



Dear London Mayoral candidates,

As Further Education colleges serving communities across London, we are writing to you to set out what we believe to be the most important issues for colleges in the city, and to offer to work with you – should you be elected - to ensure colleges are properly funded and to improve access to adult education for Londoners.

Colleges transform lives and are at the heart of communities across London. We are a fundamental piece of the education and skills system as centres of lifelong learning, and as anchor institutions within our communities. London accounts for almost a quarter of the UK's total economic output, and as colleges we have a key role to play educating and training the city's workers of the future - we currently educate and train over 350,000 people across the capital. We do this across a wide range of sectors which are key in ensuring the city makes a strong recovery from the pandemic and thrives in the post-Brexit economy.

Despite the vital role that colleges play, all too often our resources and expertise can be poorly understood, underutilised and insufficiently funded in relation to other parts of the education and skills system. In recent years, cuts to funding and wide-ranging reforms have had a long-lasting impact on the sector and on our colleges. We need the next Mayor to continue to work with us to address these challenges and to build on the current positive platform and partnership for recovery.

### **Fix the Funding**

Nationally, there has been 30% reduction in overall further education funding in the last decade. Recent research from IPPR has found that if further education funding had kept up with demographic pressures and inflation during this period, the Government would be investing an extra £2.1bn per year on adult skills and £2.7bn per year on 16- 19 further education.

The result of this underfunding is that colleges have had to narrow their curriculum and reduce the broader support they offer to students. The losers in London have been both young people and adult learners. Teaching hours have been cut, course choices have been cut to stay within budget and college teachers are paid an average of £7,000 less than their counterparts in schools. This under-investment results in under-achievement by our young people and missed learning opportunities by our adults.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on London, its economy, and its labour market. The capital has experienced a severe economic contraction and when the furlough scheme ends, 2021 could see a significantly stronger impact of the crisis on jobs and livelihoods. In the OECD's recent Future-Proofing Adult Learning in London report, they called for decisive action in terms of skills and career support in order to prevent a 'lost generation'.

This will require colleges to be funded properly so that a broad range of opportunities will be available in every community from English, maths and digital skills, through technical and vocational training to higher level specialisms, as well as more short courses to offer re-training where people face economic change.

To do this, we are calling on the next Mayor of London to address the fundamental under-funding of post-16 education in the capital.

The next Mayor should:

- Get London's AEB restored to 2008 levels – up to £640 million –to ensure the capital has the resources it needs to support Londoners to retrain and reskill in the wake of the economic upheaval caused by coronavirus.
- Influence Ministers to ensure the funding for 16 to 18-year-olds increases to a base rate of £5000 and urgently address the need for a guaranteed additional, fully funded 'education recovery year' for students who have fallen behind because of the pandemic.
- Increase the AEB rate annually in line with education inflation while considering higher increases for economically valuable courses.
- Deliver training and education funding through 3-year budgets to secure a sustainable position for the sector, enabling longer term strategic planning.

### **Get London Learning**

Further education is about making a difference to people's lives, offering unique provision for both young people and adults. Sadly, adult education is at a record low. Participation in publicly funded adult learning has declined by half in London over the last ten years, especially part-time provision. Only 35% of adults in London have taken part in learning in the last 3 years, with those most likely to benefit being least likely to take part.

Recent reporting by London Councils points at evidence of the polarised effect of the pandemic and disparities affecting the most vulnerable, young people and those least educated. Every Londoner has the right to learn, get on and succeed, regardless of background – they warn that those from poorer backgrounds may have fallen further behind and may be less well equipped to move on in life or further studies in the future or to start or progress in work.

These issues must be addressed if the capital is going to make a strong recovery from the economic impact of the pandemic and of leaving the European Union. Access to lifelong learning needs to be a priority for the next Mayor so that every adult can get the learning they need to be successful in society and in the labour market and in order to stimulate more adult learning as part of a good and fair London.

The next Mayor will have a unique role and prominent public platform which should be used to advocate and support lifelong learning and the concept of every Londoners right to learn.

Working with the Mayor of London and the Greater London Authority we want to ensure high quality learning opportunities which are accessible to all.

We are calling on the next Mayor to work with us to:

- Encourage more people to take up the digital skills entitlement and access the new Lifetime Skills Guarantee.
- Support more low paid workers to take courses that improve their skills and progression opportunities.
- Encourage individuals to invest in education, such as removing the barriers and increasing the understanding of Advanced Learner Loans.
- Significantly increase the number of apprenticeships and support small employers to access apprenticeship accounts and levy transfer.

With the right funding and policy reform, and with support and action from the next Mayor, we could do so much more to strengthen the further education system in London and ensure that every Londoner has the opportunity to fulfil their potential and be a part of an economic recovery which leads to prosperous and fairer city.

Signed by all London colleges:

### **General FE Colleges**

[Ada, the National College for Digital Skills](#)

[Barking and Dagenham College](#)

[Barnet and Southgate College](#)

[Capital City College Group](#)

[City and Islington](#)

[College of Haringey, Enfield & North East London](#)

[Westminster Kingsway](#)

[Croydon College](#)

[Couldson Sixth Form College](#)

[West London College](#)

[Ealing Green](#)

[Hammersmith & Fulham](#)

[Park Royal](#)

[Southall Community College](#)

[HCUC](#)

[Harrow College](#)

[Uxbridge College](#)

[LSBU Group - Lambeth College](#)

[NCG - Lewisham College](#)

[NCG - Southwark College](#)

[London South East Colleges](#)

[Bexley](#)

[Bromley](#)

[Greenwich](#)

[Orpington](#)

[Newham College](#)  
[New City College](#)  
    [Hackney](#)  
    [Havering Colleges](#)  
    [Epping Forest](#)  
    [Redbridge](#)  
    [Tower Hamlets](#)  
[Richmond upon Thames College](#)  
[South Thames Colleges Group](#)  
    [Carshalton](#)  
    [Kingston](#)  
    [Merton](#)  
    [South Thames](#)  
[Stanmore College](#)  
[United Colleges Group](#)  
    [City of Westminster](#)  
    [College of North West London](#)  
[Waltham Forest College](#)  
[West Thames College](#)

### **Sixth Form Colleges**

[Brooke House Sixth Form College](#)  
[Christ the King Sixth Form College](#)  
[Haringey Sixth Form College](#)  
[Orbital South Colleges - John Ruskin College](#)  
[Leyton Sixth Form College](#)  
[Newham Sixth Form College](#)  
[Sir George Monoux College](#)  
[St Charles Sixth Form College](#)  
[St Francis Xavier Sixth Form College](#)  
[St Dominic's Sixth Form College](#)  
[Woodhouse College](#)

### **Institutes of Adult Learning**

[City Lit](#)  
[Richmond and Hillcroft Adult and Community College](#)  
[Mary Ward Centre](#)  
[Morley College London](#)  
[WM College](#)

### **Specialist Colleges**

[Orchard Hill College](#)  
[Nash College](#)

### **Agriculture and Horticulture**

[Capel Manor College](#)

For more information, visit [www.londoncolleges.com](http://www.londoncolleges.com)