



Evaluation of The Community Outreach Programme

Final Report

10 October 2024

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Evaluation of The Skills for Londoners Community Outreach Programme

Final Report

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Executive summary

The Greater London Authority (GLA) commissioned ICF Consulting Services Ltd to undertake an **Evaluation of The Community Outreach Programme (COP)**. The evaluation aims to assess the outcomes and impacts of the COP for the 2023/2024 period.

The Community Outreach Programme: The COP was designed to enhance adult education and skills provision in London, focusing on underserved communities. The programme funded 28 community organisations with an annual turnover of less than £500,000 to deliver various activities that engage and support Londoners into adult education. The programme ran between October 2023 and August 2024. Furthermore, the COP was partly funded by London Multiply to ensure programme activity had a numeracy focus to help reduce negative perceptions and support Londoners to access numeracy provision.

Programme Reach and Engagement: The COP successfully engaged a diverse range of participants, including care leavers, ex-offenders, unemployed and low-paid Londoners, older people, disabled people, digitally excluded people, and those with English language needs. The programme reached Londoners who otherwise would not have had knowledge of adult education opportunities. The projects made connections with Londoners who might not have been aware of adult education, Multiply, and skills programs available in the city. The program helped these individuals recognize that these offerings are designed for people like them, fitting their needs and aspirations, and are both free and accessible.

Support and Activities: Community organisations funded by COP delivered a wide range of activities, including workshops, taster sessions, and one-on-one support. These activities were tailored to the specific needs of the target groups and were effective in building trust and encouraging participation. The range of courses and activities provided by the projects include numeracy and ESOL courses, technical courses such as IT and digital skills, health-related courses, creative digital courses, and other creative courses. Types of activities that facilitated and supported learners' journeys include providing one-on-one advice and guidance, pre-assessment of learners' goals, needs, and skills, following up post-referral, CV-building workshops, outdoor activities, mentoring programs, language assistance, and accompanying learners to assessments.

Challenges to Delivery: The evaluation identified challenges related to administrative requirements, data collection, and engagement with education providers. Organisations reported early difficulties in participant engagement and described having developed and adapted iteratively throughout the course of the programme. The length of the consent form and its required documents were seen as barriers to recruiting participants. Issues with education providers, such as poor response rates and limited capacity, also hindered referral rates. Providing clearer communication on data requirements, offering longer-term funding, and supporting the establishment of relationships with education providers before programme delivery could improve delivery.

Reflections on Engagement: The projects delivered a wide range of activities with participants, using existing strengths and connections to engage and support participants. Projects with pre-established relationships with providers had a significantly better experience of referring participants. The GLA's decision to extend 15 projects was well-received, and those projects feel that they are on track to meet their targets. The projects could not describe why the GLA is asking for the data they are collecting, and this could be improved by increased and early communication on why the GLA requires this information.

Reflections on Post-Engagement Activities: The projects also delivered a range of activities to continue engagement and support participants into education. These activities

include providing one-on-one advice and guidance, pre-assessment of learners' goals, needs, and skills, following up post-referral, CV-building workshops, outdoor activities, mentoring programs, language assistance, and accompanying learners to assessments. The projects also supported participants after referral, providing ongoing support to ensure that participants enrol into training and education and complete their courses.

Organisational Outcomes: The programme has had a wide range of positive impacts on community organisations, including significantly improved reach and relationship with AEB and Multiply providers, the ability to increase the range of activities they deliver, increased capacity, and enhanced ability to support individuals from project to employment. The programme has also enabled organisations to offer paid work to community leaders who previously engaged in informal or voluntary work, leveraging existing community networks to increase engagement. The programme also enabled organisations to build new relationships with AEB providers and London Multiply leads, participate in events to broaden their network, and leverage existing community networks to increase engagement.

Reflections on the Participant Journey: Participants faced a range of barriers to accessing education and training, including lack of English skills, lack of awareness of opportunities, lack of work experience, and lack of previous education or training. The projects successfully reached those in need, many of whom were long-term unemployed and had never accessed education or training. Participants reported a number of positive outcomes as a result of their engagement in projects, including improved English skills, obtainment of recognised qualifications, improved knowledge of future careers and pathways, increased confidence in education and training, and improved mental health due to increased socialisation with peers. Many participants were able to obtain formal qualifications, secure employment, and improve their overall well-being. For example, participants who did not have English as their first language were able to build confidence in their verbal and written skills, allowing them to read emails and texts, seek jobs, meet people without fear, complete applications, and better deal with everyday situations. A few participants were able to secure employment as a result of their engagement with the projects.

Recommendations:

For future rounds of COP, the GLA could consider:

- Supporting organisations to have established relationships with AEB/Multiply providers before delivery,
- Offering more opportunities for clarification questions following project design,
- Ensuring timely starts and having all systems/paperwork in place,
- Reducing administrative burden on grantee organisations, and
- Providing longer-term funding to offer follow-ups and holistic support.

1 Introduction

ICF, an independent research organisation, was commissioned by the Greater London Authority (GLA) in December 2023 to undertake an evaluation of the GLA's Skills for Londoners Community Outreach Programme (COP) in 2023/2024. This document is the final report for the evaluation.

1.1 Background and Context

1.1.1 Background to the COP

In 2019, the Mayor of London was delegated the Adult Education Budget (AEB) to provide educational opportunities to Londoners. In 2022, the London Multiply (LM) Programme was launched to provide free training to support Londoners to gain numeracy skills and confidence. Both projects aim to support Londoners who have significant barriers to learning and are underserved by other provision but are open to all Londoners who are aged 19 plus and have limited qualifications (below GCSE pass grade).

Following a public consultation with community organisations in 2021,¹ the GLA found that Londoners' still faced significant barriers to accessing training, such as travel costs, a lack of childcare access, and fragmented information about what is available. These barriers were particularly significant for adults with specific, intersecting experiences, including:

- Care leavers (LM target group),
- People who have experience of the criminal justice system (LM target group),
- Parents (LM target group),
- Unemployed and low-paid Londoners,
- Older people,
- Disabled people,
- Digitally excluded people,
- People with English language needs,
- People with negative experiences of mainstream education,

It is these groups of Londoners that stand to gain the most from adult education as a means to reduce inequality and alleviate poverty. And yet, GLA research found people in these groups would not access learning without it coming from trusted sources.

From the consultation, the GLA identified the importance of locally relevant support responding to specific community needs and an emphasis on long-term approaches, such as relationship-building, and capturing social and personal outcomes. These approaches were identified as critical to reducing barriers to adult education.

¹ [Skills Roadmap for London](#)

1.1.2 Programme Aims

The Greater London Authority (GLA) developed the Skills for Londoners Community Outreach Programme (COP) to enhance adult education and skills provision in London. The programme is part of the broader vision which is outlined in the Skills Roadmap for London: *'to ensure skills provision, learning and adult education are locally relevant, make an impact, and are accessible'*.²

The COP was designed to empower community organisations to serve as the bridge between underserved Londoners and the educational opportunities they need.

The objectives of the COP in the programme specification are to:

- **Raise Awareness:** Elevate awareness and understanding of the Mayor's commitment to supporting and delivering adult education and skills among Londoners, employers, and key referrers into the skills system.
- **Overcome Barriers:** Address and reduce attitudinal barriers towards adult learning and numeracy learning, and to emphasise the role of numeracy skills in everyday life and work.
- **Promote Learning:** Increase awareness and participation in adult education provision and numeracy learning opportunities, including the London Multiply programme and AEB numeracy provision.
- **Highlight Priority Sectors:** Foster awareness of skills opportunities and careers in key sectors (green, health and care, hospitality, digital, and creative) among Londoners, employers, and key referrers.
- **Share Best Practices:** Collaborate and share best practices in promoting adult education among those who need it most, benefiting AEB providers and other partners.
- **Build relationships between providers and community organisations.**

1.1.3 Programme Logic

The programme aimed to improve access for training among adults with specific, intersecting experiences, including care leavers; ex-offenders; unemployed and low-paid Londoners; older people; disabled people; digitally excluded people; people with English language needs; and people with negative experiences of mainstream education.

The COP was intended to fund community organisations so that they could be “empowered” to serve as the bridge between underserved Londoners and the educational opportunities they need. Community organisations were expected to deliver a range of activities to reach/engage and support participants into further learning opportunities, with a particular focus on AEB and London Multiply provision.

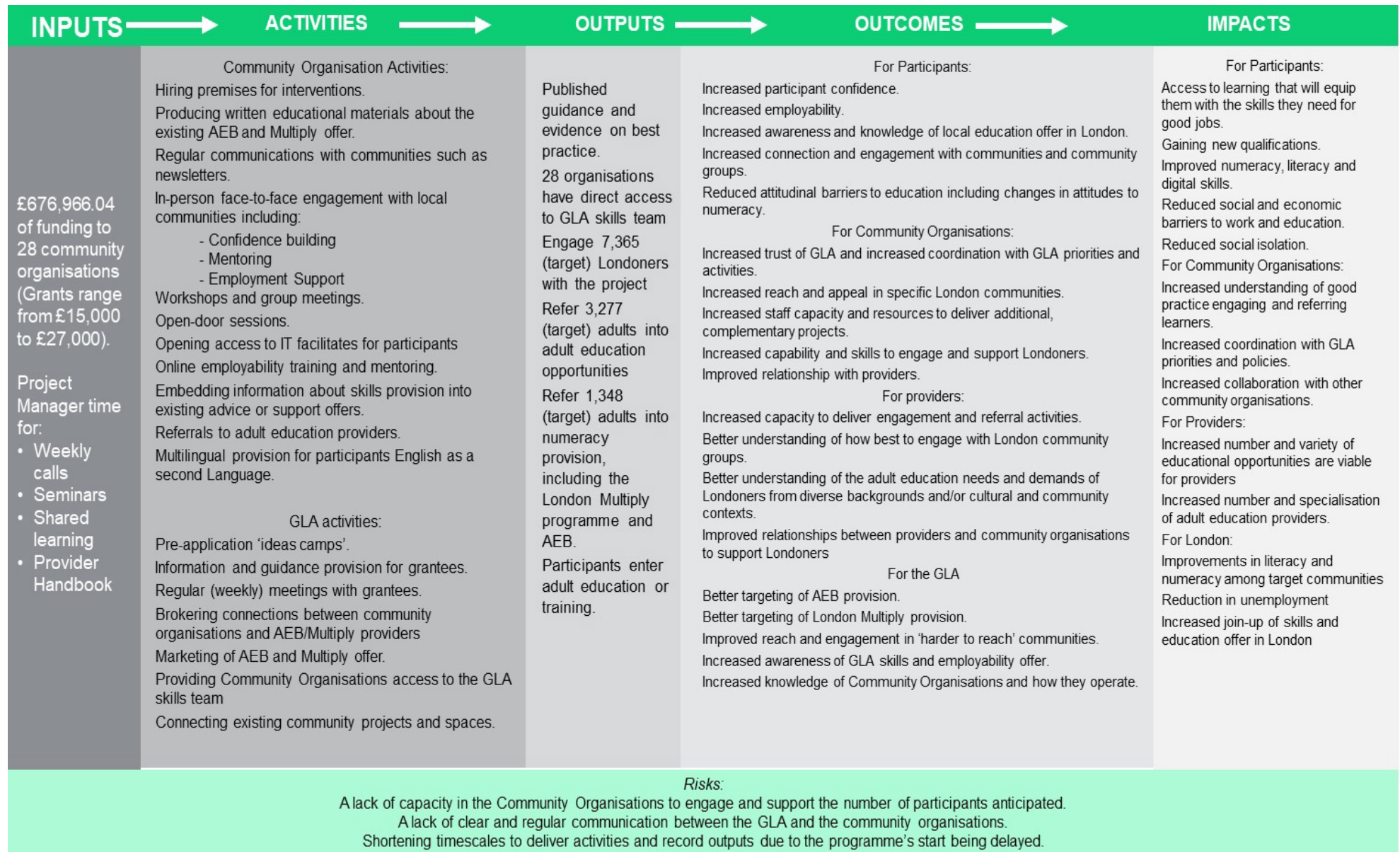
The GLA application process for the COP allowed for flexibility in the activities the community organisations delivered to engage and support participants into learning. Individual projects were expected to tailor their offer to their particular target group and to the individuals they have experience working with. There was also flexibility in relation to additional target cohorts not listed in the prospectus in order to allow

² <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-02/Skills%20Roadmap%20for%20London.pdf>

the GLA to be steered/led by community organisations to ensure that Londoners who needed the support most were reached. The wide range of activities delivered by community organisations are described in Chapters 3 and 4. Organisations utilised their pre-existing links with specific communities to develop individualised and unique activities to engage and support Londoners.

