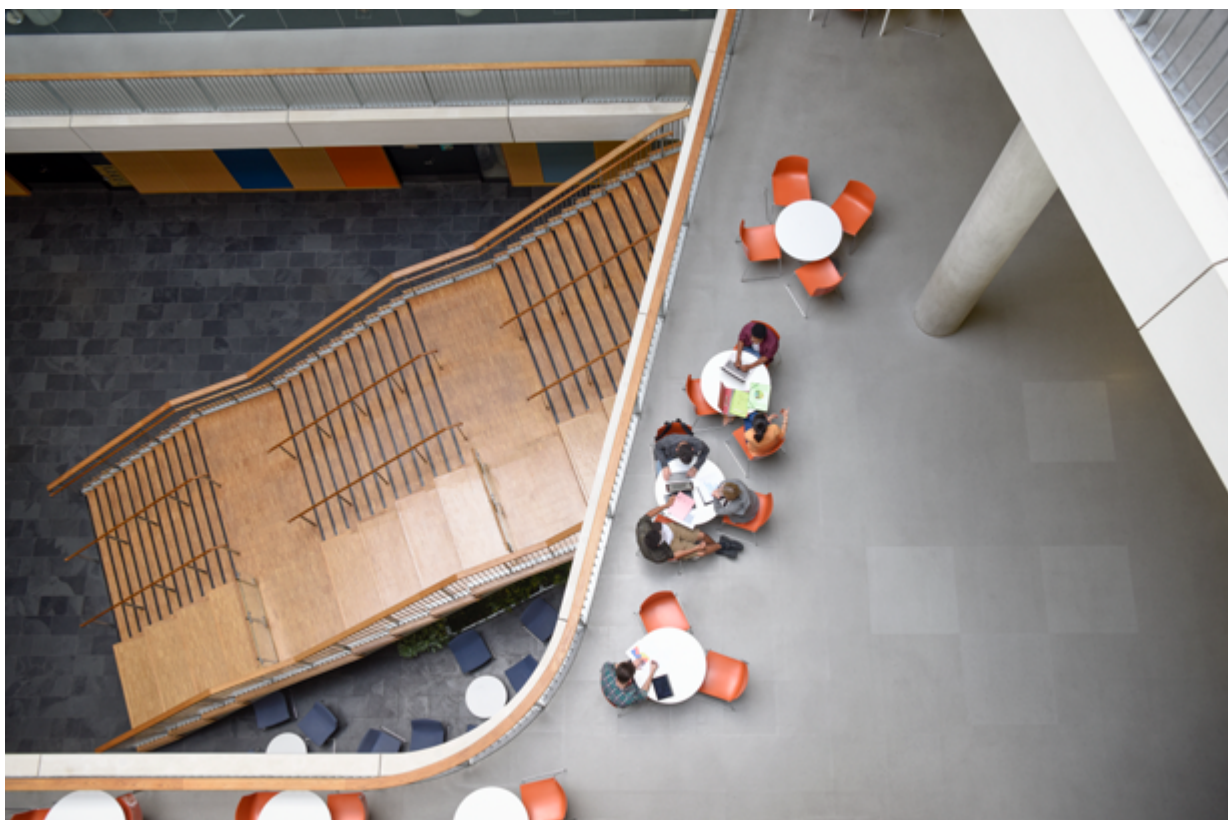
BOX 11. THE RENEWAL PROGRAMME, NEWHAM (60)

The Renewal Programme is a multi-service charity based in Newham, working with the community, the local council, businesses and other local charities. It was awarded a £264,000 grant by the National Lottery fund in 2018 and now continues to operate by raising funds from the public. The programme supports those who are facing multiple challenges, including carers, migrants or refugees without access to public funds, those suffering from homelessness, experiencing poverty, and those lacking English speaking skills. Opportunities are available for adults over the age of 19 who possess limited English, maths and IT skills.

One of the elements of the programme is 'training and education'. It aims to enable people to achieve qualifications to progress into further education and employment and began in 2010, although the programme has adapted its services over the years. The focus of learning has shifted from work-related training to be more in line with community needs. Presently, 90 percent of the courses are centred on ESOL provision, in response to need in the borough.

Key to the success of the programme is the element of adaptability and community-centred support. Using a holistic and personal approach, the charity is able to meet the needs of its most excluded residents by providing them with the tools to overcome their barriers.

The Renewal Programme's 2021 Annual Report showed that there were a total of 10,803 attendances in 2020–21, with 91 percent of learners achieving a qualification (60). Although the project was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the organisation transitioned into online learning. This demonstrated the need to strengthen the support for digital skills and inclusion, as many learners could not participate.



2D. EMPLOYERS

Many employers offer skills programmes and they play an important role in closing the skills gap and improving equity in access to employment, career progression, pay and health. Supporting skills development benefits both employers and employees by achieving higher productivity rates, tackling specific skills shortages and building new talent pools.

Employer led skills programmes are provided for employees and in some cases for local communities. Further opportunities for improving skills could come through employers additionally supporting contracted workers and employees in supply chains to develop skills, and for large employers to offer to support training and skills development in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that are not able themselves to offer their employees training. Further supporting the CVS to offer skills programmes in local communities will benefit businesses' own recruitment and retention while strengthening their social value impact.

10,000 Black Interns (Box 12) is a programme established and funded by the financial industry to increase recruitment and progression of black employees within the industry. Although the initiative is not specific to London, it is relevant as London's financial services industry is a significant employer and can take a lead in showing how employers can support groups that are underrepresented in the workforce and in leadership roles and who experience discrimination (61).

BOX 12. 10,000 BLACK INTERNS PROGRAMME (62)

10,000 Black Interns is an initiative that aims to transform the horizons and prospects of young black people aged over 18 in the UK through paid work experience and world-class training programmes. It is a programme provided by the 10,000 Interns Foundation which aims to provide paid internships for black students and graduates, as well as for disabled students and graduates of all ethnicities through the 10,000 Able Interns programme. It was founded in 2022 in response to global events at the time and a stark underrepresentation of black employees in the UK Investment Management industry. Four leading players in the investment management industry initiated the programme by piloting a project to place 100 black students and graduates in internship positions.

The 2020 pilot was a success and the programme swiftly garnered support from over 200 firms, allowing the mission to grow. Currently 10,000 Black Interns strives to offer 2,000 internships to black students and graduates from 2021 each year over five years across more than 25 sectors. In 2022 it worked with more than 600 companies and over 2,000 interns gained insight into an industry of their choosing. The initiative also strives to create a sustainable cycle of mentorships and sponsorship for the black community.

Anchor institutions can improve the skills level of local areas, improve retention and bring benefits to individuals most at risk of negative health outcomes resulting from long-term unemployment. Anchor institutions are large organisations that are unlikely to relocate and have a significant stake in their local area. They have sizeable assets that can be used to support their local community's health and wellbeing and tackle health inequalities, for example, through procurement, training, employment, professional development and buildings and land use (63). Many healthcare organisations have developed as anchors and have innovative approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of employees, suppliers, and local communities (64). Other employers can similarly adopt anchor approaches developed by the NHS to ensure that organisations are maximising positive social, economic and health impacts on deprived and excluded communities; skills programmes make an important contribution to this endeavour.

The examples from the East London Foundation Trust (ELFT) (Box 13) illustrates how public sector organisations can take a proactive role in supporting groups who experience poor health and mental health challenges into skills programmes and employment. There is great scope for other organisations within the public sector to similarly develop approaches that are supportive of improved outcomes in key social determinants of health, making a significant contribution to reducing health inequalities.

BOX 13. THE EAST LONDON NHS FOUNDATION TRUST (65)

The ELFT, which provides community mental health services and other healthcare services, is exploring what an NHS trust can do to act directly on the social determinants of health, becoming the first 'Marmot Trust'. It is extending an anchor organisation approach, working directly with local communities, the CVS and Luton and Newham local authorities, alongside improving outcomes for its own workforce and clients (66). The ELFT is supporting financial security and encouraging the resources for a healthy and dignified life by helping to overcome barriers to employment for people with mental health problems (66).

In Luton, the ELFT has identified employment and skills as a particular area of need. It aims to ensure good quality work and a living wage for everyone in Luton, and that everyone with a mental health condition is in employment if they wish to be. A workshop identified three priority actions to take forward. Promoting access to employment and apprenticeships at ELFT for service users and other disadvantaged groups by addressing potential barriers in ELFT's recruitment processes; increasing the number of service users supported into good employment and engaging with public and private sector employers to advocate for good quality work, mentally healthy workplaces and equitable access to volunteering and employment opportunities (66). The Trust is currently working in partnership with Luton Borough Council and Total Wellbeing Luton to develop and roll out a mental health training offer for employers to support the recruitment and retention of employees with mental health conditions.

In response to the pandemic and the creation of the London Recovery Board, a number of organisations together with the Mayor formed the London Anchor Institution's Network (Box 14) with the shared goal to drive progress in the following areas: procurement, hiring and skills, mentoring young people, green new deal, and place-based work with communities.

BOX 14. THE LONDON ANCHOR INSTITUTION'S NETWORK (67)

The network brings together some of London's biggest organisations to address long-standing social and economic inequalities by developing as anchors, resulting in the signing of London's first ever city-wide Anchor Institution Charter in March 2021 (68).

The network continues to expand and includes public, private, faith-based, education and cultural organisations. This is the first London-wide initiative committing institutions to collaborative impact at scale to support access to good quality work, increasing buying from small and diverse businesses, and decarbonising estates to move towards net zero.

The network is overseen by a Steering Committee chaired by NHS London and University of London, facilitated by the GLA and London Councils, supported by pro-bono consultants Bloomberg Associates.

3

INEQUALITIES IN SKILLS AND ACCESS TO PROGRAMMES IN LONDON

SECTION 3: KEY MESSAGES

SKILLS IN LONDON

- There are persistent shortages in the skills appropriate for several key occupations in London and approximately 21 percent of all vacancies in London in 2019 were due to skills shortages. The construction and health and care sectors are particularly affected.
- London's workforce has the highest level of qualifications in the country and levels have increased in the last decade.
- Despite overall high levels of skills in London, there are clear inequalities between local authorities, with 82 percent of London's workforce having a level 4 qualification in the Borough with the highest level, compared with only 38 percent having a level 4 qualification in the Borough with the lowest level.
- The employment rate for Londoners with degree-level qualifications was twice that for those without any formal qualifications, a bigger difference than in other parts of the country.
- Many ethnic minority groups in London have low employment and high poverty rates despite increased educational attainment levels.
- There are relatively high numbers of people in London who do not have English as a first language compared with other regions in the UK, and the number has increased slightly since 2011.

