Hackney

Adult Learning strategic framework / Commission into diversity and inclusion in digital tech **CE S004**	

CABINET MEETING DATE (2021/22) 19 July 2021	**CLASSIFICATION:** Open **If exempt, the reason will be listed in the main body of this report.**

WARD(S) AFFECTED

All

CABINET MEMBER

Cllr Carole Williams - Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources and Lead Member for Equalities

KEY DECISION

Yes

REASON

Affects two or more wards

GROUP DIRECTOR

Stephen Haynes - Strategic Director, Economy, Policy and New Homes, LBH

1.   CABINET MEMBER'S INTRODUCTION

1.1 Adult learning

1.1.1 The Adult Learning Service continues to be at the heart of the local recovery from the COVID pandemic. It is well placed to address many of the enormous challenges faced by residents including unemployment, mental ill-health, and social isolation. This is by virtue of the routes adult learning has into communities and its transformative role in building back individuals' independence and tackling inequalities.

1.1.2 Since September 2020, the Council's Adult Learning service has been integrated with the Council's wider employment & skills service, following the devolution of the Adult Education Budget (AEB) in 2019–20 to the GLA. Previously, Adult Learning sat in Hackney Learning Trust. This has created an opportunity to build a better skills system for Hackney residents to meet the changing needs of the labour market. This report sets out how the Adult Learning Service is implementing changes in line with The Skills for Londoners Strategy and Framework, Central London Forward's Skills Strategy and the Council's inclusive economy strategy to provide the skills development for residents that local employers require.

1.1.3 The approach focuses on supporting residents and employees to develop the skills necessary to participate and progress into high-quality employment support and opportunities, particularly for the most disadvantaged. There is also a strengthened focus on digital skills and digital inclusion in response to the urgency of this agenda.

1.2 Commission into diversity and inclusion in digital tech

1.2.1 The aim of the Commission into diversity and inclusion in tech is to foster greater inclusion and diversity across the growing digital technology sector. Hackney is renowned for its start-ups and flourishing innovation economy and the vast opportunities these provide should be available to everyone.

1.2.2 The STEM Commission will help address the stark underrepresentation of some communities in the digital tech economy:
- Black African, Caribbean or Black British background make up only 2% of UK tech workers
- Women make up 17% of tech workers in the UK, a figure that has only grown by 1% over the past five years
- 11% of all UK tech workers have disabilities, and 22% are aged 50 or above

1.2.3 With this goal in mind, the Commission will focus on listening to our diverse

community to understand the intersecting barriers they face in accessing opportunities in the digital tech economy. The Commission will bring different stakeholders together - including employers and educators - to listen and learn from residents and highlight successful initiatives and new opportunities to improve diversity in digital tech. At the conclusion, the Commission will publish it's findings and recommendations for targeted changes to services, practice and policy to support residents. The evidence and recommendations will also inform Council partnerships and commissioning.

2.   GROUP DIRECTOR'S INTRODUCTION

2.1 Adult learning

2.1.1   Hackney Adult Learning provision planning and commissioning are informed by an evidence base that has been established to ensure that the adult learning offer in Hackney is aligned to political priorities including a focus on local recovery from the COVID-related crisis.

2.1.2   The pandemic continues to have profound effects on the labour market and has had a disproportionate impact on specific communities. As part of Rebuilding a better Hackney agenda, it is essential that we do everything we can to support those facing unemployment and underemployment to develop the skills and training they need to get jobs and to take advantage of the economic opportunities that do exist.

2.1.3   Developing a relevant local vocational training offer is also integral to Hackney Council's inclusive economy strategy which aims to connect residents to opportunities to learn new skills, get good quality, well-paid work and progress their career throughout their working life. To strengthen the recovery planning, there is a renewed focus on partnership work as part of coordinating a joint approach to adult skills across Hackney. This will also allow us to respond flexibly to the changing economic situation.

2.2 Commission into diversity and inclusion in digital tech

2.2.1   This report sets out how the Council will address the 2018 manifesto commitment to "close the STEM (science, technology, engineering, maths) skills gap" by establishing a Commission to listen to our diverse community to understand the intersecting barriers they face in accessing good jobs in the digital tech economy.

2.2.2   Hackney has become a prime location for companies involved in digital

technology, with fast-growing employment opportunities.