It was an ambition of the programme to improve the connections between community organisations and adult education providers, through brokering engagement and building capacity in the community organisations. These activities were expected to lead to a wide range of outcomes and impacts.

ICF undertook a series of six interviews with GLA staff involved in the design and delivery of the programme to understand the programme logic and construct a Theory of Change. This theory of how the programme activities were expected to lead to outcomes and impacts is presented in graphical form in the Logic Model below.



1.1.4 The 2022/3 COP

Previous programmes focused on improving access to adult education tended to contract large providers.³ The COP specifically focused on smaller community organisations, with a turnover below £500,000.

In 2022/23, an initial of the programme funded 12 organisations with grants between £5000 and £9000. The evaluation of the pilot found that:⁴

- The programme had successfully supported organisations to provide a valuable route into education for harder to reach adult learners, particularly those looking to improve their English.
- The programme supported Londoners with their English skills and their confidence.
- This in turn led to increased confidence about seeking employment or in going about their everyday activities.
- A bespoke and holistic approaches were most effective in converting engagements to referrals.
- The timescales were in some cases too short to build trust and presence in communities.

1.1.5 The 2023/2024 COP

The COP funded 28 community organisations with an annual turnover of less than £500,000 to deliver activities to engage and support Londoners into adult education between October 2023 and August 2024. The programme was originally intended to end in March 2024. However, all 28 organisations were offered an extension of one month, until 30 April 2024 due to delays seen at contracting and onboarding. 27 accepted this extension. The evaluation research programme ran concurrently with programme delivery from January until June 2024.

1.1.5.1 Funding

The programme granted 28 organisations a total of £676,966.04, with grants ranging from £15,000 to £27,000. Following an EOI process for additional funding, 15 projects were successfully awarded an additional £10,000 each for a continuation of activities between 1 May 2024 and 30 August 2024.

1.1.5.2 London Multiply

For the 2023/4 programme, the London Multiply programme contributed £550,000 to the COP. This funding was provided to ensure programme activity had a numeracy focus to help reduce negative perceptions and support Londoners to access numeracy provision. The London Multiply programme provides free numeracy courses across all London Boroughs to those who are aged 19+ and have limited maths qualifications.

³ [Skills Roadmap for London](#)

⁴ The evaluation of the pilot was produced by QaResearch and submitted to the GLA in June 2023.

1.1.5.3 Adult Education Budget Provision

The Adult Education Budget (AEB) is funding that was devolved to GLA in 2019-20 to deliver adult training and education courses. The AEB can be used to fully fund adults to the following levels:

- English and maths, up to and including level 2, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have not previously attained a GCSE grade A* - C or grade 4, or higher
- first full qualification at level 2 for individuals aged 19 to 23
- first full qualification at level 3 for individuals aged 19 to 23.

The delegation of funding to the Mayor has enabled the AEB to be tailored to Londoners needs, as set out in the Skills for Londoners Framework.⁵

1.2 Aims and Objectives of the Evaluation

The aim of the evaluation is to understand the outcomes and impacts of the programme on participants, community organisations, adult education providers, as well as the outcomes for the GLA and wider impacts on London. We adopted a theory-based approach: investigating whether the reality of programme implementation matched the theory of change in the Logic Model above. We used contribution analysis to analyse evidence to develop a line of reasoning from which we can draw a plausible conclusion that the program has made (or will make) an important contribution to the anticipated (and some unanticipated) outcomes and impacts.

1.3 Research Methodology

1.3.1 Case Studies

To identify the contribution of the programme, this evaluation takes a case-study approach. Of the 28 projects funded through the programme 8 projects were selected as case studies for research purposes. The case studies were purposively selected to reflect this diversity, including projects with varied approaches, geographic locations, and areas of focus as well as different project sizes and funding amounts.

Within each case study, we undertook semi-structured interviews with grantee staff, project partners and individuals referred on to the programme. Detail is provided in sections 1.3.2 and 1.3.3.

However, it should be noted that these case studies cannot accurately represent the entire cohort of projects due to the diversity of community organisations involved in the programme. This is an important limitation of the evaluation methodology.

1.3.1.1 Case Study Projects

The projects delivered significantly different activities across a range of London boroughs. The description of the projects as described by the projects is presented below.

⁵ https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/md2389_appendix_a_-_framework.pdf

Table 1.1 Description of Case Study Projects

Project	Target Borough(s)	Description
Transit Community Support CIC	Richmond Upon Thames; Hounslow	Connecting learners with further education and training providers that offer relevant courses and have the necessary funding to support their skill development & progression.
WE RESTART	All boroughs across Greater London	Supporting artists at risk and refugee artists to enhance their artistic skills, foster personal growth, and support their journey towards sustainable careers in the arts. Aims to create a vibrant and inclusive artistic community where they can thrive and contribute to the cultural landscape, whilst promoting social integration in a dedicated studio space with access to resources, mentorship programs, and professional development opportunities.
Adult & Community Development Academy (ACDA)	Hillingdon, Ealing, Hounslow, Harrow, Hammersmith & Fulham	Focused on making adult education, employment programmes, skills provision, and other learning opportunities more accessible to marginalised and disproportionately disadvantaged communities living in West London.
Belina Grow CIC	London Borough of Newham	Supporting disadvantaged women returners in Newham to access training, including London Multiply. The project also took part in the London Multiply Roadshow.
Orange Bow CIC	Lambeth, Wandsworth, Southwark and Croydon	Delivering a schedule of weekly outreach surgeries and twice monthly taster sessions across South London, reaching those most likely to benefit from adult learning programmes such as those out of work and impacted by the cost-of-living crisis.
Golden Opportunity Skills and Development	Ealing	Raising awareness of learning opportunities such as skills opportunities and careers in the Academy priority sectors (green, health and care, hospitality, digital and creative), the project seeks to break and address barriers to learning experienced by beneficiaries and support them to access adult learning provisions.
Living Under One Sun	Haringey	A community hub in Tottenham Hale for those without information, services, learning and training opportunity access. This is via an established Café Connect drop in, with one-to-one support services, health/wellbeing activities, with a numeracy/conversational focus.

Project	Target Borough(s)	Description
Leaders in Community	Tower Hamlets, Newham, Hackney	Supporting people affected by cost-of-living crises as well as digitally-excluded Bangladeshi women with low English levels. It helps them be more financially independent, developing skills and qualifications for good work, especially in Mayoral priority areas.

Source: <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/jobs-and-skills/training-providers-teaching-skills/jobs-and-skills-funding-opportunities/skills-londoners-community-outreach-programme?ac-182113=199939>

1.3.2 Case Study Interviews

The case studies involved 36 in-depth semi-structured interviews, conducted between January and May 2024, with:

- Five members of the GLA Skills & Employment Unit;
- Two GLA provider managers;
- Eight leads from the case study projects;
- Fifteen delivery staff members;
- Six AEB providers.⁶

ICF researchers also attended the GLA’s Networking and Knowledge Sharing Event in February 2024 to observe presentations from the projects.

1.3.3 Participant Interviews

Researchers also conducted 28 interviews with participants on the project. These were conducted both online and in-person where there was a need to have delivery staff translate participant responses.

Participant interviews provide insights into how the programme supported Londoners. Where possible, researchers developed ‘pen pics’ of participants describing their experience of the programme and the distance they have travelled on the programme. These are presented as vignettes throughout Chapter 5.

1.3.4 Data Analysis and Descriptive Statistics

We analysed programme MI to explore the performance of the projects individually and overall, against their year-to-date targets and progress to their end of project targets. This including examining performance against recruitment and referral targets. In addition, we also examined the characteristics of participants by geographical area, ethnicity, employment status, age and gender.

In analysing the referrals data, we only considered referrals to have been met if they were described as being confirmed. This means any participants with referral variables that were blank were not considered to have been referred into adult education.

⁶ We were unable to interview London Multiply providers in this round of research.

1.4 Report Structure

The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- Reflections on COP Project Management
- Reflections on Engagement
- Reflections on post-engagement activities
- Organisational Outcomes
- Reflections on the Participant Journey
- Conclusions and Recommendations

2 Reflections on COP Project Management

This chapter addresses the following research questions:

- What are grantees' perceptions of the commission process?
- Did the commissioning process engage the kinds of organisations the programme is targeted at?
- Did the programme achieve sufficient geographic reach?
- Were there any difficulties faced by the projects in adhering to GLA compliance and data requirements?
- What support was provided by the GLA to the organisations? How did this develop over the programme?
- What are grantees' perceptions of the delivery model?

It draws on analysis data of administrative data and interviews with:

- Five members of the GLA Skills & Employment Unit
- Two GLA provider managers
- Eight leads from the case study projects
- Fifteen delivery staff members

2.1 Commissioning process

2.1.1 What are grantees' perceptions of the commission process?

A total of 77 applications from organisations were independently assessed against the project aims and objectives. Most of the successful projects had attended the ideas camps in June 2023 and appreciated the ability to shape the design of the programme.

However, most projects described having misunderstood some aspects of the programme during the bidding stage. For example, a couple of projects felt that there needed to be more clarity on what would constitute an 'engagement' and a 'referral'. Whilst the flexibility to shape individual projects was appreciated, this could be easily remedied through a glossary of terms outlining definitions.

One project highlighted a misunderstanding on the length of the programme and a few projects mentioned misunderstandings around numeracy and LM targets.

2.2 Characteristics of the Organisations

2.2.1 Did the commissioning process engage the kinds of organisations the programme is targeted at?

The project aims to work with a range of community organisations – London-based community, voluntary, faith, cultural, or grassroots organisations – with an annual income under £500,000. The programme is targeted at organisations who work with, have experience engaging, or are embedded in communities with the programme target groups, described below.

The programme worked with a wide range of community organisations. At application, funded organisations were asked to demonstrate existing connections with their target groups or an ability to develop new connections with the groups they will work with through their application.

