**London Anchor Institutions’ Network (LAIN) Hiring & Skills Working Group**

**Minutes**

**10:00 – 12:00 GMT, 12 December 2022**

Meeting convened via Teams

**Co-Chairs:** Janet Gardner (Waltham Forest College) & Karima Khandker (Thames Water).

**Attendees:**

Rosemary Oduntan Oke (London Borough of Barking & Dagenham), Darren De Souza (London Higher), Forogh Rehmani (GLA), Dianna Neal (London Councils), Anna Kyprianou (Middlesex University), Alison May (London Borough of Lambeth), Mark Hilton (Business LDN), Mary Vine-Morris (AoC), David Steeds (DWP), Dr Kate Daubney (University of London), Beth Wheaton (GLA), Souraya Ali (GLA), Shehreen Najam (GLA), Gemma Cook (London City Airport), Gemma Cullen (GLA), David Steeds (DWP), Caitlin Cairns (John Lewis Partnership), James Watkins (London Chamber), Sophie Cloutterbuck (London Higher Civic Network), Cleo Kinder (GLA), Hannah Candassamy (GLA), Sharon Long (City of London).

**Apologies:**

Michelle Cuomo-Boorer (GLA), Matt Simmons (Metropolitan Police Service), Paul Marshall (University of East London), Sam Gurney (Trades Union Congress), Alexia Nazarian (Bloomberg Associates), Rebecca Baker (Film London), Nina Hemming (NHS), Bridget Ackeifi (Bloomberg Associates).

**Discussion:**

1. **Welcome & Introduction:**
* Janet (chair) and Karima welcomed attendees to the meeting.
* Janet welcomed Sophie Cloutterbuck, Chair of London Higher Civic Network (and Director of London Engagement, London Metropolitan University) to the working group as a new member.
* Janet also welcomed Hannah Candassamy, Senior Project Officer from the GLA’s Economic and Fairness team to the group. Hannah briefly introduced herself as the group’s lead contact at the GLA on the Mayor’s Good Work Standard (GWS) and offered support to the members going through the GWS accreditation process.
* Hannah also congratulated Janet on Waltham Forest College receiving GWS accreditation. Janet offered support to other anchors who are working towards the GWS and encouraged other colleges to get accredited as well.
* Janet provided a brief summary of the last meeting, where case studies and good practises were shared, including on reducing barriers to recruitment for prison leavers. Janet confirmed that the working group will continue to look at other ways to share good practise as there is a lot of good work taking place with the anchor’s group.
* Souraya reminded the group that the LAIN Conference will be held on the 31st of January at Senate House. The Eventbrite registration will open in the next couple of days so if anyone has not received a save the date, please get in touch with Souraya to receive the link to the event. Janet encouraged all members to attend, as a great opportunity to showcase the work that the anchors are doing, as well as an opportunity to meet members from the other working groups and share good practise.
1. **Case Studies**

**Case Study 1 – Care Leavers Compact with John Lewis**

* Janet Introduced Sharon Long (City of London) to present alongside Caitlin Cairns (John Lewis Partnership).
* The Pan London Compact for Care Leavers started a year ago, sponsored by the Department for Education (further details can be found in the accompanying briefing note shared by Sharon). The Compact brings together Directors of Children’s Services from across London to look at how to standardize and improve the offer for care leavers across London. Other regions are working on similar activity, and regions are coordinating to create a streamlined offer.
* Sharon stated that the issues that the young care leavers are facing are systemic, hence the Pan London Compact is making sure they are looking at this issue from multiple perspectives.
* Sharon provided an example of how they are working with anchors already:
	+ TfL has agreed to offer a **50% reduction for all care leavers on buses**, as lot of young care leavers are not accessing training or employment opportunities because they cannot afford to travel.
	+ Health care providers are also offering **free prescriptions** and are looking at a targeted mental health offer for care leavers.
* The Compact is also putting pressure on the government where they cannot tackle issues on a regional basis.
* Additional areas in progress for the Compact include:
	+ **Careers advice and guidance**. A report from UCAS suggested care leavers and how they are not getting relevant advice in terms of available university options, career options and pathways, etc.
	+ **Free Wi-Fi** - The Compact is in conversation with Virgin Media to provide free WIFI to young people.
	+ The Compact is also looking into acquiring **free leisure passes** for young people.
* The Compact is looking for people to sign up to the Care Leavers Covenant (the Covenant). The Covenant is aiming to get employers on board to make sure that they are offering the best possible employment and support practices for care leavers. Thames Water was provided as an example of an organisation supporting the Covenant, and they have offered to reduce water bills for care leavers.
* Sharon posed a question to the group: **What more can be done by anchors to help care leavers to be able to sustain living independently, getting into work, and everything else that they need?** All anchor organisations have a role to play, and were urged to sign up to the Covenant.