INEQUALITIES IN SKILLS AND ACCESS TO PROGRAMMES IN LONDON

- In London there are groups with relatively low levels of skills for employment, including people over 50, some ethnic minority groups, people with a disability, people with SEND and those with low levels of English language skills. There are barriers to accessing skills programmes for these same groups and for parents and carers.
- There are significant differences between and within London boroughs in levels of skills and provision of skills programmes.
- Lack of childcare is a particular barrier to participation in skills programmes and digital skills are also a barrier for many, particularly older Londoners.
- There is a continuing need for more programmes and greater accessibility to programmes for people with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, including SEND, and poor health.
- The GLA commissions a range of English for Speakers of Other Languages programmes but there remain persistent barriers in access for those with young children and for people over 50.
- Older Londoners are also less likely to say that they plan to take up adult learning than other residents. The biggest barriers to learning for this group were a lack of interest and feeling 'too old'.
- Digital exclusion disproportionately impacts older Londoners and those who are not in employment due to long-term illness or disability. This impacts their wellbeing, access to key services and ability for social interaction.

3A. LONDON'S POPULATION

This section provides an overview of London's changing population in order to indicate the changing need for skills programmes that support health equity. Skills building programmes must be appropriate and relevant for the population in London.

London's population in 2023 was approximately 9 million residents. Between 2011 and 2021 the population increased by 7.7 percent, compared with the rest of England at 6.6 percent (69). The population is also ageing. The 2021 Census data reveals that 2.5 million Londoners are aged 50 or over, with 1,043,400 Londoners over the age of 65 (69). By 2041, 16 percent of London's population is projected to be aged 65 or above, compared with 11.6 percent in 2015. This increases the need and demand for skills programmes for older learners (70).

London is the most ethnically diverse region in England and Wales. According to the GLA CIU Population Projection, 44 percent of Londoners identified as being from an ethnic minority group in 2021. Many ethnic minority groups experience exclusion and racism in London, which harms health directly and through key social determinants of health, particularly undermining opportunities for employment and career progression and access to and outcomes from services. Skills programmes can help mitigate the impacts of discrimination and racism if they are appropriately designed and delivered.

One in three Londoners was born outside the UK (70) and more than 300 languages are spoken across the capital (71). English language proficiency is a key skill for gaining employment, and is also important for progression in work and for fostering social integration and reducing social isolation (70). It is also associated with benefits including independence, confidence, better health (72) and better access to healthcare and education (73) (74) (75). Lack of language skills and cultural competence are two important barriers to health care, impacting patient access, journey and continuity of care and the early stages of gathering service information and learning what support is available (76).

The proportion of people with main languages other than English is three times as high in London at 22 percent compared the rest of England (7 percent). City Intelligent's Census 2021 Reporting Series on main language and English proficiency (71) shows that:

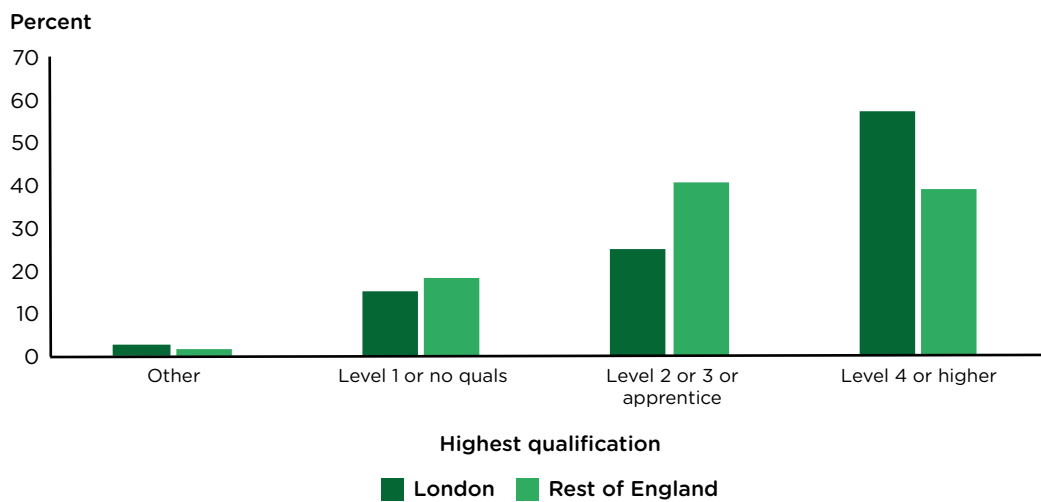
- 1.83 million, around 22 percent, of residents aged 3 and above listed a language other than English as their main language.
- For those in London whose main language was not English, most reported speaking English 'very well' (46 percent, 840,500 residents) or 'well' (35 percent, 636,200 residents).
- 355,000 (4 percent) of London residents whose main language was not English could not speak English well or at all, up from 319,600 in 2011, an 11 percent increase between 2011 and 2021.
- Boroughs with relatively high numbers of people not speaking English well or at all include Newham with 27,300 people, Brent (24,700), Ealing (22,900) and Enfield (21,000) (71).

3B. LONDONERS' SKILLS AND SKILLS GAPS

QUALIFICATIONS

London's workforce has the highest level of qualifications in the country. As seen in Figure 2, 59 percent of working age Londoners have a qualification at level 4 or above – an increase from 31 percent in 2004 and above the 40 percent across the rest of England (42). Qualification attainment among Londoners has also increased in the last decade (77).

Figure 2. Highest qualification among 16- to 64-years-olds, London and the rest of England, 2021

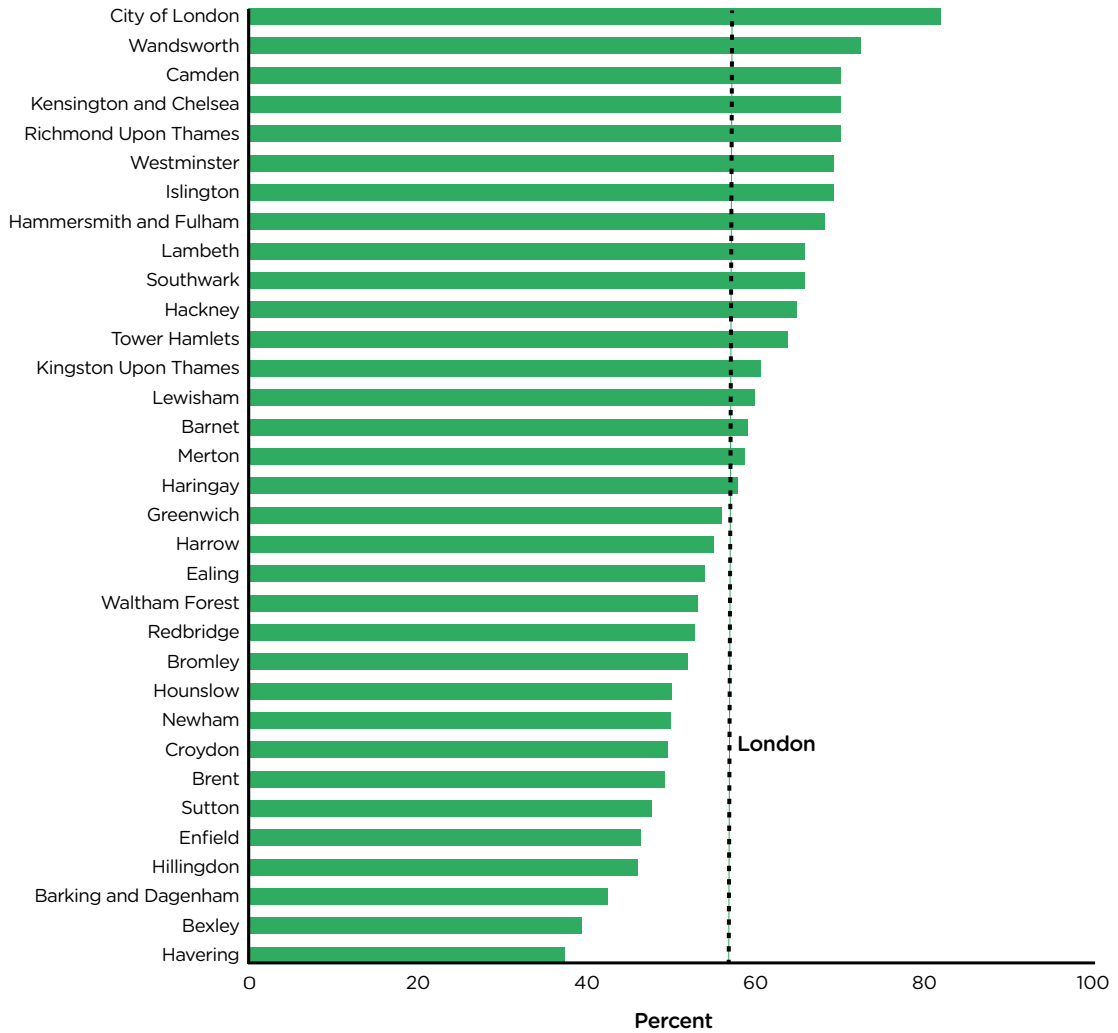


Source: ONS (78)



Despite overall high levels of skills in London, there are clear inequalities between local authorities. For example, the 2021 Census data reported in Figure 3 show that at local authority level, 82 percent of the City of London’s residential workforce have a level 4 qualification, making it the borough with the highest qualified workforce, while Havering’s workforce is the lowest qualified, with almost 38 percent of its workforce having a highest qualification at level 4.