As a result, the 28 organisations commissioned are all highly specialised in the individuals and communities they support. However, they can be split up into five typologies of focus:

- Local/Neighbourhood focus
- Women +
- Specific demographic focus
- Asylum seekers and Refugees +
- Broader focus

Table 2.1 Typologies of community organisations

Target Groups	Count of projects	Details
Local/Neighbourhood focus	8	These organisations have a highly localised focus, based around specific neighbourhoods or community assets (such as community centres and cafes).
Women +	7	Some organisations support specific groups of women, such as South Asian women or Bangladeshi women.
Specific demographic focus	7	These organisations support individuals with specific characteristics, such as care workers, Orthodox Jewish communities, Somali, young people, adults with learning disabilities, men and women from an African Caribbean Heritage, out of work mother
Asylum seekers and Refugees +	3	These projects focused specifically on asylum seekers and refugees. One project also has a particular focus on refugee women.
Broad focus	3	These organisations operate across multiple boroughs support individuals with a range of barriers to education.

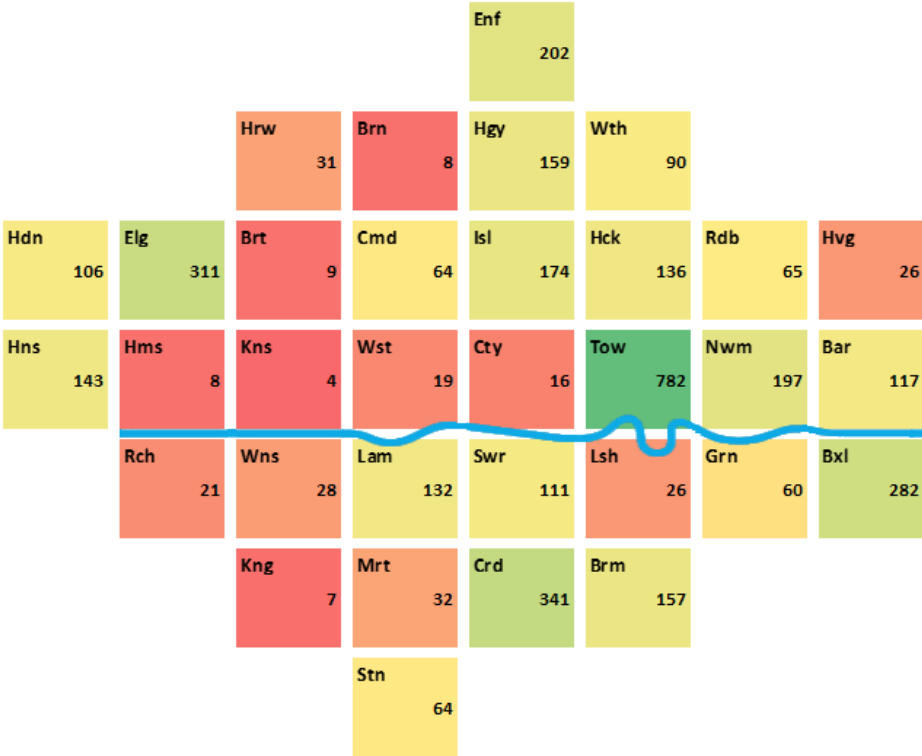
2.2.2 Did the programme achieve sufficient geographic reach?

As shown in Figure 2.1, the programme allocated funding relatively equally across North, South, East and West London. At least one project worked in each London borough. A total of 10 funded community organisations work in a single borough. 11 work across 2-3 boroughs, 6 work across 4-7 boroughs and one works across all London boroughs.

There was slightly less spread in terms of the number of participants supported by the programme as of June 2024 (Figure 2.1). Over 250 participants supported were from Tower Hamlets, Croydon, Ealing, and Brent. However, fewer than 20 participants were engaged from the boroughs of Kensington & Chelsea, Kingston upon Thames, Bexley, Hammersmith and Fulham, Bromley, Barking & Dagenham, and Westminster.

There is therefore an opportunity for the GLA to increase provision in some London boroughs, either through localised projects in these areas or pan-London projects with strong presence in these areas.

Figure 2.1 Number of participants engaged by borough



Source: GLA Monitoring Data

2.3 Administration and compliance

2.3.1 Were there any difficulties faced by the projects in adhering to GLA compliance and data requirements?

Community groups reported a few challenges related to administrative requirements. These challenges are felt to have a disproportionate impact because they imposed additional requirements and strain on small organisations and their staff. Organisations felt that their time and energy could be better spent on programme delivery.

Furthermore, the administrative requirements (in particular the lengthy form) are reported to be a barrier to recruiting participants to the project. This is documented in section 3.3.2.

Some organisations reported struggling with administrative requirements throughout the programme delivery and this causing delays and disruptions. While this was partly overcome from the granting of extensions by the GLA, there still remained high workloads for community organisations.

Organisations reported not receiving full information about reporting requirements before the programme started. Particularly on the length of the consent form. The handbook and forms when they arrived were not clearly labelled.

All of the projects said that the Participant Data Form (PDF) did not arrive for projects until later than anticipated. They also described how the required paperwork from the GLA – particularly the data sharing form – was longer and more

comprehensive than they had anticipated. They described having to spend significant time chasing participants for data to retrospectively evidence their engagement. A few projects were able to mitigate this by having well-established data collection and compliance processes, normally as a result of prior ESF funding.

The GLA team and PMs described difficulties in data collection and submitting claims. This was somewhat paralleled by most of the projects who described collecting data from participants as one of the most difficult aspects of the programme. The engagement document that includes the GDPR disclosure to be signed by participants is perceived to be overly lengthy (at over four pages) and most organisations said that it had discouraged some participants from starting on the programme.

Three organisations described how the depth of information required on the form was particularly off-putting for people fearful of deportation or experience of the justice system. As a result, projects described potential participants 'losing trust' in the process and being lost. A further three organisations also described similar results from asking for participants' highest level of education. Gradually, the projects have been able to overcome these barriers through real human relationships.

The projects could generally not explain why the GLA was asking for the data they are collecting. Potentially, this could be improved by increased and early communication on why the GLA requires this information.

2.3.2 What support was provided by the GLA to the organisations? How did this develop over the programme?

Overall, the projects felt that they had been well-supported by the GLA over the length of the programme in addressing any difficulties that arose. Most projects described the problems above as being more pronounced earlier in the programme and improved significantly over time.

While many of these issues were not overcome completely, organisations noted how having a dedicated GLA point of contact had been '*absolutely helpful*' in support of these challenges as it enables a relationship to be built between the GLA and the organisation to help resolve issues comfortably and with honesty. The GLA have also been helpful in ensuring everything completed is in line with the programme and accurate, "*you really need someone from the GLA team that every now and then supports you and follows up and pay attention to what you're doing. Otherwise, it's easy to make mistakes.*"

There was an acknowledgement across the board that the Provider Managers' (PM) support has had a significant positive impact on their ability to meet the contract requirements for data submission and using the operating systems. There was also an acknowledgement that this was an area of improvement for the organisations. Difficulties with administration and uploading documents has apparently improved with experience and PM support. Projects feel better placed to cope with these requirements going forwards and all projects feel well-prepared for further GLA contracts.

The projects also felt that the GLA were sufficiently flexible and adaptive to their needs, strengths and weaknesses. Where originally some organisations' activities and focus had a specific profile, they had conversations with the GLA around widening the target cohort in order to be able to engage more people with access to education. For example, one project originally focused on empowering communities

through art, but started doing outreach with the community to engage target cohort with London Multiply and AEB literacy courses.

2.4 Perception of the programme aims, objectives, and governance

All interviewees felt that the aims and ambitions of the programme aligned with those of their community organisation.

The delivery model for the COP is multifaceted, working with organisations in fostering community-based engagement to promote learning and increase participation in adult education through referrals. All organisations built partnerships and collaborations with adult education providers and help to address barriers to learning through targeted and tailored support and outreach methods, utilising their strengths and specialities to deliver their projects.

Generally, organisations perceived the programme to be well-aligned with their own overarching goals in engaging marginalised communities through grassroots engagement. They have all managed to engage a high number of people, noting that the broad requirements of the programme enabled them to reach and cater to more people than they would normally, e.g., those from BAME or migrant backgrounds, those with experience of the justice system, or those who lack formal education or qualifications.

All projects also felt that the programme delivery model offered the flexibility and empowerment for community organisations to use their existing strengths and arrangements to support participants. As a result, a range of diverse activities were delivered under the programme as described in Chapters 3 and 4.

Most projects would welcome funding earlier in the academic year, as well as longer-term funding for skills and education projects (as funded under ESF funding). Organisations felt that October start meant that they missed the opportunity to use September admissions and the school summer holidays as a way of engaging participants. Many projects talked about the importance of delivering in September when they meet new mothers in the area as their children start school as well as capitalising on enrolment period on adult education courses.

“This project is about integrating with society, about starting to understand how British culture works, how London works. So, for many of them, [it] is life changing.”

COP Project Lead

2.5 Key findings on COP Programme Management

The programme is active in most London boroughs, with projects varying widely in scope, the intensity of support provided, and the number of participants involved.

Grantees have strongly endorsed the program's goals and ambitions, feeling they align well with their community priorities. However, some expressed a need for earlier clarity on what constitutes "engagement" for the GLA.

Despite some contracting challenges, projects generally feel well-supported in their efforts to help adults access education.

The GLA's decision to extend 15 projects was positively received, and those projects believe they are on track to meet their targets.

However, projects were unable to explain why the GLA is requesting the data they are collecting. This could be improved through earlier and increased communication about the reasons for these data requirements.

3 Reflections on Engagement

This chapter addresses the following research questions:

- Is there sufficient reach in terms of participants from different backgrounds?
- What activities did COP projects deliver?
- Were there any barriers to engaging participants?
- Did projects meet their targets for engagement?

It draws on analysis data of administrative data and interviews with:

- Five members of the GLA Skills & Employment Unit;
- Two GLA provider managers;
- Eight leads from the case study projects;
- Fifteen delivery staff members.

3.1 Did projects meet their targets for engagement?

Engagements achieved against target were mixed.

- Eight of the 28 projects exceeded their targets (29%)
- Six projects nearly met (80% or over) their target (21%)
- Seven projects achieved between 50% and 75% of their target (25%)
- Seven projects achieved less than 50% of their engagement target (25%). These projects described having overestimated their engagement targets due to a lack of clarity on what constitutes engagement. The majority of these projects have received an extension from the GLA.

Overall, as of June 2024, across all projects, the programme had engaged 4011 Londoners against a target of 7365 (54%).

3.2 Participant Characteristics

3.2.1 Is there sufficient reach in terms of participants from different backgrounds?

The project aimed to support adults with specific intersecting experiences, such as:

- Care leavers,
- Ex-offenders,
- Unemployed and low-paid Londoners,
- Older people,
- Disabled people,
- Digitally excluded people,
- People with English language needs,
- People with negative experiences of mainstream education.

However, organisations were also able to identify specific target groups to support and the programme was not limited to the groups listed above.