**John Lewis and the Compact**

* As an example of the Covenant in action, Sharon Invited Caitlin (Progression Specialist at John Lewis Partnership) to speak about the offer provided to care leavers by John Lewis Partnership, called ‘Building Happier Futures’ and to provide the group with an employer’s perspective on this.
* Caitlin talked through the ambitions of the program offered by John Lewis. The purpose of the program is to build happier futures for care leavers through lobbying, fundraising, employment, education and building consumer awareness and advocacy in pursuit of their purpose. The purpose is built on ‘happier partnering, happier business, happier world’, with the focus on young care experienced people.
* The Christmas advert from John Lewis is based on the work they are leading to support care leavers. They have received a brilliant response to it. They are committed to being the employer of choice for young people who are care leavers. Raising awareness has been the key theme behind the interventions in this program.
* John Lewis has been focusing on this for a year and a half. They have been involved in running employability programs, working with charities and local councils, to work towards this goal.
* Their team is small, and they have a care experienced person on their team to make sure they are honest and are grounded in their interventions. They have also set up a care experience network within the partnership so people can share their experiences and gain knowledge about the work others are doing. This network is growing and is open to anyone. They also have a care advisory group that is made up of external partners and external care experienced young people.
* To expand their support offer, John Lewis is also looking at apprenticeship opportunities, potential scholarships and online learning portals to provide as part of their offer.
* The Compact has helped John Lewis to look at how to reduce barriers by providing interview support and through local drop ins. They are looking into working with consultants on how to make online testing easier and simpler. Their main intervention at present is providing support and training for managers in how to support and be supportive of care experienced young people throughout the process.
* Out of 50 people who applied, 6 care experienced people have been recruited by John Lewis since they started this program. They are focused on providing high quality support and positive experiences for a small, rather increasing numbers at pace at the moment.
* Sharon stressed it is worth looking at My Covenant’s resources. There are some good examples in London boroughs which have provided care leaver training for their employers, particularly looking at SME’s.
* It was discussed that social and corporate responsibilities play an important part. Janet thanked Caitlin and Sharon and emphasized that the program fits strongly with the priorities of the anchors group.
* Janet emphasized that it would be great for John Lewis to work with the anchors group to drive this initiative through some of the other organisations. The GLA also offered to connect Sharon with the GLA’s business engagement team.