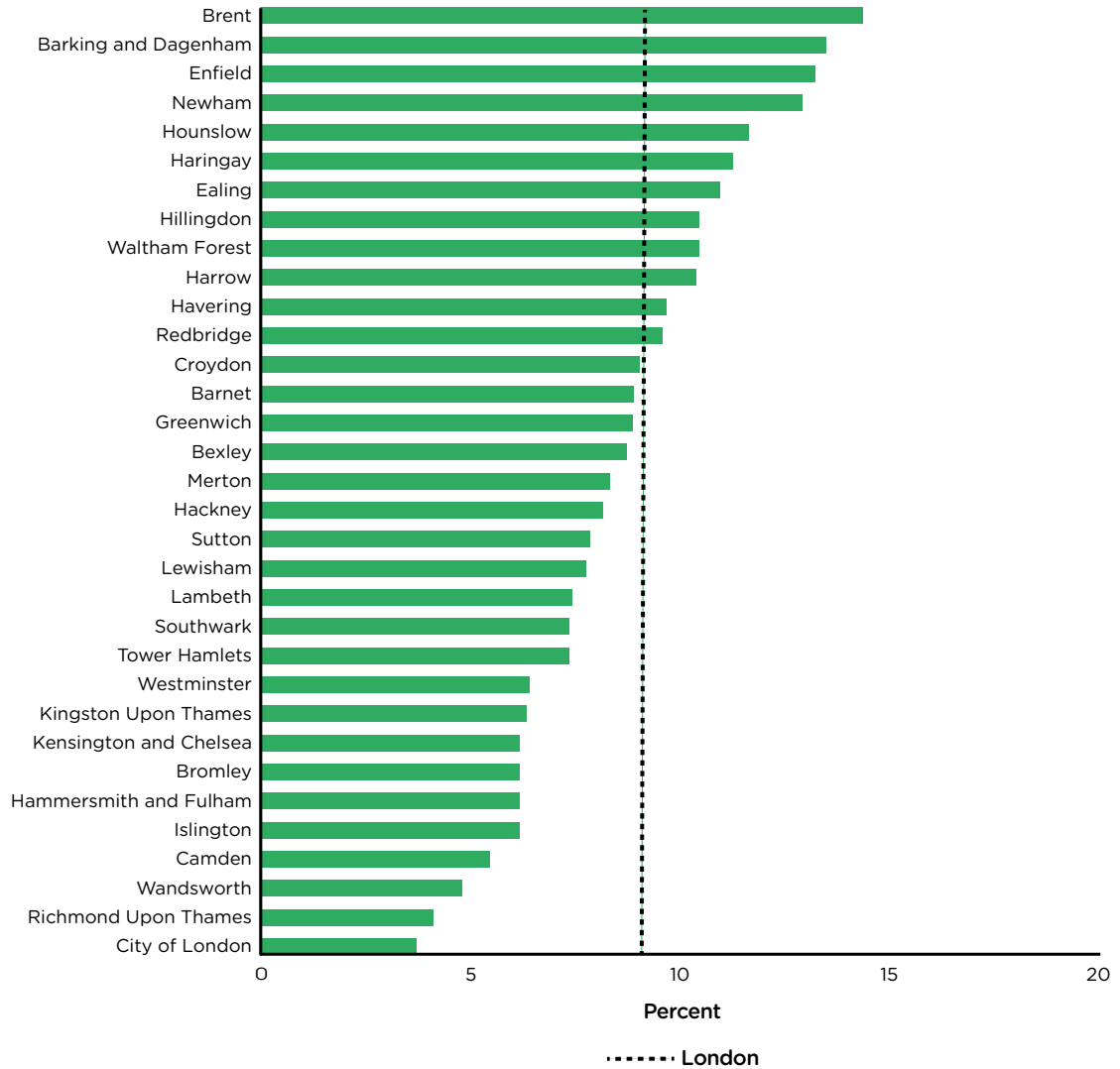
Figure 3. Percent of usual residents in the workforce whose highest qualification is level 4 or above, London and London local authorities, 2021



Source: ONS (78)

Having no qualifications is a significant barrier to employment and to career progression. Data from the 2021 Census shows that Brent has the highest proportion of the workforce without any qualifications, while the City of London has the lowest, at 14 percent and 4 percent respectively – see Figure 4.

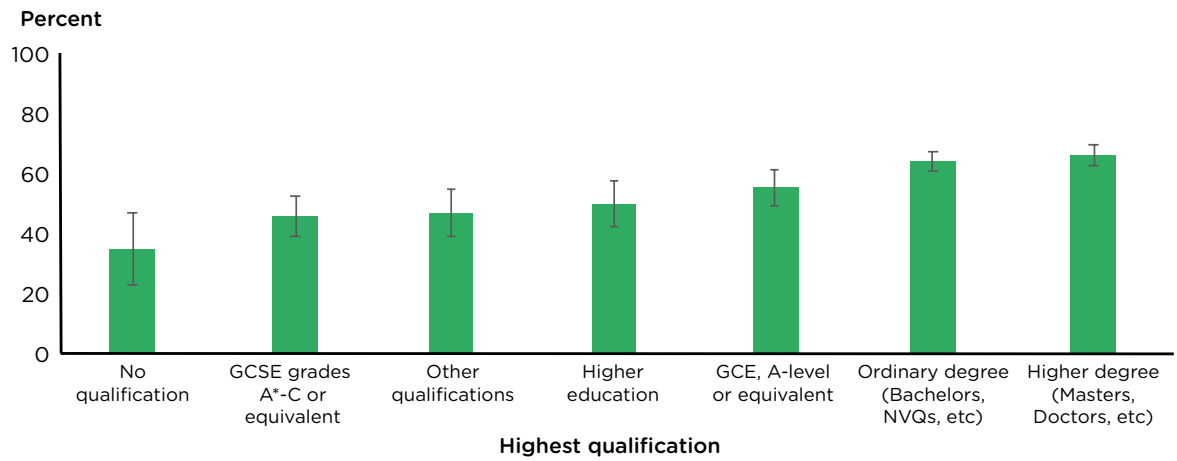
Figure 4. Percent of usual residents in the workforce with no qualifications, London and London local authorities, 2021



Source: ONS (78)

Those with higher levels of education and skills have more opportunity for career progression, Figure 5 shows that those with a higher degree have 31 percent more opportunities for career progression compared with those with no qualifications, assessed by a survey. The 2022 GLA Local Skills Report found that the employment rate for Londoners with degree-level qualifications was twice that for those without any formal qualifications, a bigger difference than in other parts of the country (42).

Figure 5. Opportunity for career progression, by highest qualification level, London residents, 2021

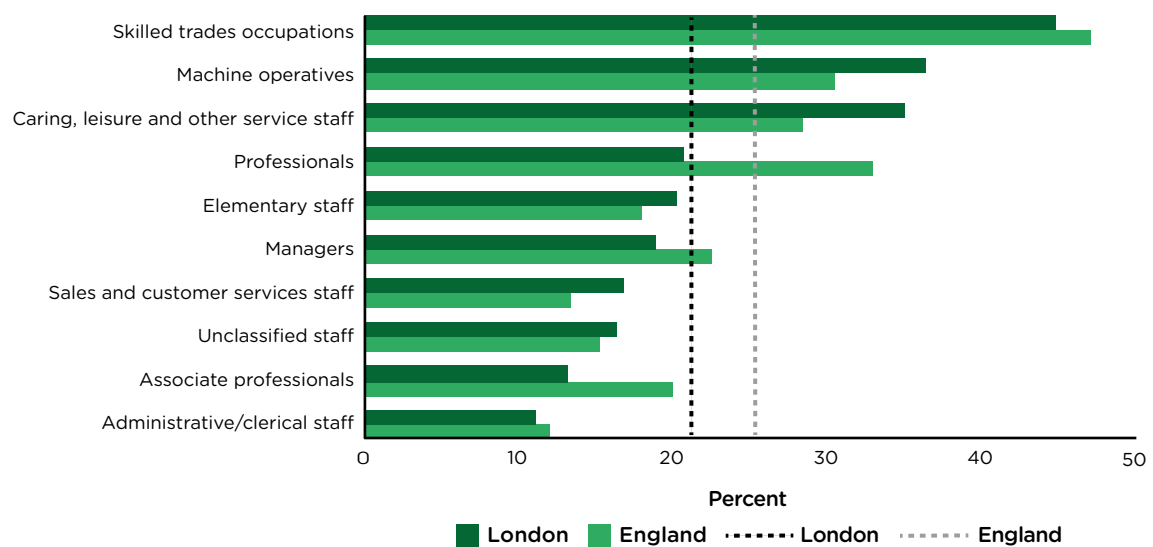


Source: ONS (79)

SKILLS SHORTAGES IN LONDON

There are persistent shortages in the skills appropriate for several key occupations in London. The 2019 Employer Skill Survey shows unfilled vacancies by sector due to skills shortages in London. Approximately 21 percent of all vacancies in London in 2019 were due to skills shortages, slightly lower than for England (30). The construction and health and care sectors are particularly affected, see Figure 6. These skills shortages clearly emphasise the need for skills development appropriate for particular occupations in London, and as noted above, skills development programmes should also be targeted at particular communities with low skills and low rates of participation in skills programmes.

Figure 6. Percent of all vacancies that are due to skills shortages, London, 2019



Source: Department for Education (80)

Note: Vertical lines indicate the averages for London and England.



Several NHS trusts have been developing approaches to increase recruitment into health care, focusing particularly on local, more deprived communities. The approach has multiple benefits for health, including increasing staff in health care and supporting health for more deprived communities by providing employment. Barts Health has a pre-employment training programme to fill vacancies with local residents (Box 15) and a programme to develop skills and education, working in schools and colleges in areas served by the Trust (Box 16).

BOX 15. BARTS HEALTH - COMMUNITY WORKS FOR HEALTH (CWFH) PROGRAMME (81)

Community Works for Health is a pre-employment training programme run in partnership with Barts Health NHS Trust since 2012. Training includes an accredited level 2 course in Mental Health First Aid, NHS values, policies and employability skills such as presentations and writing supporting statements. Upon completion of the training there is access to ring-fenced vacancies within Barts Health NHS Trust in entry-level positions such as administrative roles, healthcare assistants, phlebotomists, medical lab assistants and more. The programme covers Tower Hamlets, Hackney, City of London, Waltham Forest, and Newham residents. It focuses on helping local residents secure work in the lower bands of the Trust and seeks to address inequalities by working with local partners in the development of a workforce that is representative of the community it is supporting (82).

BOX 16. BARTS HEALTH - HEALTHCARE HORIZONS PROGRAMME (81)

As part of its work supporting local employment and careers, Barts Health set up the Healthcare Horizons programme in collaboration with the JP Morgan Chase Foundation. It is a skills and education programme that enables young people to learn more about different health professions, access higher education and secure employment within the NHS. It offers entry-level jobs and apprenticeship vacancies, working in 37 schools and colleges within Tower Hamlets, Newham, Hackney and Waltham Forest.

The programme is aimed at young people offering different opportunities suiting children and young adults. For the 16- to 30-year-old range, it offers apprenticeship recruitment, pre-employment training and one-to-one support.