All projects identified a lack of knowledge of 'the system' as the major barrier to engaging with skills and training opportunities. Furthermore, commonly, these Londoners do not feel that adult education is something freely and openly available to them. All the projects spoken to reported being able to engage Londoners who otherwise had no knowledge of the Adult Education opportunities thus achieving programme aims of improving access for Londoners.

- Most commonly the projects are supporting the following groups:
 - Refugees and asylum seekers;
 - Londoners with low levels of spoken/written English or English as a second language;
 - Single parents;
 - People with disabilities.

All the projects interviewed described how the demographics intersect and further compound the barriers to education and training. The Monitoring information collected through the PDFs show that the project reached a diverse set of participants with significant barriers to education. For example, the programme engaged:

- 2677 women (67% of engagements).
- 3105 unemployed Londoners (78%) compared to 822 employed Londoners (21%).
- 2405 Londoners in receipt of benefits (61%).
- 1654 Londoners with education levels below Upper Secondary (44%).
- 2168 Londoners with entry level or below English qualifications (64%).
- 1198 Black, Black British, Caribbean or African Londoners (30%), 1457 Asian or Asian British Londoners (37%), and 631 other or mixed ethnic groups (16%).
- 600 Londoners with a declared disability or health condition (15%).
- A range of ages (with 15% 18-24, 15% 25-30, 27% 31-40, 23% 41-50, 13% 51-60, 6% 71+).

In terms of the barriers self-identified by participants, the most common were:

- Being Black or from an ethnic minority (45%)
- Having low levels of English language (15%)
- Struggling due to the cost-of-living crisis (8%)
- Earning below the London Living Wage (7%).

3.3 Participant Engagement: Targets and Activities

3.3.1 What activities did COP projects deliver to engage participants?

COP grantees are place-based and locally well-connected organisations that are able to engage Londoners from their local community. The COP supported organisations to widen their reach and strengthen their position in their communities – and thus deliver participant engagement. The projects used a wide range of activities to engage Londoners on the programme.

Activities delivered include, but are not limited to:

- Coffee mornings
- Having previous learners as volunteers for courses and organisations
- Roadshow events
- Workshops
- Events and exhibitions
- Taster sessions

3.3.1.1 Community-building

Many projects described the project as ‘building its own community’. They were keen to stress that having shared characteristics and experiences, while useful for building trust, does not create a sense of community. Rather, the programme and the neighbourhood settings of the project helps to build a sense of community amongst participants. For example, as one project lead explained, a person who is Bengali and lives in Tower Hamlets does not necessarily mean that they are connected with the wider Bengali community. The COP project activities created small communities – in this example of a group of 20 single mothers. The community can support its members to overcome social isolation as well as encourage individuals to overcome complex barriers to entering training and education.

A few projects have been particularly successful in maintaining engagement through onboarding ‘cohorts’ of participants on to the programme. They felt that by approaching a group of participants in schools, sports clubs, or refugee accommodation had helped to build a community on the project. They also described how participants were able to support their peers and provide motivation for continued engagement.

3.3.1.2 Consistency and neighbourhood presence

Regularity and consistency were described as necessary for engaging Londoners who ordinarily would not engage with education and skills projects.

‘We work with people who have a lot of going on, not a lot of stability. The key to keeping them [engaged], is to offer that point of consistency and safety.’

COP Project Lead

Having access to their own premises is certainly an advantage for the community organisations. For example, it allows them to cross-refer participants from other activities onto the COP and vice versa in one setting. Having premises also ensures that participants have a regular place in which to meet delivery staff. Neighbourhood hubs were commonly described as the ‘gold standard’ for community engagement for this reason.

However, having an established hub is not a prerequisite for success in engaging participants on the COP. Rather, those projects without their own premises were able to build relationships with local organisations to build a recognisable presence in schools, job centres, sports centres, refugee accommodation, and libraries. A few project leads described this ‘mobile’ approach to engagement as a key method of increasing the visibility and reach of their organisation (and by default the COP).

3.3.1.3 Building relationships

As most organisations had existing positive relationships with local councils, education providers/delivery partners, and other organisations, this helped facilitate outreach and the referral process. The COP's delivery model also enabled building additional partnerships, which further enhanced the programme's reach. Organisations were able to engage participants in various settings such as libraries, schools, learning centres, job centres, town halls, community centres, and even Home Office hotel accommodation, through building upon and establishing relationships with these different groups.

3.3.1.4 Working with other organisations

A few projects described having relationships with other organisations as critical for increasing engagement. They described receiving referrals from other local community organisations, creating 'unofficial and informal hubs' to pool expertise, resources and funding. This allowed the projects to tailor their offer to the needs of the individuals.

3.3.1.5 Multi-lingual engagement

Almost all projects described the necessity of having a multi-lingual team to engage participants from a range of backgrounds. This was also critical to support participants' applications for training and education. Often, delivery staff are well-known members of the community with a broad and deep reach.

Most projects described how working with other organisations to help with cultural or language needs is also crucial. As one lead said, *'You can't work on your own... You really need cultural facilitators.'*

3.3.1.6 Employing participants

A few projects described employing participants who had been supported by the community organisations to deliver the programme. This was said to help engagement as it serves as a 'proof of concept' or a case study of how the organisations can support individuals to overcome barriers.

3.3.1.7 The London Multiply Roadshow

The London Multiply programme hosted 36 events across the city to engage Londoners who may not otherwise participate in numeracy provision and signpost them towards courses and providers. All COP funded projects were invited to attend events local to them, we interviewed staff from one COP funded programme who had attended an event. The project lead was positive about the event, particularly the opportunity it provided to network with London Multiply providers and create a 'seamless pipeline' from the project to numeracy provision. They also felt that the events helped to improve their relationship with providers, culminating in delivering a London Multiply course in a community setting, as described below.

3.3.2 Were there any barriers to engaging participants?

Organisations reported early difficulties in participant engagement and described having developed and adapted iteratively throughout the course of the programme. Difficulties with initial engagement and onboarding was noted by most organisations,

with participants being hesitant to provide their personal details. This was overcome by a few organisations through the use of workshops to break initial hesitation and build confidence. For participants hesitant about enrolling due to clashing personal responsibilities or in wanting to attend places more local, delivery staff were able to work flexibly and ensure activities worked around participants' schedules.

Most organisations found that their initial method of recruiting through job centres was challenging as the small capacity of job centres limited their ability to secure larger volumes of referrals. Therefore, it was difficult to recruit people outside of specific job centre events such as careers fairs. This was overcome by increasing their number of job centre visits across London to widen their reach and increase the organisations' presence in these spaces. Similarly, organisations that initially promoted the programme via social media found lower response rates. This led to a shift to in-person engagement methods, such as having a presence at local schools and youth centre which helped to increase engagement significantly.

One consistent challenge to participant engagement was the consent form. The length of the form was off-putting for many participants, especially the requirements for additional documents such as ID and proof of address. However, this requirement was dropped within the first week of onboarding in response to feedback to the GLA. In conjunction, explaining different aspects of the form, such as the 3-page privacy notice, was confusing for participants, especially for those with lower English language proficiency. The length of the form and documents required also led to scepticism from potential learners as many were wary about sharing their data.

Additionally, the lengthy forms meant that there was a large volume of extra administrative work that had to be completed by staff, which was seen as cumbersome for many. Therefore, organisations felt that more streamlined processes and a simpler consent form would be more beneficial to programme delivery.

Ascertaining correct information from participants was also a struggle for delivery staff. This issue was mainly able to be overcome by speaking to people patiently and informatively to build rapport and trust, demonstrating to people how their data is used and collected. Overall, the main strategies to enhance participant engagement was seen through initially building trust and providing clear and informative explanations on the programme and course.

3.4 Key findings

The projects are connecting with Londoners who might not have been aware of adult education, Multiply, and skills programs available in the city. The program is helping these individuals recognize that these offerings are designed for people like them, fitting their needs and aspirations, and are both free and accessible.

Additionally, the projects are engaging a diverse group of participants. They are utilizing a variety of engagement activities, with the most successful ones maintaining a strong presence in the community and neighbourhoods. These projects effectively showcased the benefits of the program and adult education through compelling case studies.

4 Reflections on post-engagement activities

This chapter addresses the following research questions:

- Are the projects meeting their targets for referrals?
- Are projects delivering a range of activities to continue engagement and support participants into education?
- Which activities were most effective in maintaining engagement converting engagement to referral?
- To what extent were projects able to overcome delivery challenges?
- What role did the GLA play in overcoming these challenges?
- It draws on analysis data of administrative data and interviews with:
 - Five members of the GLA Skills & Employment Unit
 - Two GLA provider managers
 - Eight leads from the case study projects
 - Fifteen delivery staff members

4.1 Referral targets and activities to meet them

4.1.1 Are the projects meeting their targets for referrals?

Most delivery organisations met or exceeded their referral targets, with a few exceptions:

- 15 projects exceeded their targets for AEB referral, 9 projects exceeded their targets for London Multiply referral
- 3 projects nearly met (80% or over) their target for AEB referral, 2 projects nearly met their target for London Multiply referral
- 7 projects achieved between 50%-79% of their target for AEB referral, 3 projects achieved this for London Multiply referral
- 3 projects achieved less than 50% of their target for AEB referral, 7 projects achieved less than 50% of their target for London Multiply referral
- 7 projects have been granted an extension and therefore have not yet reported referral figures for London Multiply

Overall, as of June 2024, across the projects, the programme referred 3154 Londoners to AEB providers, against a target of 3277 (96%). Furthermore, it referred 1042 participants to London Multiply providers against a target of 1348 (77%).

Organisations cited the length of the consent form, its required documents, as well as the administrative burden resulting from it, as the main issue behind not meeting referral targets. These issues with the form, such as the requirements to provide proof of address, ID, national insurance number, was consequently perceived by potential learners as 'off-putting', hindering referral rates. One organisation stated their targets turned out to be an 'over-estimation' of the amount of people they could

refer due to only realising the difficulties linked to the form after project initiation. The forms were described to be impractical, and so ability to almost meet or meet referral targets despite this barrier was commended as a ‘testament to trust within the community’, cementing that these issues were able to be overcome to some extent through building trust between organisation and participants.

Issues with education providers – both AEB and LM – were also said to be a barrier to meeting targets. Some adult education providers were less easy to collaborate with than others, with those with poorer response rates leading to delays in referral for some organisations. Additionally, providers with limited capacity hindered referral rates as locality was an important selling point to many participants who experienced barriers such as travel costs, especially for groups like asylum seekers.

Projects mainly attributed their success in meeting or exceeding referral targets to in-person engagement, as well as a personable, accommodating, and community-centred approach. This was seen as key to building initial trust with people in order to make referrals in spite of hurdles caused by the consent form – with staff stating, *“I think that helped quite a lot in terms of establishing a sort of relationship or a link with these people rather than just collecting the needs and referrals.”*

Changing or adapting strategies to widen reach or to better accommodate to community needs helped organisations increase referral rates to meet targets. For example, organisations both leveraged existing community networks using local volunteers to undertake outreach, as well as going beyond these networks to build additional connections with different organisations. Some organisations increased the number of volunteers to meet targets, sometimes using vouchers as incentive. In particular, one organisation set up a Facebook page for the local Syrian Community through which they can reach out to Arabic speakers within the community who could assist with interpreting for onboarding and engagements. Other strategies to engage and meet referral targets included hosting or participating in community events, coffee mornings, and phone calls to personalise the outreach and help build relationships.