2.2.3   However, Hackney has high poverty levels, inequality and deprivation. The borough faces persistent disparities in skills and labour market outcomes across different population groups (e.g. by gender, ethnicity, disability status) with a combination of education, skills, health, social, childcare and racism barriers affecting outcomes.

2.2.4   Hackney Council's core objective is to create a fairer, more inclusive local economy, whereby everyone in Hackney - irrespective of background - has the opportunity to thrive and prosper in a borough that local people feel is theirs to shape. The Council is doing what it can to help the economy recover from the pandemic, including providing employment, learning, skills support, and brokerage to help local people secure quality job and economic opportunities.

2.2.5   To take this forward, the Commission will refer to the Inclusive Economy objectives to improve resident access and participation in STEM skills to enhance opportunities in the labour market. For example:

"Increase the number and diversify the range of pathways into good quality employment, offering fair pay".

"Ensure these pathways are accessible to residents experiencing economic barriers and disadvantages".

"Maximise opportunities arising from the devolution of the Adult Skills Budget to London, ensuring that these opportunities are inclusive and meet our skills gaps and the needs of local people".

2.2.6   The Commission will build a more profound, local understanding of barriers and gaps by taking evidence from communities with experience of skills and employment barriers and consider what services are available and the changes to services, practice and policy needed to support them and open up new pathways

3.   RECOMMENDATION(S)

Cabinet is recommended to:

3.1   Approve the 3 strategic areas of focus for Adult Learning in Hackney:

- **Training with a direct link to employment opportunities**
- **Building functional and transferable skills**
- **Supporting our residents' well being and positive mental health**

3.2 **Approve alignment of Adult Learning's strategic framework and delivery with the Council's recovery planning in the context of the impact of Covid-19 on residents and its commitment to building a more inclusive economy.**

3.3 **Note the evidence base in relation to adult skills challenges in Hackney which underpins decision-making in relation to Adult Learning delivery.**

3.4 **Approve the focus and approach of the Commission into diversity and Inclusion in digital tech:**
- **The Commission will focus on understanding the intersecting barriers Hackney residents face in accessing skills and employment opportunities in the local digital tech sector**
- **Taking a bottom-up approach, the Commission will capture resident's experiences and create opportunities for people to explore their ideas and co-produce solutions to address inequalities, collaborating with the council or partners.**

3.5 **Approve the roadmap, timetable, and governance arrangements for the Commission up until Autumn 2022.**

4. **REASONS FOR DECISION**

4.1 **Adult learning**

4.1.1 An overarching strategic framework for adult learning is vital to ensure alignment between adult skills delivery, the Council's wider employment support provision, and the Council's employment pathways programmes.

4.1.2 Because the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are still developing, the strategic approach for adult learning is focused on establishing priorities for the short and medium-term rather than setting a direction for the long term. This approach ensures flexibility to respond to a rapidly changing economic situation.

4.1.3 The focus of this strategic framework is to support adult residents with skills and qualifications for work, and learning for well-being and life skills. It is not focused on employment support or providing education for children and young people. This strategic framework will be used to guide commissioning decisions for the adult learning service.

4.1.4 The strategic framework will be further developed and discussed with adult skills partners in the borough to coordinate a joint approach to adult skills

across Hackney. This will also allow us to respond flexibly to the changing economic situation by working with partners to ensure training is part of a broader local skills system and provides coordinated pathways into good quality employment.

4.1.5   This is the first time that the Council has provided a strategic framework and the evidence base to underpin decision making and enable clear political oversight for adult learning provision in the borough. This reflects the importance the Mayor and Cabinet attach to the adult learning and equalities agenda.

4.1.6   Since September 2020, the Council's Adult Learning service has been integrated with the Council's wider employment & skills service. Previously, Adult Learning sat in Hackney Learning Trust. The integration signals the political priorities for service delivery - in particular, the importance and opportunities that exist around ensuring enhanced alignment between adult skills delivery, employment support provision, and employment pathways programmes.

4.2   Commission into diversity and inclusion in digital tech

4.2.1   Focusing on the Mayor's 2018 manifesto commitment to "close the STEM skills gap", we will establish a "Commission into diversity and inclusion in digital tech" to engage our diverse communities and understand the intersecting barriers they face in accessing good jobs in the local digital tech economy.