**Case Study 2 – London Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)**

* Janet invited Mark Hilton from Business LDN to update the group on some of the progress made by the London Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).
* The LSIP aims to clearly articulate employers, current and future skills needs and changes required in the training provision system to help ensure the post 16 technical skills provision meets this need in a responsive way. The most important aspect is the process of bringing together and building relationships between providers and employers.
* The LSIP has a 9-month project timeline which is being delivered in phases. They are currently in their first phase of stakeholder engagement and in conversations with their business members. They are talking to providers in their membership groups and business/providers at large about skills, needs, gaps, identifying priority sectors and themes, and gathering data. They are working alongside GLA on this work.
* The final plan will be submitted to the Secretary of State for Education by the end of May 2023. The GLA is leading on producing the evidence base.
* The LSIP is holding several events to speak about skills needs in different sectors; hospitality, health, social care, digital, creative, green and construction. Mark invited everyone to attend the events, where relevant and requested the members to invite other organisations from their wider network. Further events will be published in January for 2023.
1. **Metrics Update**
* Janet thanked members for their efforts on the metrics and thanked GLA colleagues for capturing and assessing the data to align and prioritise some of the metrics collectively going forward.
* We now want to refine and focus on a core number of metrics. The aim of this is to demonstrate where the group has most impact that will help inform priorities for this group’s interventions and focus for the next year.
* Janet presented a set of slides, summarising the targets members had signed up to. Some of the key updates provided include the following:
* A summary of the metrics that the group signed up for collectively.
* Metrics that were assessed as being difficult to capture and more difficult to ascertain a collective target, which were agreed to remove from the list going forward which includes:
* *% of apprenticeships paying LLW*
* *Number of people in internships, apprenticeships, part time roles or earning less that LLW that progress into permanent LLW jobs or ‘good jobs’* - The majority of anchors appear to be paying apprentices above the London living wage already, so this is not a priority area going forward.
* *Investment in workforce training and professional development to support in-work progression* - Investment in workforce training and professional development to support in work progression is also a different metric to measure as members are taking steps towards this metric but not necessarily through monetary interventions.
* The group may not prioritise the metrics on *number of anchors workforce from target populations engaged in development training or mentoring programs, including those utilizing the apprenticeship levy* as it has been difficult to engage on and to measure across the group.
* The assessment of the group metrics enable us to note that:
* The transfer of unspent levy is still an area that the group can potentially have more impact on, and it was agreed this should be an area of focus for the group going forward.
* There is limited commitment by members on number of young people in supported internships, so more focus needs to be placed on this going forward.
* The members will continue to work toward the number of direct employees from target populations hired or retained on a contract for one year or for the whole duration of the contract.
* Janet emphasised that there are still some members who have not submitted their metrics and urged them to complete and submit them. She also offered 1:1 support from the GLA or the co-chairs to anyone struggling to complete the metrics. She re-iterated that all metrics do not need to be signed up to and requested members to commit to one or two meaningful metrics that their organisation is able to achieve to make a difference to Londoners and which will help cascade the impact across the wider network.
1. **Implementing Commitments**
* Janet invited members to share some of the key challenges that anchor organisations face in delivering against their metrics, to recruit, retain and promote key target groups. Janet asked members whether they have found ways to overcome some of the challenges that they face, that they could usefully share with others in future meetings.
	+ The GLA is looking at it’s demographic data and interventions around improving the system. This includes active conversations with TfL on recruitment arrangements and addressing the issues of internal promotion. The GLA is going through a payroll change, and they have given their employees the opportunity for an interest free loan to support the arrangement. Alongside this, GLA is bringing in external support to give advice around cost of living.
	+ London Higher is running a mentoring program for global majority members of staff (comprising of staff from black, Asian and ethnic backgrounds). This involves 15 of their member institutions and this will have over 100 participants from 8 institutions. The aim is to improve career progression. Middlesex University and London Met are part of the mentoring programs. This gives the staff across London to network with other member staff from different backgrounds.
	+ A suggestion was made that the anchor network could look at this model of cross-organisational mentoring.
* Janet led a discussion on what members are doing to support disabled Londoners, and challenges around this:
	+ Concerns around disclosure of disabilities was raised. Kate suggested the group could adopt a joint approach, to be transparent and consistent and learn from what’s working well.
	+ Karima mentioned that Thames Water are having internal discussions around neurodiverse colleagues not feeling aligned to the disability network which is what is making them re-consider whether they should call it the ‘ability network’. Karima requested the group to share best practises on the use of terminology around this subject matter which by default encourage disclosure or people to be more transparent.
	+ Souraya mentioned that it would be useful to theme some of the future meetings around some of the cohorts or challenges. if the group approaches this more systematically it would benefit the group. For example, if the group takes disabled colleagues as a focus and share the different challenges and practice than people can bring in case studies/practices in relation to that area.
	+ Janet agreed and added that challenges around people with disabilities is perhaps one of the most significant areas that organisations are facing in relation to disclosure of who actually have disabilities. Accessibility in attracting a more diverse range of people is another challenge. Janet emphasized that disabilities perhaps would be a useful area of focus for the next meeting.
	+ Souraya reminded the group that on publishing pay gaps, the disability pay gaps is one that is least commonly published across the working group, and it would be an interesting area to explore together as a group.
	+ Janet added to this, that some anchor organisations feel apprehensive about publishing some of the gaps in pay for different groups. She stated that if it’s not possible to publish the data, it is however possible to publish a commitment and actions towards this goal. For example, to improve gaps in organisations, members can make a commitment to reduce the gap by 5% each year which is one way of showing commitment as an anchor institution.