4.1.2 Are projects delivering a range of activities to continue engagement and support participants into education?

A range of activities are being delivered across the case study community organisations and adult education providers that appear to be tailored to specific target groups relevant to each organisation. This includes: activities to increase engagement; course provision; and support in accessing and completing education or training courses.

The range of **courses** participants were referred into by the community organisations included:

- Technical courses such as IT, digital skills
- Health related courses such as fitness and health, healthcare, first aid
- Creative digital courses such as audio/visual production workshops, digital promotions (e.g., marketing), digital music courses, IT technical sales
- Other creative courses such as art, embroidery, photography
- Security training
- Food safety

The types of activities that **facilitated and supported learners’ journeys** include:

- Providing 1-1 advice and guidance
- Provision of project advisors
- Pre-assessment of learners' goals, needs, and skills in order to refer them to the most appropriate and accessible courses
- Following up post-referral to check in on learners
- CV-building/employability workshops
- Outdoor activities/trips that facilitate social integration and learning, as well as supporting wellbeing and health
- Workshops
- Mentoring programmes
- Language assistance
- In-house employability support during/post course
- In-house mental health support
- Accompanying learners to assessments, helping them through assessments, and then following up once they start courses - *"I think that helped quite a lot in terms of establishing a sort of relationship or a link with these people rather than just collecting the needs and referrals."*
- Tailoring courses in collaboration with education providers to ensure they are best suited for target groups

4.1.3 Which activities were most effective in maintaining engagement converting engagement to referral?

All case study projects reported high referral rates during the programme, each using various activities and strategies to effectively ensure initial participant engagement led to referral and course enrolment.

4.1.3.1 Integrating learning into existing activities

A few projects described **adapting their existing activities to integrate information about available skills and education opportunities**. As one project lead said, *'we get people through the door for a range of reasons, like the foodbank, the community allotment. **Once they are here, we can start that conversation about the available [education] opportunities.**'*

Another lead described this as a strength of the programme delivery model: *'**the participants don't necessarily think they are on a programme [...] they see us as part of their community, a place they trust and feel trusted. This is the easiest way to open up conversations about what they want to do in their lives and how further education can enable that.**'*

A few organisations also delivered innovative activities to embed learning into the delivery of their usual provision. For example, the Golden Opportunities project already facilitates Mindful Drawing classes. For the COP, they designed a new set of classes that focused on participants imagining an improved life in the future, and drawing what they would need to make these changes. As a result, the project was able to show participants how skills and education could help to improve their lives. The lead also described how these classes 'inspired' participants to sign up to AEB and LM courses, despite only starting the course to practice mindful drawing.

A few projects also integrated numeracy into their existing provision. For example, Living Under One Sun teaches numeracy skills and arts and crafts simultaneously, through their clothing refashioning and knitting classes. Other projects are also using games such as, bingo, snakes and ladders, scrabble, as well as adding a 'game element' to numeracy taster sessions, to integrate numeracy into their provision. Across the board, the projects felt that this was critical to maintaining engagement. They described how participants can sometimes be 'intimidated' if numeracy is the focus of provision, due to fears and anxieties arising from low confidence or negative experiences at school.

However, when integrated into other skills and activities, they were much more willing to engage with numbers. In a few cases projects described how participants who would otherwise 'avoid anything with numbers' gained the confidence to sign up to LM courses. These projects described a 'fine line' between emphasising the value of improved numeracy and ensuring the focus of activities did not feel 'like being back at school.'

Other projects focused on financial literacy to integrate numeracy into their support. They were able to support participants in identifying the practical skills they needed to develop to better manage their finances.

Across the board, projects described how engaging Londoners and encouraging them to progress onto numeracy courses (both LM and AEB), relied on making participants aware that numeracy would: significantly improve their lives; be accessible to their level (and participants were often embarrassed); and would be a new experience, without the baggage of experiences in school settings.

4.1.3.2 An individualised and personalised approach to support

All case study projects were taking **an individualised and personalised approach to support**, ensuring the delivery staff listened and understood potential learners and delivering appropriate activities. Organisations who were able to develop individual learning plans that addressed different barriers to learning and demonstrated to potential learners their eligibility for different courses experienced success in referral rates. Activities such as skills checks and pre-assessments helped facilitate this, demonstrating to learners what they could tangibly achieve and do.

Furthermore, a clear and informative delivery approach was also seen as vital to build trust and rapport with potential learners within this individualised approach to successfully gain referrals. For this, having project advisors who could provide 1-1 guidance in these cases were effective. In particular, one delivery staff member mentioned that mindsets of potential learners were seen to shift during discussion, from initially viewing adult education as something 'formal' to something that will help them day-to-day and acquire new skills.

Other organisations found that conducting workshops was more effective than 1-1 conversations when engaging people as the group setting helped to break hesitation and instil confidence in potential learners. A combination of both approaches could be adopted going forward when communicating with different groups in order to ensure optimal referral rates – with workshops and group activities to obtain initial engagement and interest, and 1-1 advice and guidance to inform potential learners of the courses and outcomes they could obtain.

4.1.3.3 A community centred approach

Akin to the individualisation and personalisation of these activities and strategies, having a **community centred approach** was also mentioned to be appealing and helped turn engagement into referral. Having a relationship with and knowing the community and their needs was helpful in personalising engagement as learners are more likely to trust these organisations. Having a physical presence also helped with this. For example, Orange Bow has a café where they are able to embed themselves into the community and meet people, in this sense they have established themselves to be a trusted organisation, which has helped increase referral rates.

Another example of physical presence in the community is shown through We Restart who found that when they place themselves in places such as hostels or refugee accommodation, people are more inclined to speak to them (either out of curiosity, or because they want people to speak to). In doing so, they have also established themselves as a 'familiar and trustworthy link', acting as an 'interface' for participants to access courses. Other delivery leads have also mentioned that locality of the organisations was a large 'selling point' to referrals and enrolment.

Organisations that felt they were particularly successful engaged and supported cohorts with shared experiences. This allowed delivery staff to refer participants as a group. This has two major benefits. Participants were able to support each other and 'provide encouragement and accountability' to follow up the referral. Further, the projects were able to approach providers with a 'ready-made' cohort of learners. This was thought to be crucial in gaining trust from the providers and this allowed them to negotiate new AEB courses that suit the needs of learners.

In one case, this involved an agreement to deliver London Multiply courses in a community centre with on-site childcare to a cohort of mothers during the school day. This ensured that single parents could attend numeracy courses that would otherwise be inaccessible to them.

4.1.3.4 Building trust in the community

Organisations valued being able to build upon their existing community presence and relationships to promote learning opportunities. They highlighted being '*established as a trusted provider, with connection to the community*' as key to supporting participants into education. This trusting relationship was also perceived to help participants access courses from different providers, with community organisations acting as 'brokers' for education providers as they understand participants' needs. Consolidating relationships and building trust between organisation and participant was perceived to be integral throughout the programme, in not only collecting referrals, but also in ensuring participants actually attend and complete their courses, with one staff member saying, '*I think [building trust] helped quite a lot in terms of establishing a sort of relationship or a link with these people rather than just collecting the needs and referrals.*'

In particular, one case study organisation was able to partner with one of their learning providers and have the leader of the company as a community outreach champion on this project. This helped to increase both reach and referrals as the organisations worked cooperatively, both utilising their presence in the community to maximise impact and engagement. This collaboration encouraged by the programme facilitates promotion of adult learning and indicates the value in acting as a network of organisations which benefit the wider community.

4.1.3.5 Courses that offer tangible outcomes

Additionally, **courses that offer tangible outcomes** such as qualifications (e.g. ESOL), accreditations (e.g. CCS cards), guaranteed job interviews, and progression opportunities appeared to be the most popular amongst all referrals. These offerings notably helped encourage individuals to enrol onto adult education courses as it presents avenues for them to obtain accredited certification, for example in healthcare. This then provided opportunities for participants to progress further academically or enables them to seek work in the NHS. Moreover, as most available courses were either free or subsidised, this helped turn engagement into referral as it tackles a large financial barrier for those who had previously not considered adult education.

4.1.3.6 Material support for participants

Most projects have had to support participants with other aspects of their lives. As one lead said,

'education and training is obviously so important. But, for most of our participants they have bills to pay, no childcare, maybe a visa application, waiting on their universal credit [...] the thought of education can be a bit overwhelming until these are dealt with.'

As a result, most projects are providing at least one of:

- Access to foodbanks
- Childcare on site
- English language support
- Travel costs
- Support completing UC forms

All projects felt that this was important to encourage participants to engage with the programme (or *'to show the participant we can help with what matters'*) and start to unlock some of the barriers to education.

4.1.3.7 Tailoring AEB courses alongside providers

A few projects described working with AEB providers to tailor courses to increase their accessibility. For example, one project worked with a provider to embed numeracy into an ESOL course. They felt that participants would most benefit from ESOL in terms of employability and life chances. However, they also heard from participants that numeracy was a particular priority for the cohort. As a result, they were able to co-design a scheme of work that addressed both needs. Another project provided language support to participants on a numeracy course. This involved hosting the course in their premises and project staff acting as translators for the participants. Project staff felt that this was necessary to ensure a high level of attendance and that participants could fully benefit from the AEB provision.

4.2 Community organisation work done after referral

The community organisations are supporting participants after referral. They are using their relationships to add value to the programme. All of the projects said that they continued to support participants after referral. In most cases, this was to

mitigate some of the difficulties participants have faced when enrolling on to courses (as described above). However, they also described:

- Weekly check-ins with participants
- Regular calls with the provider
- Cross-referrals to other projects and services
- Drop-in sessions

One of the AE providers appreciated the organisation's ongoing work with learners *'and it also helps, because if someone's not engaging or let's say they've moved from the area then [name of organisation] are able to say, well, look, this person has issues now in terms of attending, or whatever, even illness. So, they're on the ball in terms of what's happening to all their clients.'*

The programme does not explicitly fund these activities. The community organisations felt that they were uniquely placed to offer longer-term 'wraparound' support for participants to ensure that participants enrol into training and education and complete their courses.

4.3 Delivery Challenges

4.3.1 To what extent were projects able to overcome delivery challenges? What role did the GLA play in overcoming these challenges?

4.3.1.1 Engagement difficulties

Some organisations experienced lack of responses from providers, or trouble with building relationships with new providers, which led to lower-than-expected referral rates, and course delays. On many occasions these challenges were overcome through contacting the GLA to prompt responses, as well as persistence from the community organisation to build more relationships through attending or inviting providers to roadshow or job centre events, or physically going into colleges to introduce their organisation and the COP. In cases where providers were resistant to engage due to thinking organisations were 'tapping into their stream', clear communication (facilitated by the GLA) helped to rectify this. Overall, despite all organisations acknowledging difficulties in engaging providers in some sense, they were mostly able to overcome these challenges themselves, and/or with the help of the GLA through facilitation of introductions and providing opportunities for networking.

4.3.1.2 Accessibility barriers

A key challenge to delivery was ensuring courses were accessible and digestible to participants, this barrier however was seen to have been accounted for and addressed by most organisations. Often, organisations would create individualised learning plans for participants before they start courses to address relevant barriers, such as illness, and childcare and/or work commitments, in order to provide support.