Phase I of the programme engaged with 1,407 school pupils, delivered 108 career events, offered 269 face-to-face work experience placements and helped more than 100 young people into employment and another 182 into health-related degrees. Phase II saw 65 people progress into employment. Most of

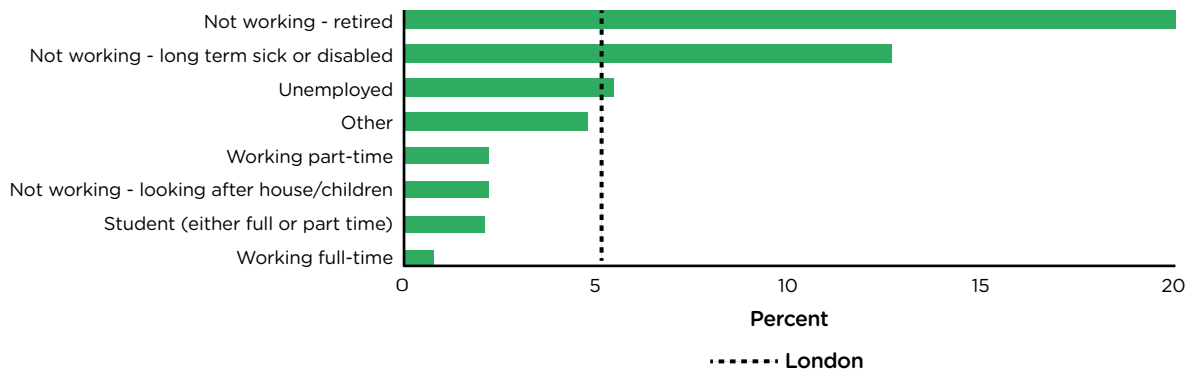
the participants at all levels of the scheme came from ethnic minority groups. In the pre-employment training programme for the 16–30 cohort, 62 percent were unemployed and 44 percent were claiming benefits when they started. Feedback from those involved confirms that the training provided from the programme gave them opportunities they otherwise would not have had.

There are no evaluations available at present, but the Trust is planning to develop the programme further with funding from ICB North East London Inequalities Fund. This would enable it to supply at least 24 four-month administration placements, focusing on women under 30 from ethnic minority groups.

DIGITAL SKILLS

Digital exclusion disproportionately impacts older Londoners and those who are not in employment due to long-term illness or disability. This impacts their wellbeing, access to key services and ability for social interaction. The 2021–22 Survey of Londoners finds that digitally excluded Londoners were significantly more likely to be socially isolated than digitally active residents: 36 percent compared with 25 percent respectively (83). It is important that adult digital skills programmes tackle the digitally excluded as a priority group.

Figure 7. Digitally excluded Londoners by working status, and London average, 2021–22



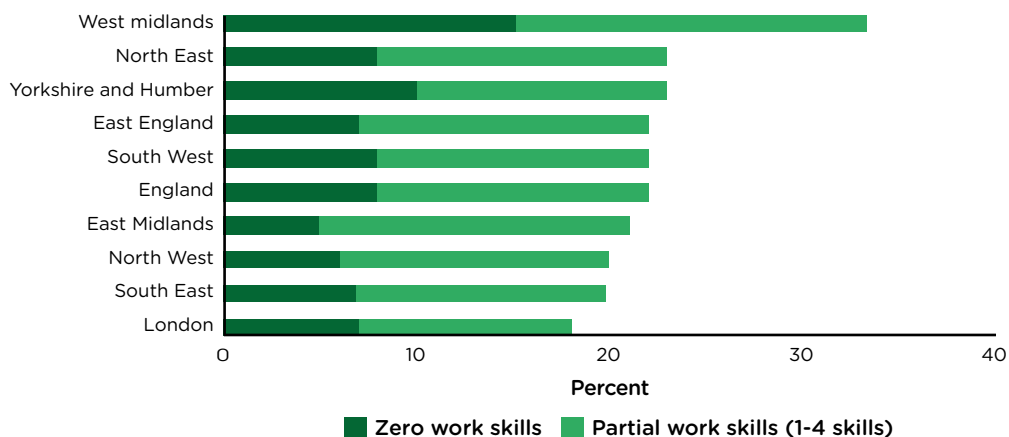
Source: Greater London Authority (83)

Note: digital exclusion includes a lack of basic digital skills and limited or no access to devices or connectivity.



According to the Ipsos Mori Essential Digital Skills Survey 2022, just under one-fifth of people in London do not have five digital skills that are essential to work. This is a relatively high proportion, despite comparing favourably with other regions in England – Figure 8 (84). There is a clear case for more programmes, well targeted, to improve digital skills in London.

Figure 8. Work Essential Digital Skills (EDS), English regions and England, 2022



Source: Lloyds Bank (84)

Note: The digital skills considered essential to work include using a device and handling information, communicating via email, using search engines, transacting and being safe and legal online.

The GLA delivers a range of digital inclusion programmes and many local authorities and CVS organisations provide programmes to build digital skills. Boxes 17 and 18 describe programmes funded by the GLA and delivered a by a range of partners.

BOX 17. DIGITAL INCLUSION INNOVATION PROGRAMME (DIIP) (85)

The London Recovery Board's Digital Access for All Mission (86), developed in 2020, aims for every Londoner to have access to good connectivity, basic digital skills and the device or support they need to be online by 2025. Following the development of the goal, the London Office of Technology and Innovation launched the Digital Inclusion Innovation Programme (DIIP) in 2021, funded by the GLA. A two-year programme, it seeks to design, develop and scale up initiatives that support digitally excluded Londoners by supporting the public sector and CVS organisations that work with digitally excluded people.

The three main goals of the DIIP are to: first, create a minimum access package for residents with various options to meet individuals' device, data and skills needs; second, provide easily accessible information, resources and services to boroughs and the CVS so as to rapidly implement interventions; third, give companies greater ability to provide their own services and offers of philanthropic support where it is most needed. The first year focused on improving data on digital inclusion in London, guidance for device upcycling and work with target groups of excluded residents (87).

As the programme is ongoing, it is too early to evaluate its impact, but between November 2021 and January 2022, the DIIP did establish several promising projects, including Mapping Digital Exclusion (88), Digital Inclusion Research (89), Providing Devices (90), and Providing Social Tariffs (91) (92).

BOX 18. CROYDON COLLEGE DIGITAL SKILLS HUB (93)

In Summer 2022 Croydon College launched its Digital Skills Hub. Funded by the GLA, it is a joint project between Croydon College and John Ruskin College, who are working alongside 17 of the Borough's employers. The initiative developed after data showed there had been a 40 percent increase in digital businesses in Croydon between 2013 and 2018, and the borough is home to more than 2,000 digital, data and technology businesses, employing more than 8,000 people in the area. Despite this there had been a 40 percent decrease in local young people taking IT subjects at GCSE.

With the recognition of the growing digital skills needs in the borough due to the fast-changing local market and economy, the Digital Skills Hub offers a range of free online courses in digital skills, from advanced IT User to Cyber Security. The courses are free for learners who currently do not hold a level 3 or higher qualification. The Hub aims to get at least 60 percent of learners to progress into positive work-related outcomes.

As part of the funding package for the Digital Skills Hub, Croydon College also provides access to its careers coach service. Another feature of the Hub is that for employers referring an existing member of staff, an obligation to co-fund the training with a 30 percent contribution required.

The Hub is a promising initiative in widening accessibility to digital skills training and job opportunities in the borough, meeting local labour market needs by upskilling its residents. As it launched recently, evaluation or progress reports are not available.

The community and voluntary sector also has a vital role in supporting digital skills for excluded communities as it has good links with communities and can support design and delivery of well targeted programmes, often able to support those who are excluded into skills programmes more effectively than other providers. However, the CVS relies on charitable donations and commissions from funders, meaning smaller CVS organisations can be overlooked. The programme Wise Horizons is a relatively well-resourced programme in East London, led by the social enterprise Renaisi and has support from financial institutions (Box 19).

BOX 19. WISE HORIZONS (94)

Wise Horizons is a programme designed to tackle the digital skills gap for East Londoners aged 50 and over who are long-term unemployed or on a low income. The programme was launched by a London-based social enterprise, [Renaisi](#), funded by the Power Up programme. Power Up is an initiative launched in the UK as a collaboration between the Good Things Foundation with the financial support of the JP Morgan Chase Foundation. It launched between 2019 and 2021 in order to help individuals, businesses and communities to become digitally engaged through building the digital skills they need to qualify for in-demand jobs and to improve their financial health.

Wise Horizons teaches over-50s the digital skills sought by employers via one-to-one and group-based learning activities spread over 12 weeks. Participants are supported by a digital skills tutor and a dedicated employment advisor to improve employability. Topics that participants can learn about include: finding and using online resources and public services; preparing for remote interviews and remote working; money management, including using online banking and pensions; communicating online; and staying safe online.

Londoners aged over 50 have been identified as a group with relatively low digital skills and use of technology (95). By targeting the needs of this group, who are furthest away from the labour market, the programme boosts their economic inclusion, and digital skills for employability and for later life, with the ultimate goal of getting them into long-term sustainable employment.

There are no data or evaluations for the programme at this time.



Many digital skills programmes are focused on developing skills for work. As noted, digital skills are needed for access to services and social interaction too, and older people often miss out when skills development programmes are oriented towards employment. Community Clicks (Box 20) is delivered by a charity and supported by businesses and social enterprise with the aim of supporting a small number of older people in East London to gain digital skills in order to reduce social and health inequalities.

BOX 20. COMMUNITY CLICKS (96)

Community clicks is a free digital skills programme for adults aged over 50 in Newham, delivered by Community Links, a charity hub tackling health and social inequality in East London. The programme was developed in 2021 and is being supported by 3i and is delivered in partnership with the Positive Transformation Group and Ixion. The digital skills programme aims to support 100 older Londoners in Newham by offering courses twice a week over six weeks, building skills and confidence and keeping older Londoners connected to family, friends and local services.

Participants learn day-to-day digital skills, including online shopping, chatting with friends and family online, booking a doctor's appointment and managing medical appointments online, and accessing online banking. The programme takes place at Community Links so that participants have the use of computer facilities. At the end of the programme, participants are given a tablet to continue digital inclusion support and continue practising their digital skills. In addition to refreshments at each session, there is an optional group activity day in central London.