	+ Mary agreed this is an area that people have said the anchors have made least progress on.
* Janet thanked the group for this discussion and reminded the group that Hannah will be supporting the members seeking advice on GWS.
* Alison raised that Lambeth Council has recently earned an excellent standard accreditation 6 months ago and they are happy to put members in contact with her colleagues for advice and support on this.
* Janet brought back the group’s attention on challenges around apprenticeships and recruitment challenges around these.
* James Watkins added to this by stating that London Chambers is doing their best to promote apprenticeship levy transfer. James offered to share case studies with the group where London Chambers members have successfully passed on their levy.
* Karima mentioned that Thames Water has signed up to the London Progression collaboration. Thames Water have set out some principles around wanting to share levy with organisations within a certain geographical area. Karima suggested to the members to engage with the London Progression Collaboration as it is an easy way to give Levy and they can give measure and give an update on how performance is going, how that levy is being spent and on achievement rates.
* Karima suggested perhaps this could be made into a collective commitment to work on/towards as well, where the working group collectively commits to engaging with the LPC or a certain amount that the group can agree as an anchor group.
* Janet agreed with the proposal and endorsed agreeing on a set of principles which the hiring and skills group can collectively agree on focusing on levy being transferred. The aim would be to demonstrate most impact, particularly on the disadvantaged groups that the working group is focusing on.
* Forogh recommended linking this up with Growth Hub where the focus is around engaging SMEs as there is a challenge around raising awareness with SMEs.
* Janet asked the group on how they are responding to the **cost-of-living crisis as an anchor group**:
* Alison mentioned that they have small businesses working together on the **cost-of-living crisis** and they are doing more comms, more newsletters to offer advice on this area.
* London Higher brought together a group of all universities to assess what they are doing as a sector. The discussion was around the fact that they are looking after their students but what are they doing to look after their employees. Some universities are giving extra payments to their employees as well as hardship funds for students, free food, free sanitary and a lot of offers on warm spaces is provided. Staff and students are provided toiletries as well. There are different models followed across the sectors: some example include giving away free food boxes to community supermarkets.
* LCCI’s interventions include access to finance hubs, free advice to members and others. London Chambers is focusing on supporting micro and small businesses as they are dealing with energy prices, and the hit taken by the market through the pandemic and Ukrainian crisis. LCCI is going to launch a scheme in the new year with a partner where debt advice service will be provided. In addition, LCCI has a free membership service called Community where people join for free and many of them are community charities. James offered this is an area where the working group can collectively think about in terms of how we can support these community charities.
* Janet mentioned that the group has shared good practise in meetings and asked members how can they help each other outside of the meetings. Janet asked the group if there are any additional case studies that the group would like to share.
* Karima responded that they have signed the care leavers covenant and successfully placed care leavers. They are also working with prison leavers in collaboration with GLA and the WIN design lab supporting young black men into employment. Their sustained rate in 6 months is over 80%. Karima mentioned that she is happy to connect the members from anchor institutions with the delivery team at Thames Water to understand their journey and to share learnings.
* James Watkins suggested they could link their PR with other organisations, to have greater impact. James also suggested continuing to focus on the communities that have not been treated well in the past, and addressing inclusivity and diversity issues. The Black Business Association and Asian Business Association speak strongly about working with other organisations to ensure that the needs of the communities are met. James offered to put members in touch with Black Business Association and the Asian Business Association which is led by communities and not by officers.
* Janet emphasised the importance of delivering on the group’s agreed commitments and putting numbers against these will help us to more easily measure impact.
1. **Sharing Learnings & Success Stories**
* Janet invited Souraya to update members on comms.
* Souraya informed the group that on the [anchors website](https://www.anchors.london/members-hub/hiring-and-skills), there is a member only section which is password protected and which the members need to have. There is a specific [page](https://www.anchors.london/members-hub/hiring-and-skills) for the Hiring and Skills working group that provides a private space where members can share resources amongst themselves.
* On this website, there are videos, write ups and information resources available. This is a repository that the group can use. There is also a section on the website that is public facing in case the group wants to share information and is trying to generate momentum.
* Souraya stressed that the space on the website will be used by the group where they can access paper, presentations, videos, case studies. There is a new dedicated comms officer, Helen, in the LAIN’s core team providing support on this.
* Helen currently is collecting and filming stories about the impact that anchor work is having in London. This is being completed for the conference in January but once the conference is over, we can focus on what we would like to do with the working groups online space. We would like to capture the sharing that takes place in the meetings and share it across the group and outside of the group.
* Souraya welcomed ideas from members on how to make best use of the website.
* Janet thanked Souraya and re-iterated that it is important to showcase some of the great work that is being done and to encourage others through showing those examples. Janet emphasized that watching individual stories bring those stories to life has a powerful impact on the audience.

**Actions:**

* Members were requested to take part in the LAIN conference end of January (31.1.2023). If you do not have a calendar invite, please contact Souraya.
* The GLA will circulate future meeting invites to the group all meetings will be held in-person. Members are asked to let Shehreen know if they are willing to host one of our upcoming meetings.
* Members who have not completed their metrics templates have been requested to complete them.
* Members of the Hiring and Skills group to sign up to the Care Leavers Covenant, if they have not already done so.
* Metrics that are difficult to measure across the group or are not applicable, will not be prioritised going forward.
* A summary of the metrics update and group assessment of the metrics of the Hiring and Skills group will be shared with the group.
* The feedback from this meeting will be used to inform the key areas the group will work on for next year, i.e., focus on people with disabilities into employment, apprenticeship levy transfer.
* Members will be provided help on log in and passwords for access to the hiring and skills website page.

**Next meeting:**

In-person meeting on 6 March 2023. Venue TBC.