Most organisations were able to ensure the courses had flexible timings, ran multiple times a day, or could be completed remotely. One organisation was also able to provide tablets to participants for 6 months to facilitate learning. As mentioned, locality was a running participant need, so finding a suitable and local

place to enrol and refer participants to was difficult, especially as many providers ended up being over-subscribed. Some providers were able to account for this by having ongoing or consistently recurring courses, and others managed to find a suitably sized venue that was local in order to minimise travel costs.

4.3.1.3 Language and cultural barriers

Language and cultural barriers were able to be overcome to a large extent due to the accommodations in place from community organisations. For example, having in-person outreach with multilingual approaches in cultural spaces such as mosques helped to build trust with these communities to convince them to enrol. In course delivery, one organisation experienced challenges with providers who were unreliable, and whose ESOL courses were found to be insufficiently practical or useful for their participants. They then started to co-facilitate this course with the provider, using their own ESOL tutor and volunteers who had previously completed the course, to address this issue and support learning. As their in-house tutor knows the participants well, this greatly helped with the delivery of ESOL courses, as well as having a volunteer that speaks their language and can share their own past experience.

Other skills providers added ESOL elements to courses including Maths to accommodate to those with language needs. It was found that overcoming language barriers through having people available to communicate in different languages, adds to the positive and community-like environment of these organisations which in turn facilitated learning.

4.4 Key findings

Despite experiencing contracting and administrative difficulties, the projects generally feel they have been successful in meeting their engagement and referral targets. This is reflected somewhat in the number of engagements and referrals recorded by the projects.

Projects are delivering a range of activities, both in supporting and engagement capacities, and also in reference to the range of courses being offered. These organisations are utilising their existing strengths, networks and connections, and community presence and knowledge to tailor activities that successfully engage and support target groups into adult education. This is something the COP can benefit from.

Having pre-established relationships with providers was notably an advantage to increasing referral rates. However, both the GLA and organisations acknowledged these relationships are forged and built over time. Overall, all projects felt they were more able to engage providers compared to before the project.

Projects that provide additional support to participants, such as interpreters, accompaniment to assessments, follow-ups, material support (such as childcare, foodbanks), and employment support, also experienced success in referral rates. Additionally, projects with tangible outcomes such as accredited certification were viewed more favourably.

All of the projects said that they continued to support participants after referral. However, this is not reported or recorded in outputs achieved.

5 Organisational Outcomes

This chapter addresses the following research questions:

- To what extent have projects built new relationships with AEB providers and LM?
- Which activities were most effective?
- What barriers were faced (and overcome) for engaging providers?
- What organisational changes have been made as a result of the programme?
- It draws on analysis data of administrative data and interviews with:
 - Five members of the GLA Skills & Employment Unit
 - Two GLA provider managers
 - Eight leads from the case study projects
 - Fifteen delivery staff members

5.1 Engagement with AEB Providers and London Multiply leads

5.1.1 To what extent have projects built new relationships with AEB providers and London Multiply providers?

There has been variation between the case study programmes on the extent they have built new relationships with AEB providers and LM providers. Most organisations (5 out of 8) had pre-existing relationships with AEB providers and/or LM, and many of them had to build additional relationships for the purpose of the programme. Two organisations had to build all their relationships with AEB providers for the programme, and one organisation had minimal relationships with external providers, starting with having only two partner organisations to now having built 8 or 9 relationships. One organisation had a selection of longstanding pre-existing relationships with AEB providers, and while they were able to meet new providers through the COP, there was limited effort to build new relationships outside of their current partners. There was no notable variation in the experience of engaging LM and AEB providers.

5.1.2 Which activities were most effective?

A range of activities took place to build new relationships with providers. Beyond reaching out via email or phone to introduce their organisations to providers and propose collaborations, community organisations found that **participating in events such as seminars, conferences, workshops, exhibitions, or roadshows** to be effective in building relationships as it **enables opportunities for wider networking and collaboration**. One case study organisation invited a local college to a roadshow event where they introduced them to another partner AEB provider in hope that the college could support the provider in delivering classes for asylum seekers in future.

Another project reached out to London Multiply providers to ensure that their project was promoted by other organisations and providers. They presented themselves as

a 'wraparound' offer, in which the participant journey from engagement to referral was clear and consistent. This was particularly the case at the Roadshow. Organisations and London Multiply providers worked together to ensure that they were supporting each other at the roadshow, coordinating their messaging, and ensuring that they were able to signpost potential participants to the most appropriate provision. The community organisations felt that this had helped them to present their project as 'worthwhile' as they could direct participants to the tangible qualifications available from the providers, alongside presenting case studies of successful participants. Therefore, **participating** in these events can **broaden and facilitate a network of local providers that can help each other** in supporting referrals and collaboratively delivering different courses, as they are able to share challenges and solutions amongst each other.

Another project further forged a link between the council and college providers, as well as asking other providers to collaborate and share resources in a way that addresses relevant and wider learning needs of the area. This helped to mobilise different providers and increase the organisation's links and connections. Other community organisations have reported delivering workshops in colleges and schools to build engagement and attract different providers to collaborate with. Having initial collaborative projects with providers and then maintaining contact through calls and regular updates enquire about or promote any new events/courses further assists the development of a longstanding positive professional relationship between community organisation and education provider.

Many organisations reported the GLA in being useful throughout the process to encourage relationship building. Specifically, providing lists and maps of different local providers to each community organisation was perceived to be helpful.

5.1.3 What barriers were faced (and overcome) for engaging providers?

Most organisations experienced some level of difficulty in building and maintaining relationships with AEB and LM providers.

Responsiveness of AEB and LM providers were cited to be a key issue faced by organisations when trying to communicate or build connections. Lack of or slow responses caused delays in starting courses. Interestingly, one case study organisation experienced poor response rates from a provider despite having previously collaborated with them. This was overcome by reaching out to the GLA to prompt responses.

Another barrier was the providers' **capacity** as many did not have the resources to cope with and process referrals and applications. Furthermore, as locality was a key issue for participants, there was found to be an imbalance in the spread of participants across providers, with those most local to the community being over-subscribed and others having more availability. This, in turn, impacted levels of communication between community organisation and provider, as those with lack of capacity were less responsive to organisations.

There were also initial challenges with providers who thought community organisations may be **encroaching on their areas of course provision**, which led to hesitancy to collaborate. One organisation was able to rectify this by demonstrating that this project would help enhance and boost their reach, rather than compete for the same targets. Subsequent meetings, facilitated by the GLA, addressed these issues which led to increased positive engagements and partnerships.

One organisation who worked with their pre-existing provider partners revealed one of the reasons for their lack of outreach to new providers was due to being **unsure of how to find different providers, specifically providers whose course offering aligned with theirs**. Additionally, maintaining new relationships was also proven difficult due staff on both sides already being overwhelmed with work. As the GLA did not provide them with contacts, it was difficult to reach out to different providers and so they hoped in future the GLA would be able to support this by setting up meetings with organisations and providers whose courses are in alignment.

Most projects described how providers had refused to take on some participants referred from the programme. This has led to a number of impacts:

- Reduced trust between community organisations and providers;
- Reduced trust between participants and the community organisations; and
- Sometimes participants losing trust in their own ability to join a course.

In a few cases, projects described not *'feeling like the priority of the providers'*. They felt that the providers were unwilling to engage with the programme. As a result, the projects were unable to offer the range or flexibility of education opportunities they had envisioned in the bidding stage.

Projects with pre-established relationships with providers have had a significantly better experience of referring participants. However, there was an acknowledgement from both the GLA and projects that these relationships take time to build. All projects felt that they were in a better place to engage with providers than they were before the project. In some cases, this was the first time they had engaged with local providers and the programme has allowed them to 'start the dialogue.'

There is, therefore, an opportunity for the GLA to act as a broker between the organisations and providers. This would be most useful at the start of the programme, given the time it takes to build trusting relationships and the capacity issues described by the projects. Projects felt that the GLA could use its influence as a funder to promote COP to AEB providers and encourage or even actively broker relationships between providers and COP grantees. Many interviewees strongly felt that this is a missed opportunity that could improve achievement of programme aims without considerable burden.

5.2 What organisational changes have been made as a result of the programme?

Some projects have seen a significantly improved reach and relationship with the AEB and LM providers. Most interviewees felt that this was a key outcome of the programme. Most interviewees also felt that these relationships would continue and improve in the next round of the programme and will outlive the programme. A few projects are referring Londoners onto AEB/London Multiply courses outside of the programme.

Organisations have also been able to offer paid work to 'community leaders' that previously engaged in informal or voluntary work. These 'community leaders' have been able to leverage existing community networks. The 'community leaders' are often members of disadvantaged or vulnerable communities and the programme has been able to provide paid work alongside development opportunities for these individuals.

Delivering activities through COP widened the reach of the organisations which had had a more specialised focus before and supported with expanding and establishing a strengthened network with other community organisations.

A few organisations valued the sense of satisfaction derived from supporting project participants and initiating multi-agency conversations to better address the needs of the target cohort.

Community organisations have experienced a range of positive impacts as a result of the programme, including:

- Significantly improved reach and relationship with AEB and LM providers. Most projects were able to identify new and improved relationships with AEB/LM providers as a result of the programme's focus.
- The ability to increase the range of activities they can deliver. The grants received and new focus on adult education enabled the organisations to extend the range of activities they are delivering.
- Increased capacity. Similarly, the projects often used their grants to employ additional staff, who were able to support the organisations in wide-ranging ways.
- Enhanced ability to support individuals from project to employment. Organisations developed new activities to engage and support Londoners into employment.
- Satisfaction in supporting participants and fostering multi-agency conversations to better address community needs.

5.3 Key findings

There is variation between the case study organisations in ability to build and maintain new relationships with AEB providers and LM, with most projects experiencing difficulties that caused delays, primarily due to poor responsiveness and limited provider capacity.

Organisations undertook various activities to build and maintain new relationships with providers. Beyond initial outreach via phone or email, projects sought to grow their network through participating in events such as seminars, conferences, workshops, and roadshows. Here, they could establish new connections and expand existing networks which was helpful for the COP.

Projects with previously established relationships had better experiences overall. However, many still struggled to forge new relationships due to lack of initial support and contacts provided by the GLA. Providers' refusal of participants caused trust issues which consequently impacted community organisations and participants' confidence.

Case study projects suggested the GLA could act as a broker to facilitate these relationships at project outset, using its influence to promote collaboration and support the COP's goals.

Community organisations have experienced a range of positive impacts as a result of the programme, including:

- Significantly improved reach and relationship with AEB and LM providers
- The ability to increase the range of activities they can deliver
- Increased capacity.

- Enhanced ability to support individuals from project to employment
- Satisfaction in supporting participants and fostering multi-agency conversations to better address community needs.

6 Reflections on the Participant Journey

This chapter addresses the following research questions:

- What barriers to adult education are faced by participants?
- What are projects doing to effectively support participants to overcome barriers?
 - What has been the distance travelled by participants?

28 interviews were conducted with participants who had engaged with Belina Grow (n=4), Transit (n=5), Living Under One Sun (n=5), WeRestart (n=3), ACDA (n=4), Orange Bow CiC (n=4), and Leaders in Community (n=4).