4.2.2   Taking a bottom-up approach, the Commission will listen to residents and capture their stories. It will create spaces for them to explore their ideas and contribute to innovative solutions to address inequalities.

4.2.3   The Commission will bring stakeholders together - employers, educators, charities, and academics to listen and learn from residents and highlight what works to improve diversity in digital tech. It will deliver resident-led recommendations for changes to address gaps.

4.2.3   The work of the Commission will contribute towards the evidence base for Adult Learning in Hackney and longer-term commissioning decisions by providing a deep local understanding of the barriers adults face to accessing lifelong learning and skills. Specifically, the Commission will take evidence from our diverse community to understand the intersecting barriers they face in accessing opportunities along digital tech career pathways.

5.   DETAILS OF ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

5.1   Do nothing – this option was rejected as it would not provide a clear direction to guide commissioning decisions for the adult learning service

5.2   Doing nothing would not provide an evidence base to inform services, practice, and policy changes needed to support resident participation in digital tech skills and employment.

6.   THE NEED FOR A STRATEGIC APPROACH

6.1   Adult Learning

6.1.1   Hackney Council's approach to adult education and adult skills fits into the Greater London Authority's (GLA) wider 'Skills for London' Strategy in order to secure sustainable funding. The required outcomes fall into four groups: labour market outcomes; social outcomes; partnership development; and

strategic alignment, as well as high quality of education, which informs the following priorities for the council's strategic approach to adult learning.

6.1.2   **Respond to changing labour market and skills requirements**: The uncertainty of the current economic situation requires regular reviews of the labour market to identify opportunities. It requires flexibility to respond, to inform the Council's provision (in-house and commissioned), and work with partners.

The move to a greener economy is a key priority and green skills development is relevant to a range of sectors. Adult Learning courses can provide progression pathways to these vocational areas including maths qualifications, for example, and career guidance for residents to plan careers connected to the green economy. Planned Adult Learning provision also includes embedded carbon literacy approaches across a range of subjects.

An evidence base has been established to inform this decision making as set out in Appendix 1 - Adult Learning strategic evidence base. This examines the impacts of COVID-19 on the labour market, the current economic outlook including the potential for economic growth and job opportunities, as well as being part of the strategic approach going forward.

6.1.3   **Clear, coordinated progression pathways:** The Council and its partners will provide pathways for people to improve skills and gain qualifications and employment. This means looking for opportunities to coordinate the provision of adult learning courses with other providers of entry-level, level 1, level 2 and level 3 qualifications across the borough.

6.1.4   **Reduce barriers to participation and increase the number and diversity of adult learners:** Certain communities are more likely to need support for training and may benefit more. The Council will actively work to reach out to these groups to understand barriers and provide appropriate support. These

groups include young people at risk of the scarring effects of youth

unemployment, 'Black' and 'Mixed' ethnic groups. They are more likely to

have lower-level qualifications and people with disabilities who also, on average, have lower-level qualifications.

6.1.5   **Collaborate on a joint-approach**:   The Council will lead a borough-wide conversation on how we can work together to provide residents with the opportunities to learn new skills, get good quality, well-paid work and progress their career throughout their working life, and support people's wellbeing. These partners should include higher education providers, large employers, businesses, and training providers.

6.1.6   **Shape a borough-wide adult learning offer:** The Council's role in shaping a more expansive system for adult skills with partners across the borough will be based on collaboration and mutual learning, and responding to change. Partners are likely adjusting to the changed circumstances of the pandemic as much as the Council. They will also have their insights into the focus of adult skills development and their priorities for meeting these challenges. For genuinely effective partnerships, the Council will need to be open to changing its plans in response to partners, as much as we can expect partners to adapt to our priorities.

6.2   Commission into diversity and inclusion in digital tech

6.2.1   The digital tech sector grew six times faster than other industries in the UK between 2017 and 2019, creating many new jobs. The industry continues to grow, making it increasingly necessary to foster greater diversity to deliver an inclusive economy that works for everyone.

