Central London Local Skills Improvement Plan Annual Progress Report 2023/2024

Central London Forward

June 2024

This progress report has been prepared in accordance with Local Skills Improvement Plans: Stage 2 Guidance (dated November 2023) and is intended to review progress against the local skills improvement plan published in August 2023. This report was produced in June 2024 but publication was delayed due to the pre-election period

Who we are

Central London Forward (CLF) is the partnership of the 12 central London local authorities.[1] We work together with our member authorities and with other stakeholders to support inclusive and sustainable growth in central London; so that our economy thrives, and our residents benefit from the opportunities this creates.

Central London Forward worked with BusinessLDN to develop the Local Skills Improvement Plan for the capital. Our report, *Meeting Central London's Skills Needs* set out the skills needs of our economy, and how we can shape our post-16 technical skills system so that it better meets these needs.

Who is this publication for?

This publication provides an update on progress in delivering the Local Skills Improvement Plan in central London. It is aimed at employers and employer organisations, colleges and other skills providers, boroughs and other stakeholders across central London.

Summary of the central London Local Skills Improvement Plan

Central London has a strong and dynamic economy, which drives growth for the whole of the UK. Over 3m people work in central London. The area has world-leading clusters in the industries of the future, and the local economy generates £314bn of GVA. Ensuring employers have access to the skills they need is vital to enabling the future success of central London's economy.

However, while central London has a highly qualified workforce, too many residents struggle to benefit from the opportunities available locally, and too many businesses struggle to recruit to the skilled workers they need to succeed.

In 2023 Central London Forward worked with businesses, skills providers, boroughs and other stakeholders to shape London's Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). The report identified the skills needs of employers locally, it explored the extent to which the post-16 technical skills system was meeting these needs, and it set out locally implementable changes to the skills system to better meet employer needs.

Our report – *Meeting Central London's Skills Needs* – identified five priority sectors:

1. financial and professional services;
2. information and communication;
3. health and social care;
4. arts, entertainment, and recreation;
5. hospitability and retail.

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[1] Camden, City of London, Hackney, Haringey Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth and Westminster

The report also focused on two cross-cutting themes; supporting the transition to net zero, and tackling labour market inequalities.

What has been achieved so far and what still needs to be achieved?

This section goes into detail on the work that CLF and are our partner organisations are doing to deliver on the actionable priorities set out in *Meeting Central London's Skills Needs,* as well as identifying areas for further work.

**Priority sector - Information and Communication*: Increasing apprenticeship opportunities*

Meeting Central London's Skills Needs highlighted the capital's poor performance on delivering apprenticeships - London has the lowest levels of apprenticeship employment per capita of any UK region.

CLF is working with [Workwhile](#) to promote apprenticeship opportunities in the sub-region. The work includes:

- Promoting apprenticeships, T levels, skills bootcamps and other parts of London's skills offer to SMEs in central London;
- Encouraging and supporting the transfer of unspent levy funds from large employers to local SMEs;
- Working with SMEs and training providers to develop cohorts for key apprenticeship standards;
- Building capacity at local authority business support teams so they can promote apprenticeship creation.

The project aims to deliver a minimum of 30 SME apprenticeship opportunities and 10 T-Level placements in priority sectors.

What has been achieved so far

Workwhile undertook initial consultation with the 12 central London boroughs to understand their priorities and support needs.

Workwhile is working with LDN Apprenticeships to develop a cohort of apprentices on a digital apprenticeship standard.

Workwhile has developed a training session for local authorities on apprenticeship support for SMEs and produced a comprehensive set of materials for local authorities to use when supporting SMEs.

Workwhile led three National Apprenticeship Week events for central London boroughs, engaging with approximately 30 SMEs. The sessions provided apprenticeship guidance and highlighted the work Workwhile are doing to develop apprenticeship cohorts.

Workwhile has supported 80 apprentices from central London since October 2023. The majority of these have been from priority groups, with 54% being from ethnic minority/Global Majority backgrounds, 63% being female, 65% aged under 30. Over half were being paid less than London living wage before their apprenticeship.

What still needs to be achieved?

Following the appointment of LDN Apprenticeships as the training provider, Workwhile are seeking to have the first cohort of 15 apprentices starting in August, with a second cohort

starting in October. Workwhile will also be engaging with local business networks to promote the benefits of apprenticeships and promote levy transfer.

Priority sectors - Information and Communication and Supporting the Transition to Net Zero: *Investing the Local Skills Improvement Fund*

Central London Forward has been working with Bridge, a collaboration of 16 education and skills partners and 72 employers, to invest the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF). The LSIF supports the implementation of the priorities identified in *Meeting Central London's Skills Needs*.

Bridge, which is led by New City College and supported by CLF, seeks to support residents to develop the skills they need to enter skilled work and develop their career. The partnership is focusing on two priority areas identified in the LSIP report; digital skills and green skills.