6.1 What barriers to adult education are faced by participants?

Many participants who engaged with the GLA-funded programmes had been long-term unemployed and reliant on Universal Credit, and some had not ever accessed education or training, in the UK or otherwise.

Participants faced a range of barriers to accessing education/ training, and subsequently, work, and many participants faced **multiple/overlapping barriers** (see case study example, below).

Case Study 1 - Overlapping barriers

S previously worked in domiciliary care but stopped in 2023 due to physical health issues. She began looking for jobs again after a period to rest but found (after six months of searching) that she was having difficulty getting back into work. She also decided during this time that due to her physical health issues, domiciliary care may be challenging to re-enter as it required extensive travel. Furthermore, she had no recognised GCSEs in England which prevented acceptance to roles, as *'everywhere you're going they are asking for certification'*.

6.1.1 Barriers around language

Many participants **did not have English as their first language**. This prevented them from accessing work or even having the confidence to apply for jobs or training due to quality of written and verbal communication and some lacked awareness of opportunities due to language barriers. While some of these participants also had low or no training/education/work experience, some had degrees and were *'technically strong'* candidates for roles but struggled to communicate in English, which prevented them from accessing work. Relatedly, **some participants who had recently moved to the UK or sought asylum in the UK** lacked awareness of training and employment opportunities, with one participant specifically stating that his immigration status had hindered his ability to work, while another in asylum accommodation also lacked finances to travel to different courses.

Case Study 1 - Language barrier

Before the course, H was looking after the kids at home and struggled with communicating in English. She lacked confidence to speak and made a lot of mistakes, especially grammatical, and struggled with communicating in social situations but also in everyday life. She wanted to improve her language skills to be able to be more comfortable and confident when interacting with people and when dealing with everyday tasks, such as speaking with staff at school and healthcare professionals.

6.1.2 Barriers around lack of work experience

Some participants did not have work experience, or work experience in the UK. Some participants with degrees had not been able to gain 'real life' experience in their areas, which acted as a barrier to employment (see case study example, below). Many participants were de-motivated due to being rejected for work despite having qualifications and required opportunities to upskill.

Case Study 2 Barriers due to lack of 'real-life' work experience

Z was a criminology and criminal justice graduate and had been unable to secure a job in this field since finishing her degree. She had experience in retail and in food business but was unable to obtain even entry-level jobs due to many places requiring experience. She had plans to do a year abroad and an internship year whilst at university however was unable to due to covid. She has been on Universal Credit and looking for graduate/entry-level jobs since the beginning of 2023 with little luck. She had even undertaken online courses in Level 2 Counselling and Level 2 Childcare to gain more knowledge and experience but was still unable to find a job. Z had felt depressed, demotivated, and like she was '*in a rut*' during this process.

6.1.3 Barriers around lack of previous education or training

When **participants lacked education/training/qualifications or recognised/formal qualifications in the UK**, they often had low awareness of opportunities available, were uncertain of how to access them, and struggled to find work. One participant had lost their GCSE Maths certificate, so could not get onto the Level 3 NVQ course they required to progress in their career.

Case Study 3 - Barriers due to lack of previous education or training

A did not have any formal education prior to arriving to the UK and was living in asylum accommodation. He was unaware of what educational opportunities are available, and this was in fact the biggest barrier to accessing courses. Prior to engaging with the project, he had no plan or idea of what to do and felt lost and depressed. His main motivation was to improve his English-reading, writing, grammar and communication. He also wanted to access further education for employment purposes and also to be able to support his child.

6.1.4 Other barriers

Several participants stated that they had **mental or physical health issues** which had prevented them from working, re-entering work, or accessing training. It may be that education/training felt physically or logistically inaccessible or too challenging to enter while managing health issues.

Childcare had also been a barrier to participants' access to education, training, and/or work. Women were either responsible for childcare in the family or were single mothers. While some had not necessarily seen childcare as a barrier, it had meant they had lacked time to identify and enrol on courses and/or identify potential career opportunities.

Case Study 4 – Childcare barriers

R has been out of work for the past 18 years as she has been a full-time carer for her son with special needs. Prior to this, she has years of experience working for a housing association and also working for the NHS as a support worker and an interpreter. R has completed various short courses previously in subjects such as business administration and IT, however, was never able pursue work in these fields.

Some participants were in work, but work which was not seen to be stable (described as part-time and/or ad-hoc) **or satisfactory**. Other participants were in work but had not been trained and/or gained experience in the area they really wanted to go into.

6.2 What are projects doing to effectively support participants to overcome barriers?

All participants interviewed were referred by projects onto relevant educational courses and if participants had missed the deadline for a certain course, they were often placed into adjacent or relevant courses in the interim so they could progress with learning or developing skills. Indeed, quantitative data shows that case study organisations generally exceeded their referral targets for AEB and London Multiply, with a few exceptions.⁷ Furthermore, most participants were referred onto several courses at the same time. See an example, below.

Case Study 5 – Help identifying career path and pathways

R knew of Living Under One Sun as she had taken her daughter to courses run there before, but discovered last year that there might be support she herself could tap into for education and training. She had not been in education for 13 years and had been in and out of 'odd jobs' to support herself and her daughter, including in childcare, but had not had time or resource to think about long-term career. R worked with staff at LUOS to identify that she would like a formal qualification in counselling. Although before this, she had not considered counselling, staff helped her to narrow down her interests, and this was more in mentorship than it was in childcare. LUOS staff sent her to an open day in college to speak to tutors

⁷ Transit only met 58% for AEB; Leaders in Community at 0% for London Multiply, ACDA were below for AEB and London Multiply (35% and 14%, respectively).

more about the counselling course, which resulted in her registering interest, passing an assessment, and being signed up for the September course, which she is excited to begin. In the interim, staff at LUOS identified R's lack of confidence in her reading and writing skills, so registered her for a grammar course, which has really boosted her confidence and is preparing her well for her course in September, which will involve reflective writing. She was also signed up to a cyber security course she has completed, which she found very interactive, and which is helping her in her current role but will also help for her future role in counselling.

Many participants spoke to the breadth of courses available to them, that they had been previously unaware of. Participants therefore became aware of ample opportunity to upskill in several different areas, to enhance their employability and overcome some of the barriers they had experienced. See example, below.

Case Study 6 – Support to upskill into a better paid/suitable role

As S was registered with Work Hounslow, she was alerted to Transit Community Support CiC, who she signed up to receiving support from. She wanted to upskill herself over the period in which she was not able to find work due to health issues and was keen to gain more skills in care specifically, so she could progress from domiciliary care (where she previously worked) to becoming a care assistant. Transit referred S to Functional Skills Level 2 in English, an AEB numeracy course, and also an informal course on unpaid carers running at Transit. The former two courses enabled S to gain crucial certifications to show employers. The course on unpaid carers was to help her gain insights from relatives which would help her softer skills around care. S was also pointed towards a short first aid course by Transit to further upskill in her area of interest.

The referral organisations substantively **supported participants with enrolment and assessment for courses**. Support included identifying participants' key interests and needs for education and training, finding appropriate courses which matched these needs, guiding participants through finer details of courses (e.g., course modules, time commitments, materials involved), sending participants further links to courses, assisting participants with filling in forms and completing paperwork, and checking in on participants' progress with courses.

However, referral organisations **provided further support even after the referral stage**. Participants reported organisations sending them relevant job roles, events, and further courses of interest, finding participants volunteering opportunities, sourcing material such as laptops so participants can complete coursework, and providing CV and interview support to participants. See more examples, below.

One participant mentioned that the project did not use '*cookie-cutter techniques*' but tailored support based on the individual. Indeed, participants mentioned unique support, for example, having guidance around managing finances and help with obtaining a senior travel pass. This logistical help is also key to participants overcoming barriers to education.

Case Study 7 – Support to build experience/skills for future work

T is living in asylum accommodation and became involved in We Restart to increase his access to adult education and work opportunities. WR linked him in with someone within the artistic and celebrity world, who run a workshop that helped him with getting onto the 'media make-up' and 'tailoring' course at the local college. T's participation in the workshop allowed him to develop a connection with a person who could help him with developing his career in media/celerity make up, his professional goal. As a result of engaging with WR and attending the workshop he was able to enrol onto a college course in media make-up and was 'second-best' in the class and felt that the organisation helped him with networking. WR also helped him with travel expenses and some educational materials. He has also been doing a tailoring course at the college. T considers WR and the college to be his mentors, and the support he received from them allowed him 'to start shining like a star'. WR's support helped him become hopeful and motivated about his future. In addition, T was encouraged by WR to volunteer at a LGBTQ centre for migrants and a community centre for older people. T also volunteered as an assistant at the college to support new students with 'making first steps'. WR showed him ways of working with and within the community and inspired him to engage with community work so he could 'give back.'

Case Study 8 – Support to improve English language skills

A has been progressing with ESOL Level 2 while working as a delivery driver and spoke positively of the course. He has liked the style of teaching and the fact that the course covered topics like communicating at a GP practice, shopping in a supermarket, and travelling around London. His language skills improved, including grammar and vocabulary, and he became more confident when speaking with other people. He also said that during the classes the teacher included additional information such as history of London or practical knowledge on everyday life in the city. He also gets homework to do at home and feels motivated to practice English. A said that the teacher discussed his goals and next steps with him. He would like to study the next level of ESOL and is interested in further education such as IT courses. Accessing the classes is easy for him as he drives to the library on his scooter, or sometimes takes the bus, and the times also suit him as he can work before or after.

6.2.1 Which activities did participants perceive to be the most effective in overcoming barriers to education?

Most participants interviewed emphasised the **importance of the referral itself, and the courses they enrolled onto**. Referral staff's support to identify interest areas and relevant training and education was reported most, as well as their help with completing paperwork attached to enrolling on courses, particularly as many participants were going on courses to improve their written English. Staff helped to alleviate administrative burden and to encourage participants to think about longer-term career paths.

Certification at the end of courses has also been important for many participants. Having a formal qualification to show employers was key, both for those seeking work and those hoping to progress in their current roles.

At the same time, several participants highlighted that the **short length of some courses** had helped them to access education. For those who had never gone into education, or had taken a long time out of it, the idea that courses were short-term and not exam-based was reassuring. It helped them to upskill and gain confidence in education, without pressure associated with exams.

Mock interviews were also seen to be particularly helpful by participants. Several spoke to how staff had guided them through questions they might be asked and coached them in how to articulate their experience and expand their answers. Several directly applied these techniques to interviews and noticed improvements in their approach.

Participants tended to emphasise the **importance of activities being delivered in the community**. Many were concerned about travel costs and therefore courses and support embedded in the community and community settings was a key way to overcome barriers.

Some feedback was given on how courses participants were referred onto might better cater to barriers they experience. A few participants highlighted that they had **struggled to communicate with colleges**, and there were long gaps in which they did not hear about outcomes of applications, with one participant who was waiting for an ESOL Level 2 certificate confirmation for some time. There was also some feedback on **time demands**. While most participants found courses fit well with other responsibilities, a few found courses demanding of time. A few participants felt that having more frequent or longer classes may be more useful, so assignments can be completed at the learning site instead of at home, where there were more pressures. Two participants wanted to highlight that there was **need for more learning materials provided** by colleges, while one participant also felt that courses focused less on grammar/writing and more on practising English in group settings may have been more beneficial for building confidence.