6.2.2   Today, protected characteristics groups are not benefiting equally from this growth and job creation. Only 2% of UK tech workers are from a Black African, Caribbean or Black British backgrounds, only 11% have disabilities, and 22% are aged 50 or above. See Appendix 2 - Evidence base: Commission into diversity and inclusion in digital tech

6.2.3   The factors affecting participation in digital tech employment are multi-layered and often interrelated. Issues uncovered through initial research include: skills and qualifications gaps, gender, ethnicity, and class barriers, little or no access to digital skills training opportunities, jobs are not clearly defined in this fast-moving sector, lack of understanding and guidance about potential career paths, lack of social capital, and networks to find opportunities. Further, the local digital tech businesses are often small

and operating on a contract or project basis - making it less likely that they offer apprenticeships, in-house training or in-work progression.

6.2.3   The Commission will develop a deeper local understanding by taking evidence from communities with experience of skills and employment barriers. The Commission will identify gaps in service provision and make resident-led recommendations for changes to services, practice, and policy needed to support them. See Appendix 3 - <u>Policy context: Commission into diversity and inclusion in digital tech</u>

7.   HACKNEY'S ADULT LEARNING FOCUS

7.1   The courses provided by Hackney's adult learning service include accredited and non-accredited, entry-level, level 1, level 2, and level 3 courses to fit the GLA's Skills for London framework.

7.1.2   To date, there has been little scope to deliver level 3 qualifications as part of the Adult earning offer. However, following the government's 'Lifetime Skills Guarantee' announcement in September, there should be more flexibility with the Adult Education Budget (AEB) funding rules to deliver some higher-level courses

7.1.3   Hackney's curriculum plan for 2021-22 is built on a robust evidence base. It provides close alignment between the Skills for Londoners Strategy, CLF's Skills Strategy and the Council's inclusive economy strategy to provide skills development for residents that the local labour market requires.

The courses provided by Hackney's adult learning service will focus on:

7.2   **Training with a direct link to employment opportunities**

7.2.1   Vocational upskilling and reskilling courses can directly improve employment opportunities. The current economy has left many people with low-level skills unemployed or at significant risk of unemployment. Retraining to meet the needs of employment sectors that are actively hiring can be life-changing. Examples include courses in the education sector and health & safety. The IT sector is also more resilient than most in the current economy, and digital skills are needed for many other jobs beyond the IT sector.

7.3   **Building functional and transferable skills.**

7.3.1   Residents benefit from the Council's Adult Learning service: "Many learners build their skills well to prepare them for their next steps in their personal lives and further learning and employment", according to the Ofsted inspection of 2018.

7.3.2   Functional and transferable skills include foundation skills for higher qualifications and increased opportunities for employment. For example,

courses in English and maths are pathways to higher qualifications, as is ESOL. These courses directly impact participants' ability to communicate and develop a range of transferable or fusion skills including problem-solving and critical thinking.

7.3.3 Family Learning also has a key role to play as a springboard into further learning. There is strong learner voice evidence to show how participating in ALS courses boost transferable skills and contribute to a culture of learning in the family and enable parents to learn with and support their children. This is increasingly important given the current need for support for parents and carers with homeschooling.

7.3.4 Community Learning courses such as arts and crafts and music provide skills taught. It is vital to ensure that these broader skills are effectively embedded across specialist Community Learning programmes. For example, tutors ensure timekeeping is reinforced with learners at all levels following a 2018 Ofsted finding that there wasn't enough focus on timekeeping which is an important employability skill.

7.3.5 In addition, research has shown employers seek out specific transferable skills, many of which adult learning can help develop: For example, teamwork, adaptability, creativity, initiative, organisation and time keeping, communication, writing, listening, relationship building.

7.4 Wellbeing and building a basis for future opportunities

7.4.1 Adult Community Learning has a well-documented history of delivering positive mental and physical health outcomes and has a critical role to play in transforming residents' life chances. This is recognised and encouraged by the GLA. For those furthest away from the job market, community learning can act as a vital entry point and a stepping-stone to qualifications or even employment.

7.4.2 Existing courses focused on wellbeing and life skills directly affect people's well-being, health, and ability to look after themselves and their families. These courses already give people transferable skills such as creativity, problem- solving, teamwork, etc. The Adult Learning Service delivers outstanding personal development outcomes.