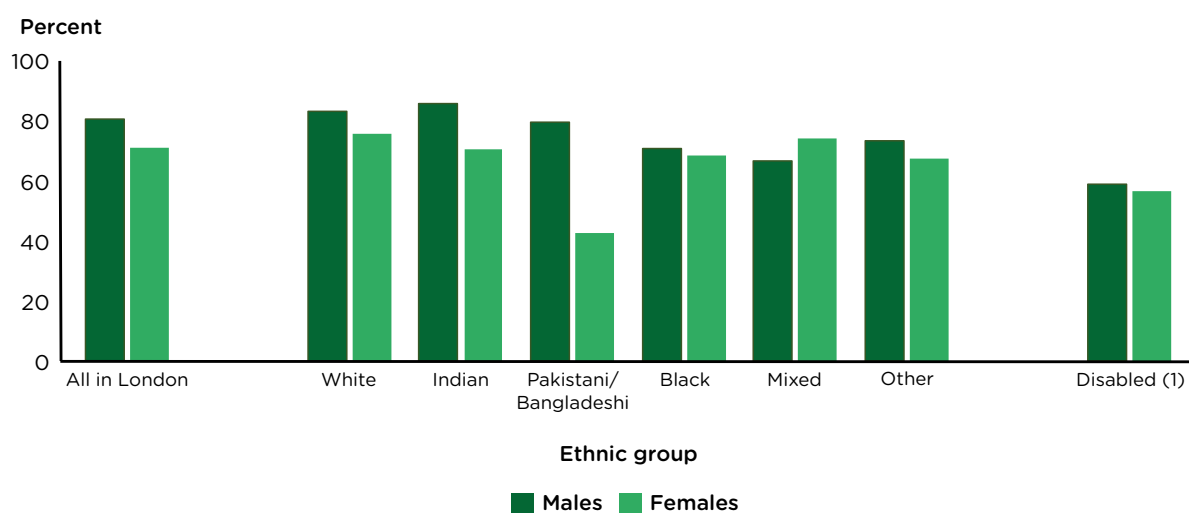
3C. POPULATIONS FACING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT AND ACCESSING SKILLS PROGRAMMES

There are clear inequalities in employment rates related to gender, ethnicity and disability. As Figure 9 shows, for the year October 2021 to September 2022, Londoners from ‘mixed’, ‘other’, ‘black’, and ‘Pakistani/Bangladeshi’ ethnic groups had below average employment rates, as did disabled Londoners.

On average, Pakistani and Bangladeshi Londoners have employment rates 18 percent lower than white groups (42). Pakistani and Bangladeshi women generally have 30 percent lower employment rates than the average for London (97); factors in this lower rate include many of these women having a role in the informal economy, as well as caring responsibilities.

Figure 9 also shows that ‘EA core or work-limiting disabled’ people have low employment rates, with employment rates for disabled women at 57 percent and men at 61 percent – highlighting the need for targeted skills for work programmes for disabled people, and many ethnic minority groups, particularly women, who face disproportionate barriers to access employment.

Figure 9. Employment rates at ages 16-64 by ethnicity and disability, London, 2022



Source: ONS (98)

The GLA’s Adult Education Budget has supported many Londoners paid below the London Living Wage to develop their skills and access fully funded courses. In 2021/22 there were 23,590 learners in receipt of a low wage who participated in the Adult Skills stream of the AEB programme, a 17 percent increase from the previous year (29). Nevertheless, some groups still face low participation rates. These include single parents and carers, Londoners with disabilities, ethnic minority groups, and older Londoners. In 2021/22, 62 percent of AEB learners were not in employment, 59 percent were from an ethnic minority background, 27 percent were aged 50 plus, and 13 percent declared a disability or health problem (99) (29). The background characteristics of the learners in academic years 2020/21 and 2019/20 are largely similar.

The West London Alliance Skills Escalator project (Box 21) has had positive impacts on excluded and low skills residents in Harrow and Hounslow, including higher incomes and increased confidence and wellbeing – which are important for health. The project also demonstrates the importance of offering ESOL alongside other courses. While demonstrating positive impact, the programme has relatively low reach as it is only offered in three London boroughs.

BOX 21. WEST LONDON ALLIANCE SKILLS ESCALATOR PROJECT (100)

The West London Alliance Skills Escalator pilot was delivered in the London boroughs of Harrow and Hounslow from November 2014 with funding from the Transformation Challenge Award, a fund to assist local authorities to ensure they meet users' needs and provide sustainable services over the long term, established by the Department for Communities and Local Government in March 2013. Subsequently, two additional years of funding were secured from the European Social Fund to continue delivery from 2017, and to extend it into the London boroughs of Ealing and Barnet. The Skills Escalator programme provided as an Ealing Council scheme, requires residents to be over 18, living in rented accommodation in the borough, working at least one hour a week, and be receiving housing benefit.

The Skills Escalator project pilot aimed to develop an integrated support service for low-income workers to enable them to progress into better paid and more stable employment by focusing on skills development. The pilot was targeted at residents living in the private rented sector or in temporary accommodation in receipt of partial Housing Benefit, with the intention that by overcoming barriers to progression, and increasing earnings, residents would reduce or end their dependency on in-work benefits, releasing savings to the public purse.

A 2017 evaluation report by the Learning and Work Institute (101) covering findings from the first two years of delivery in Hounslow and Harrow shows that the pilot enrolled 361 clients between the last quarter of 2014 and the first quarter of 2016, 168 in Harrow and 193 in Hounslow. Although not specifically targeting ESOL provision, ESOL courses were taken up by the largest number, showing a need for targeted intervention in those boroughs.

Out of the 361 participants, almost three-quarters were women aged between 30-50 years. Around one-third of these were lone parents, four-fifths lived in private rented accommodation and the remainder in temporary accommodation. The main ethnic groups among participants were Asian-British, Black-British and white-other. Almost a quarter reported that their key barrier to progression was limited English language ability (101). The most common barriers faced by participants included caring responsibilities for children or sick relatives, complex housing or financial situations, limited labour market and employability knowledge, and individual behavioural and emotional barriers, including confidence, motivation and lacking direction (101).

Outcomes show that within the timescale of the evaluation, participants undertaking training were more likely to increase their earnings than those who did not take up training, 34 percent and 11 percent respectively. Being involved in training also resulted in improved self-esteem, a sense of purpose, confidence and improved job performance. Participants confirmed that the earnings increases they achieved had transformed their own and their family's quality of life, leading to improvements in their standard of living, housing situation and their ability to address financial worries – all of which contribute to better health. Clients also reported a changed perspective and sense of direction and felt they presented a more positive role model for their children (101).

SINGLE PARENTS AND CARERS

The 2020 GLA-commissioned poll of Londoners about adult learning confirmed that childcare is a significant barrier to learning due to cost and availability (102). London has high private childcare costs when compared to other regions in England. A 2022 survey by Coram Family and Childcare charity found that the price in London for part time (25 hours a week) childcare for children aged under two was £183.56 in inner London and £155.19 in outer London, compared with £140.68 in England (103).

Forty-five per cent of parents of children aged 0-11 years and 22 percent of parents of children aged 12-18 years reported childcare arrangements or another caring responsibility as the reason for not taking up adult learning (102). Access to skills building programmes for parents is limited as many locations do not have childcare facilities or support (104). This disproportionately affects women as on average women carry out 60 percent more unpaid work than men (105). Access to and take-up of free childcare has also been found to be linked to ethnicity and socioeconomic position (106). The take-up of the free childcare entitlement for disadvantaged two-year olds is lower in London than nationally (107). Awareness of childcare benefits can impact uptake. Nationally, 79 percent of parents with a child aged 2 years old were aware that certain 2 year olds are eligible for some free hours of childcare each week (108). Bangladeshi, black and Pakistani children in London are less likely to be enrolled in formal childcare than White British children. In 2017 less than one Bangladeshi child in five was in formal childcare, and black and Pakistani children had take-up rates of

approximately 40 percent, compared with 62 percent of white children (107). Skills development programmes that are accessible to ethnic minority parents are needed, along with more skills training locations that offer childcare facilities.

The parental employment programme aims to support parents with young children to gain employment that fits in with their caring responsibilities (Box 22).

BOX 22. PARENTAL EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME (109)

The Parental Employment Programme, funded by the GLA from the European Social Fund and delivered in partnership with Renaisi and 3SC, was for parents in South West London aged 16 and over either earning below the London Living Wage or unemployed or economically inactive with children aged between 6 months and 11-years-old. With the goal of finding and sustaining employment that suits family situations and career aspirations, participants received a personalised needs assessment and training plan to gain the skills employers expect. The programme started in November 2020 and continued through to August 2023.

The free support included IT and digital skills training, access to level 2 or above accredited training, or addressing career barriers, and guidance on finding and securing sustainable work, including in-work support for up to six months. For parents who were already in work, coaching and mentoring support is intended to help them take the next step in their career, including promotion, taking on more hours or finding better-paid employment.

Finding suitable employment is challenging for many carers. Working for Carers is a project delivered across all London boroughs (Box 23). It supports unpaid carers into employment and helps them overcome barriers to working, including lack of skills.

BOX 23. WORKING FOR CARERS (110)

Working for Carers is led by Carers Trust and delivered by Network Partner and local carer organisations. The project was funded by the European Social Fund and the National Lottery Community Fund from October 2016 until June 2023. Unemployed carers were supported to gain employment and retain jobs. The programme also supported former carers returning to work after caring ceased. Carers had access to free support, tailored to specific individual needs, including help with job-searching, applications and CVs, and interview techniques; wellbeing support; IT skills; and access to training and volunteering opportunities.

At the end of December 2022, 1,263 carers and former carers from all London boroughs had registered with the project, exceeding the overall target of 1,253. The majority of participants (82 percent) were economically inactive (not in employment or actively job-searching) (111); 58 percent of those registered accessed training, 48 percent received support to job-search, 20 percent moved into employment, and 13 percent accessed volunteering opportunities. Of those who moved into employment, 72 percent reported that they sustained employment for 26 out of 32 weeks. Participants who moved into employment, job-searching and/or training were asked to complete a satisfaction survey, in which 86 percent reported an increase in confidence, while 82 percent said their skills had improved.

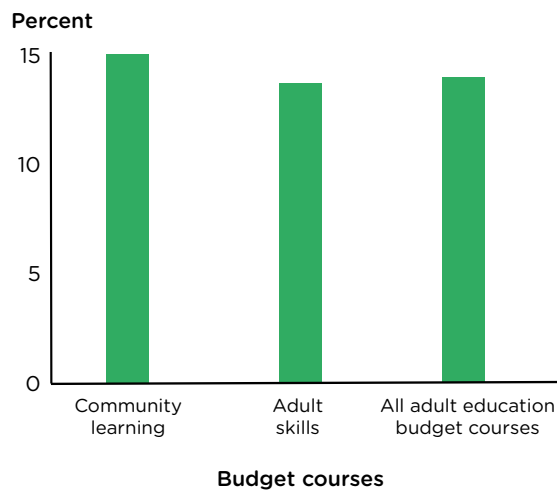
Key findings from the evaluation of the project by Wavehill Social and Economic Research found that the biggest barrier to moving into employment for carers is finding work or education and training that fits around the caring role, followed by low confidence and lack of relevant skills (111). The monitoring data also show that carers aged 50-plus achieved outcomes at the same level as the other participants (112).