6.3 What has been the distance travelled by participants?

6.3.1 Access to education

Of the 28 participants interviewed, only 3 had been unable to start or complete courses they were referred onto. One participant had to postpone her enrolment due to pregnancy, another has issues providing specified documents, and for another, the training provider did not respond to their emails. One participant who was able to enrol on several courses also spoke to some issues they had with the training provider, with advertised courses unavailable and/or different from what was advertised. However, all participants were aware that their respective projects could help them with these issues, and they still expressed interest in applying to other courses.

For many participants, a key outcome from increased access to education was **significant improvement of English skills**. Engagement with the projects and ESOL courses meant those who came in with limited English were able to build confidence in their verbal and written skills. Many reported being newly able to read emails and texts; seek jobs; meet people without fear and without the support of family members; complete applications and fill in forms; improve in performance in

interview settings; better deal with everyday situations such as going to the GP and attending parents' evenings; and begin to teach their children English. See a case study example, below.

Case Study 9 – A, We Restart

Before engagement with WeRestart, A had no formal education and was living in asylum accommodation. He enrolled through WR onto an ESOL Level 1 class and an IT class at the local college and was supported to find a volunteering position at a local charity shop which helped him obtain a second-hand laptop for his course work and his child's school work. As a result of attending the ESOL course he improved his English language skills which gave him more confidence when dealing with everyday situations, for example during visits to the GP or when trying to get somewhere. He also noticed benefits for his wife who has been attending the course with him and said that she is no longer shy when interacting with people, not just in relation to language skills but also in relation to cultural background. A also said that their child was very fond of WR and taking part in activities for children, or just chatting with the staff made her happy. Being engaged with educational courses also helped A's wellbeing and outlook. He no longer felt depressed and felt motivated to make a plan for his educational and work progression due to being more informed as to what was available. He said that from his observations, WR has done a great deal for the other project participants who were depressed or didn't know what to do. The service helped to lift them up from their low moods and enrolled them in education which resulted in a change in these people and their lives.

Another key outcome resulting from improved access to education was that **participants who did not have any UK recognised qualifications have been able to obtain them** through engagement with the projects. Others have **begun looking for work** with new skills in their area of interest and improved confidence in presenting their experiences through their CV and in interviews.

Some participants reported having **better knowledge of what they wanted to do for their career, and the courses they needed to access to work in their area of interest**. Participants uncovered with project staff interests in counselling and marketing; in upskilling for better roles in care and childcare; and in moving from one sector to another, for example, one participant was attempting to move from engineering into healthcare and another was moving from IT into security due to better availability of jobs.

For 4 participants, **engagement with projects had helped them into employment at the time of the interview**. These roles included part-time carer (see example, below), supermarket assistant, and two participants landed roles in one of the referral organisations, Orange Bow.

Case Study 10 – F, Transit

F first began with Transit after hearing about it through Facebook. She had not previously been in work, education, or training, but was eager to learn new skills and had previously faced some barriers, including financial barriers, awareness barriers, and barriers around lack of skills. Transit

referred F on to two courses, one on care, and one on digital literacy, and she has also received support on improving her CV and interview skills. The care course enables F to talk about a range of topics, discuss ideas with the group and hear from those with experience, and engage with interesting pictures, videos, and talks provided by tutors, which give them more in-depth knowledge. The digital literacy course has also covered sending emails, which she was previously unable to do. As a result of her engagement with Transit/Transit courses, and their support with her CV and interview skills, F has become a part-time carer. In her free time, she continues to engage with the two courses and now has a long list of new skills. This includes sending emails and creating CVs, but also gaining further knowledge for her job, such as on dementia, mental health, service providers, using equipment, handling patients, and technical care language.

6.3.2 Attitudes to education

For other participants, engagement with projects provided an important first step in **building confidence in their ability to learn and to take steps towards employment**, despite adversity (see examples, below). In these cases, support has been important for improving participants' attitude to education, including through building on their own esteem and confidence in their abilities.

Case Study 11 – T, We Restart

T, waiting on a decision about immigration, had engaged with WeRestart to gain experience and connections into adult education. Through his engagement with them, he had been able to enrol on a college course in media make-up, a course on tailoring, and had engaged with volunteering. T is still engaged with WR and actively pursuing his educational courses. Thanks to WR he is more knowledgeable about local education and other provisions. He is a believer that WR can help with further networking and employment opportunities, and to link him in with other educational opportunities if needed. His future outlook increased, and he felt supported with developing his potential. T was very enthusiastic about the staff at WR and considered them '*a messenger from God*' due to the practical and emotional support he has received from them.

Case Study 12 – C, Orange Bow

C has been long-term unemployed and has been on Universal Credit for the past couple of years due to collapse of his business. C has over 30 years of experience in a range of different jobs, however had been actively seeking work with no success since then. He has also been struggling with depression amongst all of this for a long time. C attended a job fair at Sutton Job Centre where he met Orange Bow who referred him to their 4-day digital marketing course as he had an interest in digital marketing and was doing an online course independently prior to signing up to the course. C has felt that the course at Orange Bow not only helped him to get out and 'back into contact with the world', but also provided him with confidence and a shift in mindset to believe that he is capable of finding work and progressing. He feels that it was an excellent first step into potentially

starting a career in marketing (even at age 53), as well as a first step to improving his mental wellbeing, saying that the course was *'a way of breathing life back into people'* as it showed them all the opportunities that are available to them. The support he's received from both the organisation and peers in his cohort has been invaluable and *'revitalising'*, despite it only lasting four days.

Some of **those who had completed courses were also enthusiastic about upskilling further** and were actively planning their next steps into further education and training.

6.3.3 What additional outcomes have been felt by the participants?

Most additional outcomes were around the ways in which projects and referrals **improved the mental health of participants.**

Mainly, participants spoke to the benefits of the projects for making new friends and socialising with new people, both those they were of a *'similar mindset'* to and also those who came from different cultures. Two participants specifically spoke to the sense of community fostered through their participation in the projects, for example, one participant was a lawyer and was able to help those on the course with writing letters to the Home Office. Other participants mentioned the importance of exchanging ideas and information and networking with peers, and emphasised how they had shared opportunities discussed with friends of theirs, suggesting the projects are having further reach into the community through word of mouth.

Engagement with the projects also increased participants' mood and motivation, 'sense of pride', sense of independence, sense of creativity (n=3), and confidence and belief in ability.

6.4 Key findings

Projects successfully reached those in need, many of whom were long-term unemployed, and had never accessed education or training. Participants faced multiple barriers which prevented prior access to education and training, among them: lack of English skills, lack of awareness of opportunities, and lack of work experience.

All participants were referred onto relevant courses, and only three interviewed did not start or complete courses they were referred onto. Often, participants were referred onto several courses, and expressed surprise at the breadth of courses available to them.

Participants were primarily supported with enrolment and assessment to courses but were also provided with significant help beyond this by projects. Participants found particularly helpful aspects of support to be referral to the courses themselves, certification obtained at the end of courses, short length of courses, mock interview support, and activities embedded within communities. A minority raised issues with contacting colleges and with time demand of courses.

Participants reported a number of positive outcomes as a result of their engagement in projects. This included improved English skills, obtainment of recognised qualifications, improved knowledge of future careers and pathways to get there, and

increased confidence in education and training. Participants also reported they had begun seeking employment, had secured jobs, and were looking to further upskill.

Additional outcomes centred around the improved mental health of participants due to their engagement in projects. Many expressed how increased socialisation with peers had improved their mood and motivation.

7 Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

Project staff, AEB providers, participants and the GLA were in agreement that the Community Outreach Programme had been successful in delivering its aims and objectives. We can conclude that:

- The programme is operating across the majority of London boroughs. The projects themselves vary significantly in their scope, the resource-intensity of the support provided, and the number of participants supported.
- There has been a high level of buy-in to the aims and ambitions of the programme from the grantees. All felt that the purpose of the programme reflected their own priorities for their community/ies. However, a few felt that their needed to be some earlier clarity on what constitutes 'engagement' for the GLA.
- The projects are reaching Londoners who otherwise would not have had knowledge of adult education, London Multiply, and skills offerings in London. The programme is helping these Londoners understand that the offerings are 'for people like them', appropriate for their needs and ambitions, and freely available and accessible.
- The projects are also reaching a diverse range of participants.
- In spite of some difficulties regarding contracting, the projects feel that they have been successful in meeting their engagement and referral targets. This is somewhat reflected in the number of engagements and referrals recorded by the projects. They also, on the whole, feel well-supported in delivering activities that support adults into education.
- The GLA's decision to extend 15 projects was well-received, and those projects feel that they are on track to meet their targets.
- The projects could not describe why the GLA is asking for the data they are collecting. Potentially, this could be improved by increased and early communication on why the GLA requires this information.
- The projects are delivering a wide range of activities with participants. Crucially, they are using existing strengths and connections to engage and support participants. The COP therefore benefits from the additionality of these existing activities that have been developed and tailored over time to the target communities.
- Projects with pre-established relationships with providers have had a significantly better experience of referring participants. However, there was an acknowledgement from both the GLA and projects that these relationships take time to build. All projects felt that they were in a better place to engage with providers than they were before the project.
- All of the projects said that they continued to support participants after referral. However, this is not reported or recorded in outputs achieved.
- The programme is having a wide range of positive impacts on participants. These include:
 - Increased confidence.
 - Improved knowledge of education opportunities.

- Improved access to education.
- Overcoming of significant barriers to education.
- The programme is having a wide range of positive impacts on community organisations. These include:
 - Significantly improved reach and relationship with the AEB and Multiply providers
 - The ability to increase the range activities they deliver.
 - Increased capacity.
 - A clear pipeline from project to employment.

7.2 Recommendations

The findings above suggest that:

- The GLA should continue to support community organisations to deliver engagement projects in places and ways that utilise their reach and strengths.
- The GLA should support organizations to have established relationships and agreements with AEB/London Multiply providers before delivery. This would be most useful at the start of the programme, given the time it takes to build trusting relationships and the capacity issues described by the projects
- There is great potential for alignment of this project with the GLA-funded regional skills hubs to support partnerships and local network building. Again, this would be most useful at early stages but is useful at any stage.
- The GLA should offer more opportunities for clarification questions following project design (such as Q&A sessions). A common understanding of expectations on process, outputs (particularly of recorded outputs) and paperwork would help grantees kick-off delivery.
- Future programmes would benefit from timely starts and having all systems/paperwork in place. This would allow projects to make use of key dates in the year, particularly enrolling Londoners onto learning provision with September start dates.
- There is scope for adaptations to the paperwork to reduce administrative burden on grantee organisations, as well as further communication on this. Several data fields are requested by the GLA to enable future research (such as impact assessments). The GLA should consider reviewing data requests further and ensure that it explain why information is collected.
- There is a need and appetite for longer-term funding. The projects want to offer follow ups and ‘wraparound’/‘holistic’ support. However, they require longer-term funding for this.
- Framing the project in terms of ‘neighbourhoods’ as well as ‘community’ may help to build bridges and intercommunity bonds. A few projects felt that ‘community’ pre-assumed an existing affinity between residents. They felt that the project was potentially of most value to those who did not feel like they had a strong community.