7.5 Next steps

7.5.1 The service faces several challenges to be addressed, often in combination as it delivers the adult learning curriculum while concurrently collaborating on a joint-approach with other local providers. As for the next steps, we will:
- Track and measure 2021/22-course outcomes based on the GLA's requirement for progression outcomes, e.g. referrals to Hackney Works for employability support or employment opportunities

- Develop social metrics to demonstrate the impact of embedding transferable skills into provision
- Keep track of the labour market to inform and shape the Council's provision (in-house and Commissioned) for a locally responsive adult skills strategy, in line with the Adult Learning annual commissioning cycle, and to ensure adult skills provision is properly linked to the local jobs market and opportunities
- Effectively sustain good outcomes through online and blended learning models
- Combine appealing community learning courses that attract those with the lowest level skills, least confidence and, in some ways, the most need for engagement with training and learning - while also teaching transferable skills
- Initiate a borough-wide conversation on how education providers can work together. First steps include:
  - Identifying potential partners
  - Initiating a consultation process
  - Agreeing a roadmap and timeframe for the local adult skills system

8. ROADMAP FOR THE DIVERSITY IN TECH COMMISSION

8.1 Commission resources and operating model

8.1.1 The Commission's work will be carried out by the Project Manager, working in partnership with community groups, academics and stakeholders, and guided by the Advisory Group.

8.1.2 The Advisory Group mandate
The Advisory Group will contribute expertise to:
- Shape and guide the mission of the Commission
- Shape the priorities and outcomes of the Commission
- Review outputs from each workstream
- Monitor quality, risks, and timelines
- Oversee progress and ensure delivery of the project outputs and achievement of project outcomes

8.1.3 Advisory Group Members
- Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Human Resources and Lead Member for Equalities
- Strategic Director, Economy, Policy and New Homes, LBH
- Head of ICT Delivery, LBH
- Director of Public Health for Hackney and the City of London
- Principal, Tower Hamlets College and Hackney College, New City College Group

Meeting frequency: ~ Every two months

8.2   Commission activities and timeline

Timing	Activities
March - April 2021	Workstream 1 **Literature review** Review existing literature related to participation and representation in digital and tech skills and employment, develop evidence base, identify key topics, draft questions to ask stakeholders/ community groups.
May - June 2021	Workstream 2 **Landscape of D&I initiatives** Understand what the Council, educators, employers and charities are already doing to improve participation and representation in digital tech.
July 2021 - January 2022	Workstream 3 **Community consultation** Working in partnership with community-based organizations (primarily those organizations already working with the skills and employment and adult education teams) - consult residents and gather evidence of their experiences accessing skills and opportunities in the digital technology sector. Consultation modes include, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups: ● Understand how different groups view the digital technology sector ● Articulate specific intersecting barriers identified by different community groups throughout the skills to employment pathways ● Create spaces for underrepresented communities to explore their ideas and contribute to innovative solutions to address inequalities
February - April 2022	Workstream 4 **Data analysis and feedback events** Analyse data. Conduct "Feedback Events" with residents to share the research and identify any gaps in analysis.
May - July 2022	Workstream 5 **Employer and educator engagement** Resident-led, roundtable discussions to review and reflect on the findings from community focus groups. ● Capture any new ideas, opportunities and pledges for targeted interventions to improve access and diversity (Includes employers not currently engaged by the council)

	Identify gaps in existing landscape of skills and employment opportunities and support services to support residents
August - October 2022	Workstream 6 **Findings and resident-led recommendations** Identify opportunities and targeted changes to services, practice and policy for all stakeholder groups to address the factors that cause some people to face disproportionate barriers to opportunity ● Publish findings create an action plan

9. COMMENTS OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND CORPORATE RESOURCES

9.1   The report brings together existing strategic thinking in relation to both adult learning and the diversity in tech commission to ensure we are achieving value for money.

9.2   The are no new commitments of expenditure and the new approach will be meet from the existing service budget.

10.   COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR, LEGAL & GOVERNANCE SERVICES

10.1   The decision to approve all corporate policies and strategies is reserved to the Mayor and Cabinet under the Mayoral Scheme of Delegation and therefore this Report is being presented to Cabinet for approval.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - ADULT LEARNING STRATEGIC EVIDENCE BASE

Appendix 2 - EVIDENCE BASE: COMMISSION INTO DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN DIGITAL TECH

Appendix 3 - POLICY CONTEXT: COMMISSION INTO DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN DIGITAL TECH

EXEMPT

N/A

CONFIDENTIAL

N/A

BACKGROUND PAPERS

In accordance with The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) England Regulations 2012 publication of Background Papers used in the preparation of reports is required

Description of document (or None)

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