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The GLA 2020 poll of adult learning found that disabled men were three times less likely to gain qualifications than non-disabled men, 18.1 percent compared with 6.3 percent respectively. This difference was smaller but consistent for women, 14.6 percent of disabled women without any qualifications compared with 5.6 percent of non-disabled women (113). Disabled people aged 60–64 were almost two-and-a-half times more likely to have no qualifications than non-disabled people, with 24.1 percent and 10.4 percent having no qualifications respectively (113). As shown in Figure 10, disabled people have approximately 16.5 percent lower employment rates than the average for London, while their inactivity rate is almost double the London average (98).

Census data from 2021 shows that London has the lowest percentage of people with a disability as defined under the Equality Act, compared with other regions in England. Around 15 percent of London's residents have a disability such as a long-term physical or mental health condition or illness. Ill health is increasing across England (114). Figure 10 shows that amongst the 156,550 GLA-funded learners in London from August 2022 to January 2023, 14 percent consider themselves to have a learning difficulty and/or disability and/or health problem, with the highest proportion in community learning settings, 15.4 percent (30). However, given low employment rates for these groups and therefore higher need for adult learning programmes, there should be far higher levels of participation in adult learning programmes. It is important that skills programmes extend their reach and deliver appropriate services to people with a disability, Londoners with learning disabilities and/or health problems and these groups should be a priority for skills programmes in London.

Figure 10. Proportion of learners with a disability, learning difficulty and/or health problem by funding category, London, August 2022 - January 2023



Source: GLA (115)

Central London Works is an employment support programme aimed at supporting unemployed adults with disabilities into employment (Box 24). It provides flexible and individualised local support which is sustained even after employment has been secured. These are key elements of the success of the programme. Particularly important is continued access to skills training and health and wellbeing support, as well as the ability to seek guidance from the individual caseworker and specialist organisations within each local community.

BOX 24. CENTRAL LONDON WORKS (CLW) (116)

Central London Works is a voluntary employment support programme, part of the national Work and Health Programme operating in the Central London Forward (CLF) boroughs. These are the local authorities of Camden, the City of London, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth and Westminster. CLW is designed to help Central London residents aged over 18 with disabilities, who are long-term unemployed, and other specified disadvantaged groups. The programme is delivered by Ingeus (117), a service provider delivering services across employment, health, justice and youth, alongside a range of partners including Get Set UK (118), Leonard Cheshire (119), and the Bromley by Bow Centre (120).

Funding was allocated in March 2018 over five years to support approximately 50,000 long-term unemployed, disabled people and people with health conditions into employment. The programme is part funded by a grant from the Department for Work and Pensions and part funded by the European Social Fund. Participants were referred to the programme up until 2022, with support extended for a further 15 months after the last referral (116).

CLW assigns a caseworker to each participant to help manage their health and support participants into employment through a range of activities, including skills development. Targeted sectors include hospitality, customer service, construction, administration and business. Online support is also provided via access to a digital service accessible 24/7, allowing flexibility in scheduling appointments and the ability to join pertinent online courses.

Data for January 2021 and December 2021 shows that during that period, more than 3,500 people, 61 percent of programme participants, gained employment (121).

The Department for Work and Pensions published an evaluation of the overall Work and Health Programme in October 2023 (122), however, specifics for the Central London Works programme are not available. A London evaluation is planned and will include an assessment of the programme's impact on wellbeing, skills and employability (116).

While improving skills for employment is an important health intervention, skills programmes that are designed for building confidence, reducing social isolation and enjoyment are also important health equity interventions; increasing investment in these programmes and ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities and learning disabilities is important. The DFN Project SEARCH (Box 25) is an example of a partnership in which the role of participating businesses is particularly important as it enables on-the-job training, confidence building and advice.

BOX 25. DFN PROJECT SEARCH (123)

The DFN Project SEARCH is a one-year transition to work programme which provides work experience combined with training in employability and independent living skills delivered in a business setting to help young people make successful transitions to productive adult life. This enables financial independence, sustainability and career progression (124). It is a business-led partnership between the public, private and voluntary sectors to create supported employment internships for young people with learning disabilities, autism and/or sensory impairment in their last year of education to prepare and guide them into paid employment. Partners include the NHS, NEXT, GSK, bpd, Dow, the Social Business Trust, and the University of Aberdeen (125).

Although comprehensive evaluations have not taken place, Project SEARCH has supported over 1,900 interns into work across the UK in the ten years to 2022. It has over 100 sites across the country. Within the NHS, 62 percent of interns were employed between 2020 and 2021, 26 percent of whom were from ethnic minority groups (126). An employment outcome is considered successful if the work is in an integrated setting, of at least 16 hours per week, paid at the National Living Wage and non-seasonal. Their target is to support 10,000 young adults with a learning disability or autism spectrum condition into full time paid employment by 2030 and 20,000 by 2035 across the country (127).

In London, the programme has seen success at Whipps Cross, Royal London and Newham hospitals, and has seen managers adapting their working practices and changing attitudes (128). At Whipps Cross Hospital the project has been operating for nearly a decade, preparing more than 140 young people for the workplace with approximately 70 percent of interns securing permanent employment shortly after graduating (129).



Transport for London's Steps into Work (Box 26) is an employability programme, launched in 2009, that offers work experience and employability skills training over a 12-month programme to individuals aged 16 and over who are neurodivergent.

BOX 26: TFL'S STEPS INTO WORK PROGRAMME (SIW) (130)

Delivered in partnership with the Shaw Trust, SIW offers recipients with neurodivergence the opportunity to complete three work experience placements, lasting up to 11 weeks, across TfL's London offices, stations, piers and the Greater London Authority (GLA). It aims to provide work readiness skills and open doors to employment and the on-the-job experience and qualifications to help prepare for employment. Those aged 18-plus can gain experience as a Customer Service Assistant for eight weeks at an Underground Station, complete an NVQ Customer Services in the Rail Industry award, or obtain an accredited BTEC level 1 Work Skills qualification, to boost confidence and preparation to find work.

Individualised support is a fundamental element to ensuring the success of employment outcomes and the programme overall. The Shaw Trust connects participants to a Specialist Job Coach who provides support from the application stage through to the work placement. Upon successful completion of the programme, the Job Coach assists participants to transition into paid employment.

Between 2016 and 2019, 75 percent of the students achieved paid employment of more than 16 hours a week within 12 months of completing the programme (131). It is able to benefit a small pool of students every year, and the number doubled from 12 to 24 between 2018 and 2019. There is currently no formal evaluation of the programme available, although the programme is still running.

ETHNIC MINORITY GROUPS

Previous sections have noted the relatively low employment rates among many ethnic minority groups in London. Of the total number of participants in skills programmes in the academic year 2021/22 (221,280), 59 percent were from an ethnic minority background (125,520 learners), higher than the 44 percent of Londoners who identified as being from an ethnic minority group in 2021. Forty-one percent were from a white background (87,680 learners). Given the lower levels of employment and blocks to career progression among many ethnic minority groups, there should be ambitions to further increase their proportion of the ethnic minority population engaged in skills programmes.

There are skills programmes designed specifically to support employment among ethnic minority groups in which there are relatively low employment rates. One of these is Moving on Up, funded in 2015 by Trust for London (132) and City Bridge Foundation (formerly City Bridge Trust) (133), in partnership with Action for Race Equality (134) with the goal of increasing employment rates among black men aged 16–24 in London (Box 27).

BOX 27. MOVING ON UP (MOU) (135)

MoU funds initiatives that improve the support offered to young black men to increase their ability to transition into employment. Between 2015 and 2017, funding was allocated to six projects focusing on recruitment agency models, mentoring by employees, on-the-job experience, group-based support to improve skills and build character. The programme also supports employers to improve their recruitment, retention and progress. Targeting the skills of employers to improve their employment practices is an important innovation of the programme.

In 2017 The Social Innovation Partnership (TSIP) conducted an evaluation of Phase I (136). Overall, the findings showed that 271 young black men were in paid work following MoU, which equates to a job entry rate of 40–60 percent. However, this data covered only 66 percent of the participants. The evaluation found that the programme's greatest impacts were on psychological outcomes, including participants' attitude, confidence, motivation and self-assurance and their understanding of work and the skills and behaviour sought by employers. In addition to individually tailored support, young black participants felt recognised and cared for in a nurturing environment where they could openly speak about their frustrations relating to accessing the labour market. Another important outcome relates to the feeling of empowerment given to the participants by having a programme designed to mitigate issues specific to young black boys. This shows the importance of tailoring initiatives and policies to underrepresented groups, who face differential barriers and require specific solutions.

Phase II ran from October 2017 to the end of 2022 and tested new, replicable approaches to deliver better local coordination and employer engagement focused on getting more young black men into quality jobs and careers. In particular, the programme tested whether a collective impact model focused on a specific population group can improve employment support and outcomes for that population (137). In a development phase from early-2018 to mid-2019, MoU established collective impact partnerships in two London boroughs, Brent and Newham. In each borough the collective impact partnership brought together the local authority, JobCentre Plus, further and higher education providers, voluntary and community agencies working directly with young black men, and key employers. In 2021, through direct delivery in the collective impact partnerships, 77 young black men were supported into employment (137). MoU won Community Partnership of the Year in the 2021 Employment Related Services Association (ERSA) awards, which is the membership body for the employment support sector (138).

As part of the initiative, an [Inclusive Employers Toolkit](#) (139) was developed, which aims to help companies increase recruitment, retention and progression of young black men within their workforces. The toolkit is for use by senior leaders and recruitment staff within companies in the construction and digital technology industries, and their suppliers. It equips employers with practical tools and examples of good practice from within these sectors. The toolkit includes a series of sequential actions to be taken by an employer in order to review the representation of young black men within their workforce and practical steps to address any underrepresentation.

According to the toolkit, to aid recruitment, employers should ensure that: potential sources of recruiter bias are removed from application processes; selection panels are ethnically and gender diverse and include a senior black employee wherever possible; and that all staff involved in recruitment understand what positive action measures are permitted under the Equality Act 2010. To aid retention and progression, employers should ensure that: the company encourages a supportive workplace for young black men, such as managers completing diversity, inclusion and anti-racism training, or forming black staff networks; the company takes action against all incidences of racism in the workplace and provides independent support for staff who wish to report; and that it sets targets and provides support to increase the number of young black men progressing to senior levels. With regard to the latter point, work shadowing or mentoring, leadership programmes or reverse mentoring schemes targeting young black men are suggested by the toolkit.