What has been achieved so far

Between November 2023 and March 2024, the partners invested £3m of LSIF in:

- **Low carbon labs** to help young people and existing workers to learn installation and fault-finding on green technology. The labs include heat pumps, solar phot-voltaic, solar-thermal, insulation and cladding;
- **Immersive technology** which will enable curriculum innovation, new content and new ways of teaching the skills employers need. This will allow us to connect classrooms to businesses, enabling better engagement between providers and industry. It will also connect classrooms across the central London and the capital as a whole, helping share specialist knowledge;
- **Digital campus**, being developed with Metaverse, focused on green skills. This will include a focus on climate literacy, buildings, low-carbon energy and transport. In future years the digital campus will include other areas related to the LSIP such as health and science.
- **Curriculum development** including in fast developing and emerging areas such as coding and Generative AI;
- **Filming training** to help teachers learn how to record and share learning sessions. Following the training, 41 instructional videos have already been created and shared with partners;

What still needs to be achieved?

In year two (2024/25), Bridge will invest a further £3.5m of LSIF in providers across central London.

Bridge is supporting providers to work with employers to develop a range of new courses that meet their future workforce digital needs. This includes data analysis, programming, coding, and cyber security, and digital provision focused on creative, health, sustainable construction.

Bridge is also helping providers develop new courses focused on future green skills needs. These include retrofit, sustainability management, insulation, and heat pump installation.

Cross-cutting theme – Supporting the transition to net zero - *Identifying and tackling skills gaps in the green, retrofit and construction sectors*

To deliver net zero, we will need to retrofit hundreds of thousands of buildings across central London.

What has been achieved so far

Central London Forward commissioned analysis of the labour and skills implications of retrofit in central London. The report quantified the number of homes and buildings that will need to be retrofitted, and the amount of work required to deliver this, broken down by borough and by occupation. The report received media coverage, and it has helped inform skills provision locally.

What still needs to be achieved

We are currently working with the GLA on research to map the growth of green jobs across the capital.

Central London Forward has also been supporting the Skills for a Sustainable Skyline Taskforce. This project aims to ensure we have the skilled workforce needed to decarbonise central London's commercial built environment. We are working with boroughs to explore the potential for sharing of Section 106 opportunities across central London. This aims to help ensure more residents can access employment and training opportunities on major developments and boost the apprenticeship completion rate in construction.

Cross cutting theme - Tackling labour market inequalities: *Supporting employer engagement - the* Central London Careers Hub

The Central London Careers Hub seeks to ensure all young people in central London can access high quality careers education. By connecting industry professionals with over 235 Central London schools, the Hub seeks to provide insight into the world of work and empower London students to make informed decisions about their career path.

What has been achieved so far

The Central London Careers Hub has been working with Central London Forward to ensure the LSIP priority sectors, cross-cutting themes and actionable priorities are reflected in their work.

Examples of activity delivered in 2023/2024 include:

- **Hospitality Connect**, a partnership between schools and five-star hotels, which aims to support regular contact between students, teachers and the industry;

- A partnership with **BAFTA** which will help 32 educators understand the creative sector;

- A partnership with **ColourScape** and the **Arts Council**, focused on careers support for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Students will undergo a week-long programme, with the opportunity to meet professionals from the creative sector, and to put on a performance at the end;

- A partnership with the **British Insurance Brokers Association** to engage young people in the insurance sector, focusing on Tower Hamlets schools with a high proportion of students on Free School Meals.

What still needs to be achieved

The Hub's work over the coming year will focus on developing shared communication tools around essential skills to ensure smoother transitions between school and work, as well as activity aimed at engaging both senior leaders and parents.

Overarching ambition *- Strengthened collaborative working arrangements across boroughs and colleges*

Meeting Central London's Skills Needs set out an ambitious plan to reshape the post-16 technical system in central London. Implementing this will require a significant level of partnership working and collaboration between our member boroughs and external organisations – something CLF has focused on over the first year of the LSIP stage 2.

Our Skills Officer Group brings together officers leading on skills, and our Construction Skills Officer Group supports partnership working around apprenticeships and skills in the built environment. Our Employment and Skills Board brings together cabinet leads, employer organisations and employment and skills providers across central London to shape our work, and support collaboration. We facilitated 20 meetings of these networks in 2023/2024.

What has been achieved so far

We have organised 'deep dive' meetings of our Employment and Skills Board focused on priority sectors in the central London LSIP. These have helped share good practice and identify opportunities for partners to working.

We have also improved links between boroughs and central London's colleges through Bridge: the Central London Skills Partnership.

What still needs to be achieved

CLF will continue to focus on strengthening our partnership working approaches with member boroughs and colleges, with a focus on identifying oppurtunities to engage employers in our day-to-day work. This will include activity such as supporting the Central London Inclusive Life Sciences Coalition employer event in the Autumn.