The SWEET project targets support at ethnic minority women that have particularly high levels of economic inactivity and worklessness (Box 28). Support to access childcare is provided, which should be routinely available in skills programmes across London as noted previously, lack of childcare is one of the major barriers to participation in skills programmes and employment in the capital (102) (104).

BOX 28. THE SWEET PROJECT (140)

The SWEET project is designed to help women from ethnic minority groups in West London to enter sustainable employment. It is funded by the European Social Fund and the National Lottery, through the Big Lottery Fund. The Paddington Development Trust is the lead partner, coordinating the programme with other partners, and working with women from the boroughs of Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Brent, Ealing, Barnet, Hillingdon and Hounslow.

The project aims to reduce barriers to accessing employment by encouraging participants to develop skills and confidence, via: outreach to engage inactive women; one-to-one appointments; help with CV generation; ESOL provision; provision of culturally sensitive information, advice and guidance; community groups with other women; workshops within the community, support to access childcare; and activities to link participants to the labour market, including voluntary work experience and open days to meet employers. Outcomes include social inclusion and reduction of poverty.

The Create your Future programme in Hackney (Box 29) recognises that there are barriers that specifically affect ethnic minority women, such as social isolation and lack of confidence, and it works with affected communities to change these. Highly targeted programmes such as these are important for reaching communities whose needs are not met by existing programmes, but they are not widespread.

BOX 29. CREATE YOUR FUTURE (141)

Create Your Future is a pre-employment project for ethnic minority women in Hackney who are not working or studying. Delivered by [Hackney CVS](#), the project is part of the Building Better Opportunities programme, which is funded by the Big Lottery Fund and European Social Fund.

The programme provides a range of experiences, including creative workshops, one-to-one coaching, social events and accredited courses, with the aim of equipping participants with the work and social skills to obtain work of their choice. It works to empower this target group to gain independence, increase confidence, build and expand work and social networks and explore different career options.

Haringey offers free adult education programmes to support better employment outcomes and develop language, numeracy and digital skills. Most of the participants are female and just over half from ethnic minority groups (Box 30).

BOX 30. HARINGEY LEARNS PROGRAMME (142)

Haringey Learns is a council-run free adult education programme helping residents upskill and reskill themselves to change career paths, keep healthy and active, integrate within their local community and build confidence.

Haringey Learns supports over 2,000 learners a year with in-person and online courses including ESOL, digital skills, functional skills (English, Maths and IT), career development in areas such as health, counselling, book-keeping and business administration, and employability. 77 percent of learners are women, 53 percent come from ethnic minority groups and 17 percent declare learning difficulties or disabilities (143).

OLDER LONDONERS

As well as having lower levels of digital skills compared with younger people, older Londoners aged 50–64 are less likely to have any qualifications at all compared with the 25–49 age group (144) (37). Older Londoners are also less likely to say that they plan to take up adult learning than other residents. Polling in 2022 found that the biggest barriers to learning for this group were a lack of interest and feeling ‘too old’. Older Londoners’ motivations for learning were more focused on leisure or personal interest than those aged 18–49, according to the 2020 GLA adult learner poll. These motivations reinforce the points made in this report about the need for investment in non-work skills programmes. As noted in Section 1, the health and health equity benefits of participation in skills programmes are significant for older Londoners even where these are not linked with employment skills (102).

LinkAge Plus, operating in Tower Hamlets, aims to support participation in skills programmes for older residents (Box 31). The ambition is to support quality of life, enjoyment and improve access to benefits and services. The programme is now funded by the health care budget, indicating recognition of the valuable health benefits from participation.

BOX 31. LINKAGE PLUS, TOWER HAMLETS (145)

First running as a pilot in Tower Hamlets between July 2006 and June 2008 (146), LinkAge Plus brought together central and local government as well as the CVS to improve quality of life and health outcomes for older people (147).

Data from the 2001 Census used at the time showed that 19 percent (nearly 40,000 people) of Tower Hamlets residents were aged 50 and over. The pilot aimed to provide a single access gateway for this group through voluntary sector-based networks and network centres in the borough, via partnership with five key partners: Age Concern, Neighbours in Poplar, Sonali Gardens, Sundial Centre and Toynbee Hall. Specifically, the pilot aimed to achieve full integration of services for older people, meet the specific needs of the local area and the development of respectful, accessible, flexible, proactive services that promote wellbeing and independence. By the end of the two-year pilot there were over 30 partner organisations, with services being hosted in five network centres across the borough.

A key part of the Tower Hamlets LinkAge Plus pilot was the use of outreach to reach older residents. This help reduce social isolation. Each network centre had LinkAge Plus-funded staff working with housing associations and local people to develop referrals and work with socially isolated people. The aim was to encourage older people to join in activities at the network centres to develop contacts and create their own social networks. Further, outreach workers aided participants in accessing relevant local services, tailoring packages of care, including access to benefits, home safety improvements and home adaptations.

The Aston Centre for Voluntary Action Research, Aston Business School evaluated the pilot in 2008. It found the pilot exceeded its output targets, and achieved a substantial increase in the number and range of services provided for and accessed by older people, as well as the number of organisations and groups contributing towards service provision. Further, there was an improved utilisation of public services. Key to success was a service delivery model based on networks and collaboration between third sector and public sector organisations (147).

The evaluation of the pilots nationally highlights the importance of recruiting workers from a range of ethnic minority groups, although no data is available regarding the number of ethnic minority participants.

Overall, a key feature of the LinkAge Plus pilots is the way in which they engaged older people in activities that help them to develop and sustain social networks, while being enjoyable, educational and involving physical exercise. These include initiatives designed to improve physical and mental health, education and lifelong learning, leisure, employment, welfare entitlements, social benefits and access to transport (147). LinkAge Plus pilots have either provided or supported educational and lifelong learning activities, including sessions related to health and safety, ICT skills development, plus creative arts and local history initiatives.

Within Tower Hamlets there are five ‘network hubs’ scattered around the borough offering services and activities along with a team of outreach workers who provide one-to-one support to those who are lonely or isolated (148). These include Toynbee Hall (149), Age UK East London (150), Neighbours in Poplar (151), Peabody at Sundial (152), and St. Hilda’s (153). The hubs are a one-stop shop for older people. They promote independence and involvement within the local community and decrease reliance on traditional services such as GP practices.

SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

The GLA commissions a range of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programmes and the AEB funds the majority of ESOL formal providers, including colleges or adult education departments within local authorities. Some CVS organisations are also funded to provide ESOL courses, but this is less common. ESOL is in the Preparation for Life subject area, grouped with English and maths. This area combines employability, personal and social skills to give learners an opportunity to develop the required skills to progress to employment, independent living, further learning or a combination of these. This subject area accounts for nearly half of all enrolment in the 2021/22 AEB programme (29). The AEB funds ESOL provision for approximately 40,000 people with English-language needs in London (154), a relatively small proportion (11 percent) of the 355,000 residents who reported not speaking English well or at all in the 2021 Census (71).

There remain persistent barriers in access to ESOL for those with young children and for older people, as well as new and recent migrants. Extending provision of these programmes would support health for those with limited English-speaking skills and is clearly required given rising numbers of people in London who identify that they do not have sufficient English language skills. Boroughs with higher numbers of people should be prioritised for investment in ESOL programmes such as those set out in Box 32.

BOX 32. ESOL PROGRAMMES

ESOL PLUS PILOT PROGRAMME (155)

The GLA's ESOL Plus Programme, which ran between 2018 and 2021, centred on funding innovative pilots to improve access to ESOL for Londoners. The programme focused on specific priorities in overcoming barriers to ESOL for adult learners in London. It was designed to encourage cross-sectoral collaboration between ESOL providers and other sectors, including arts, culture and heritage. One of the funding rounds, described below, focused on meeting the needs of learners with childcare responsibilities.

ESOL PLUS - CHILDCARE PROGRAMME (156)

The Mayor's ESOL Plus Childcare programme funded two pilots to meet gaps in ESOL provision for learners with childcare responsibilities - in particular those who are excluded or have difficulty in accessing mainstream provision. The pilots were delivered between July 2018 and July 2019 by Poplar HARCA and Sutton College, in partnership with Croydon Adult Learning and Training, Kingston Adult Education and Westminster Adult Education Service (157).

The 2019 evaluation of Poplar HARCA's ESOL Plus Childcare Programme (158) found that the programme met expectations and exceeded its targets. The programme involved offering three classes at Entry 1, 2 and 3 levels. Provision catered for parents and ensured local accessibility, a family-friendly environment, a crèche on site for 1-5 year olds, and a flexible timetable. Overall, there were 48 participants. The learner profile (159) shows:

- 46 female, 2 male
- 79 percent Asian Bangladeshi background
- 21 percent from Arabic, South American, Turkish, Somali and North African backgrounds
- Aged 21-55
- Mixture of educational backgrounds
- High level of need - many were young parents or first-time mothers
- Aspirations to improve English to continue education or go into employment

Childcare was the greatest obstacle learners had previously faced to learning English, alongside the difficulty of finding free ESOL provision. Outcomes include improved language skills, improved self-confidence, increased social integration. 45 percent of learners reported increased confidence in accessing health services independently. An important indirect outcome of the pilot is the participation of women from a Bangladeshi background, showing that integrating childcare in ESOL provision is essential to decrease inequalities and that lack of childcare provision is a significant barrier in building adult skills.

ESOL PLUS – EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIP (160)

The Mayor of London’s ESOL Plus Employers initiative piloted provision of ESOL for workers in low-paid and insecure employment. City Hall awarded £20,000 match-funding to Battersea Academy for Skills and Employment (BASE), a Community Interest Company established by Battersea Power Station (BPS) in 2014, to run a project from September 2018 to September 2019. In partnership with a range of members at BPS and employers operating nearby Battersea Power Station, employers from different companies in the area participated. Training was delivered by High Trees Community Development Trust, a recipient of a Battersea Power Station Foundation grant. Partners worked together to identify gaps in ESOL provision for local workers (160).

BASE carried out a needs analysis for participating employers and found that 38 percent of the workforce had ESOL needs (160). Eight organisations participated, five of which were restaurants and the other three were service providers, covering cleaning, entertainment/catering and corporate development. The ESOL courses, matched the needs of participants by incorporating some content focused on customer service and hospitality (161). BASE coordinated the pilot and recruited participants with the offer of free onsite English language classes for their staff. Six ESOL courses were delivered over three terms, involving two courses per term to accommodate different levels of English. The courses ranged from Entry 1 to Entry 3 levels (162).

An evaluation published in 2019 showed that the provision of ESOL through local employers is an important way to access employees who would benefit from English language tuition. Challenges mostly related to scheduling courses to match learner availability, which often led to decreased attendance. Overall outcomes include better English skills used generally and in employment; increased ability to effectively carry out work responsibilities and communicate with residents, workers and visitors; improved communication skills with colleagues more generally; improved career prospects with a greater chance to access further employment opportunities within the workplace; and increased success in achieving vocational qualifications (162).



Supporting new migrants with programmes to build English skills is a vital contribution to a range of outcomes, including education, social cohesion, health, and employment and income prospects. Box 33 describes one such programme, called LEAH, provided by a charity that relies on funds from charitable donations.

BOX 33. LEARN ENGLISH AT HOME (LEAH) (163)

LEAH is a charity working across Southwest London that supports adults from ethnic minority groups, including refugees and asylum seekers, to learn English. Participants face a range of challenges including isolation, being victims of trafficking or domestic abuse, having children with special needs, living in severe poverty, and having a limiting physical or mental health condition.

The organisation enables participants to gain confidence, develop support networks, access services for themselves and their children and make their first steps towards college, volunteering and employment. The LEAH team supports approximately 300 people annually (164). The charity raises funds from the public, other charities and local authorities.

Operating in the boroughs of Kingston, Richmond and Hounslow, LEAH offers ESOL support in three different settings, offering one-to-one classes to individuals who cannot access standard provision because of health reasons, caring or childcare responsibilities, past trauma or lack of confidence in being in formal learning settings. LEAH also offers group community classes that aim to build confidence in developing language skills, progression and integration. LEAH also helps participants to reduce isolation, build their social networks and practice English by offering social integration trips and visits to local museums, galleries, and libraries. ESOL support is offered mainly remotely, but when in-person classes take place, these have crèche facilities for learners' children (165).

Their 2020-21 annual report outlines their learner profile (166), which shows that:

- 89 percent of LEAH clients were women, 1 percent male
- Clients originated from 55 countries and spoke 42 languages
- 42 percent had no recourse to public funds; 15 percent were refugee or former refugees
- 57 percent were unemployed
- 18 percent were unable to seek employment, 7 percent employed and 1 percent retired
- 57 percent had pre-school aged children, 42 percent had children aged 5 years +.

Evaluations and progress reports for LEAH are not available.

4

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This intervention review brings together a range of evidence about inequalities in skills and access to skills programmes in London. London has extensive and relatively accessible skills programmes, which contribute to reducing inequalities in key social determinants of health and health itself. There have been recent additional improvements which have made skills programmes more equitable, including offering free courses for a widening group of low income and excluded Londoners.

Despite these positive outcomes, there is still much to do to strengthen skills programme design and delivery in the capital. There are persistent inequalities in levels of skills related to area deprivation, and among ethnic minority groups, migrants, parents and carers, disabled people and older Londoners. Parents and carers, people with disabilities and older Londoners have relatively low levels of participation in skills programmes.

Overall, the first two years of the national government's delegation of the Adult Education Budget to the Greater London Authority have seen some positive steps in improving accessibility to skills programmes for particular groups who are currently disadvantaged in education and employment. Specifically, there has been increased participation among learners from ethnic minority groups, particularly among learners earning below the London Living Wage or receiving out-of-work benefits. Building on the extension of the fully funded offer, an important ambition should be to extend this to increase funding for individuals on relatively low incomes, those without strong English language skills and those who wish to further develop their skills. Additionally, full funding should be extended to include disabled people and those with learning disabilities and poor health. Parents with young children should be offered skills-building programmes in early years and faith settings. Extending free provision to disabled people and those with learning disabilities and poor health, and to parents with young children, would be beneficial for health as well as employment prospects.

In London there is a prioritisation of programmes that improve skills for work. While employment-related skills are important for health, they are only one of the varied ways skills programmes can benefit health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities in the social determinants of health. These benefits include social mixing, reducing social isolation and better mental health. The health case can be further strengthened in order to make the case for increased investment and participation from the health care sector, public health and businesses.

Funding for skills programmes across London must take account of the very different needs and skill-sets within London and within its different boroughs. While efforts have been made to increase funding for boroughs with low skills, there are areas and communities within every borough that would benefit from programmes - including those not directly based on employment. Analysing the 2021 Census will enable matching of local populations to skills provision to ensure that provision and funding are based on need.

Skills differ greatly across London boroughs; those areas with high deprivation and populations with high levels of poor health, disability and ESOL need must be priorities for skills programmes and resources. As part of the recommended overview mapping of London skills provision, there should be an assessment of how effectively individual boroughs are able to respond to their level of local skill need. Local authority provision needs to be assessed to ensure that it is meeting the needs of its populations. Some boroughs may require additional funding from the AEB to ensure they are meeting local need and to make closer links to employers who are based within their local authority.

There is scope to extend the provision of adult community learning to settings that are accessible to communities that are not currently accessing skills programmes, including early years settings and faith settings. Health care settings and those of other public services such as education settings should also be informed about skills programmes and refer people to them and offer premises for delivering skills programmes. Businesses can collaborate closely with local authorities to further support the building of skills for their own employees but also for the wider community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Overarching recommendations for strengthening health equity impacts of skills programmes in London.

1. Target underserved populations

- Further invest in skills programmes that include developing hobbies, wellbeing and social mixing in addition to programmes developing skills for work.
- Ensure more investment in skills programmes in more deprived areas with higher skills needs and in areas with higher rates of low English language skills.
- Tailor courses appropriately to increase the proportion of learners with physical and learning disabilities, including SEND, and for those with health problems.

2. Tackle barriers to participation in skills programmes

- Create skills development programmes that are more accessible to parents by increasing the number of training locations that offer childcare facilities or support to access childcare.
- Improve outreach for advice and support accessing skills programmes among groups with low skills and low participation rates.
- Extend provision of English for Speakers of Other Languages programmes including in employment settings. Areas with higher numbers of people without good English language skills should be prioritised for investment.
- Support higher rates of entry into good quality employment by increasing the proportion of skills programmes offering individual support that continues after the learning element of the programme has ended.

3. Strengthen role of public health and partnerships with employers in skills programmes

- Strengthen the role of employers and service providers in offering skills programmes to employees, local communities and referring service users and consider offering space for skills programmes to be delivered.
- Strengthen partnerships between employers, service providers the CVS, local and regional authorities in identifying skills needs and delivering appropriate accessible programmes.
- Strengthen the role of public health in skills programmes, including:
 - > In the identification of populations who would benefit from skills programmes
 - > Linking with other sectors, including the CVS, health care, housing, education to support identification and referral to skills programmes
 - > Sharing information about the availability of skills programmes with particular communities and places in order to support uptake
 - > Carrying out assessments and evaluations to establish the efficacy of programmes and their impact on health.
- Ensure programmes are tailored appropriately and designed with specific communities initiatives who face a range of barriers and require specific solutions to skills building.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GLA

1. Target underserved populations

- Undertake mapping of all skills provision in London, related to area deprivation, skills levels, ethnicity, gender, disability and age, to identify gaps in provision and funding for key groups and areas.
- Further strengthen the involvement of low skills groups in identifying and addressing barriers to engagement with skills service programmes and in the design of the content of courses.

2. Tackle barriers to participation in skills programmes

- Extend fully funded programmes to those on relatively low incomes, even if above the Living Wage and to those with a disability and those with limited English language skills.
- Embed monitoring and evaluation of health impacts in the delivery of skills programmes and ensure that the health equity impacts of skills programmes are recognised and incorporated into the investment case for skills programmes.

3. Strengthen role of public health and partnerships with employers in skills programmes

- Extend provision of skills programmes in local communities as one of the criteria for the Skills and Progression pillars in GLA's Good Work Standard.
- Ensure that housing providers, small and medium-sized enterprises, primary health care, in particular social prescribers, early years settings and schools are aware of available skills programmes and refer people in.
- The public health system in the London Region to further engage in the development of skills programmes:
 - > Include local authority public health workforce in the assessment of need and design and delivery of skills programmes
 - > Work with public health in local authorities to support identification of need and build links with adult skills programmes within local authorities
 - > Public health representatives included in the Skills for Londoners Board.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM IN LONDON

The public health system at all levels to have a greater role within the adult skills landscape in London, including:

1. Target underserved populations

- Identify populations who would benefit from skills programmes.
- Link with other sectors, including the health care sector, education, housing, the CVS and faith based organisations to support access to programmes for those with low skills and those who would benefit from participation.

2. Tackle barriers to participation in skills programmes

- Share information about the availability of skills programmes with particular communities and places in order to support uptake.

3. Strengthen role of public health and partnerships with employers in skills programmes

- Participate further in the design and delivery of GLA Adult Education programmes.
- Carry out assessments and evaluations to establish the efficacy of programmes and their impact on health.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

1. Target underserved populations

- Maximise efforts to ensure that the adult education offer within each borough is well-advertised and reaches communities with low skills and low participation rates.

2. Tackle barriers to participation in skills programmes

- Conduct surveys and undertake community engagement to provide insights on local barriers to accessing skills programmes and devise plans to address these specifically in boroughs with low skills and low participation in skills programmes.
- Ensure that housing providers, small and medium-sized enterprises, primary health care, in particular social prescribers, early years settings and schools are aware of available skills programmes and refer people in.

3. Strengthen role of public health and partnerships with employers in skills programmes

- Work closely with the business sector, based on principles of economic inclusion, to encourage businesses to offer skills development to their workforce and the community as part of their social value contribution.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR

1. Target underserved populations

- Skills providers and employers to strengthen their relationships with the VCS in order to engage communities in the design and delivery of skills programme and in the identification of low skills areas and groups.

2. Tackle barriers to participation in skills programmes

- The CVS to strengthen their role in identifying and referring community members to skills providers.

3. Strengthen role of public health and partnerships with employers in skills programmes

- Strengthen partnerships and advocacy with local authorities and employers in the development of specific interventions for target groups they represent.
- Deliver skills programmes in faith and early years settings in addition to more traditional training settings.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

1. Target underserved populations

- Assess skills needs of employees and invest more in skills programmes for their own workforce, their contracted workforce and employees in their supply chain, including ESOL.
- Public services to work with service users to make referrals to skills programmes, including those offered by the CVS, and extend the No Wrong Door approach.
- Health care settings to extend their referrals into skills development programmes, including through direct referrals, social prescribing and offering space for provision of programmes.

2. Tackle barriers to participation in skills programmes

- Provide training and skill development in the community as part of their social impact contribution and qualification for the Mayors Good Work Standard.

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