CLF will aggregate local needs assessments to understand the extent to which local provision is meeting employer needs – making this information available to our skills and employment networks.

Priorities and actions (Roadmap):

A summary of the key actions undertaken to address priorities identified in *Meeting Central London's Skills Needs*

Priority: Sector and actionable priority	Activity	Partners involved	Timescales	Method of implementation and outcomes expected	Monitoring arrangements	Progress status
Priority sector: Health and social care – *Employer engagement - Providers working with employers to raise awareness of available provision and funding, to boost demand for training and to support co-design*	CLF is working with the Central London Inclusive Life Sciences Coalition – a coalition of boroughs and life science sector partners – which seeks to support the growth of the life sciences sector, and the opening of opportunities to under-represented communities. This will include an event in Autumn 2024 focused on identifying best practice in the coalition's work and encouraging employer participation in the skills system.	Central London Inclusive Life Sciences Coalition, which includes Camden, City of London, Hackney, Hammersmith & Fulham, Islington, Lambeth, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Westminster, MedCity and London and Partners.	February - October 2024	Method: sector-focused workshop Outcomes expected: stronger partnership working between life sciences sector, boroughs and providers; sharing best practice.	Employers and other stakeholders engaged.	Development and scoping phase.

| Priority sector: **Information and communication** – *Employer engagement - Providers working with employers to raise awareness of available provision and funding, to boost demand for training and to support co-design* | CLF is working with Workwhile to increase the number of SMEs taking on apprentices. | WorkWhile, CLF member boroughs, LDN Apprenticeships, employers. | October 2023 - April 2025 | Method of implementation: Business support and employer engagement; capacity building for local authority business support teams.

Outcomes expected: minimum of 30 SME apprenticeship opportunities supported; minimum of 10 T-Level placements in priority sectors. | Quarterly progress reports from Workwhile | On track to deliver to target and on time. Marketing and training material all complete. Outreach and engagement work ongoing. |
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| **Cross cutting theme: Supporting the transition to net zero** – *Updating Provision – provision should be regularly reviewed, so that training content reflects the latest industry needs* | CLF is working to ensure boroughs, employers and providers have the information they need to develop relevant, targeted and proportional skills provision in the retrofit sector.

CLF produced a report quantifying the labour and skills implications of retrofit in central London.

CLF is working with GLA to map the growth of green jobs across the capital. | Whole Life Consultants conducted analysis of the skills implications of retrofit.

Central London Forward is working with the GLA, London Councils and the London Borough of Hounslow to map the growth of green jobs. | Retrofit skills report published October 2023 | Method: commissioning analysis of retrofit skills requirements, and communicating findings to providers and stakeholders.

Outcomes expected: a better understanding of future skills needs, and more effective matching between provision and demand. | | Retrofit skills analysis has been completed. Communication and engagement with providers is ongoing.

Joint project with GLA on green jobs is ongoing. |

Cross cutting theme: Supporting the transition to net zero – *Employer engagement - Providers working with employers to raise awareness of available provision and funding, to boost demand for training and to support co-design*	CLF held a workshop on heritage retrofit. The session brought together training providers, and the construction sector with major property and landowners to explore the skills needed to retrofit heritage properties, and the implications for the skills system locally.	Event organised in partnership with Westminster City Council. Event attended by 26 representatives from the property, construction, and FE sectors, local government, and Historic England	Sept - Oct 2023	Method: stakeholder workshop Outcomes expected: better understanding of skills needs of sector; stronger partnership working between property owners, construction sector, and FE providers.		Workshop complete. Partnership with Westminster City Council ongoing.
Cross cutting theme: Supporting the transition to net zero – *Industry placements – high-quality placements are available, giving learners the oppurtunity to gain experience of the industry*	CLF are working with the City of London's Skills for a Sustainable Skyline and CLF member boroughs to share best practice and develop joint working arrangements to improve the number of people completing apprenticeships in the construction industry. This work focuses on apprenticeships for local residents made possible through Section 106 agreements.	Skills for a Sustainable Skyline Taskforce which brings together commercial property sector and construction sector. CLF member boroughs.	January 2024 - April 2025	Piloting cross-borough partnership approaches to S106 agreements. This is expected to focus on a small number of apprentice completions across multiple sites in the first year as a test case.	Continued successful engagement with member boroughs, development of shared policies and approaches.	Ongoing – workshop and next steps preparation underway.
Cross cutting theme: Tackling labour market inequalities – *Improving pay and job quality – to attract recruits and address skills gaps*	CLF is undertaking a programme of research into 'Good Work in Central London'. The work is seeking to measure job quality across central London, including issues such as access to in-work training and skills match. This work will provide intelligence for borough interventions to improve job quality.	CLF member boroughs, GLA	October 2023 - June 2024	Method of implementation: Research project Outcomes expected: Boroughs and other stakeholders have better understanding of job quality and are better able to target interventions to improve job quality.		Research and development completed - will launch shortly.