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

**Minutes**

**14:00 – 16:00 BST, 15 January 2024**

In person meeting at the Capital City College

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

**Attendees:**

Janet Gardner (Waltham Forest College), Sophie Cloutterbuck (London Higher Civic Network), James Llyod (TfL) , Mark Hilton (Business LDN), Jackie Chapman (Capital City College Group), Rosemary Oduntan Oke (London Borough of Barking & Dagenham), Michael Heanue (GLA), Divya Patel (London Fire Brigade), Phyllis Abebreseh (GLA), Rachel Williamson (GLA), Claire Churchill (NHS), Emily Dixon (On behalf of Darren Desouza – London Higher), Shehreen Najam (GLA), David Steeds (DWP), Gemma Cook (London City Airport).

**Apologies:**

Karima Khandker (Thames Water), Rebecca Baker (Film London), Alison May (London Borough of Lambeth) Dianna Neal (London Councils), Paul Deemer (NHS Employers), Tahera Jama (University of London), Mary Vine-Morris (AoC), Nina Hemmings (NHS), Evelyn Odeyemi (NHS), John Soper (Middlesex University), Camelia Gamee (GLA), Karima Khandker (Thames Water), James Watkins (London Chamber), Claire Southwood (NHS), Jennie Stone (NHS), Helen Connor (GLA).

**Discussion:**

1. **Welcome & Introduction:**

* Janet (In the chair) welcomed attendees to the meeting and thanked Jackie Chapman for hosting the H&SWG members at the Capital City College.
* Rachel Williamson, who will be covering Souraya Ali, briefly introduced herself and offered to connect members to other working groups, to shrae resources and provide support with communications.
* Janet also provided a brief recap of the discussions the working group has had over the last year, looking at how to create more inclusive workplaces and increase recruitment of disabled staff and those from minoritized ethnic backgrounds.
* Janet than introduced the aim of the day’s meeting is to re-cap last year’s sessions, play back progress that members have made since joining this group, discuss best practices around apprenticeship levy transfer and supporting prison leavers into employment.

1. **Recap of 2023 H&S Working Group sessions:**

Janet provided the following insights from previous sessions:

* **H&SWG session on 6th March** focused on disability with input from Diane Lightfoot, CEO of Business Disability Forum, and sharing of practice from colleagues at the GLA, TfL and Middlesex University relating to recruitment practice, publication of disability pay gaps and achievement of Disability Confident status.
* The working group discussed the importance of supported internships as a way into the workplace for colleagues with learning differences. James Lloyd from TfL and Janet Gardener from Waltham Forest College have both offered to share advice with any colleagues considering offering a supported internship programme for the first time.
* Following the session, a paper was shared with the group which captures top tips, resources and toolkits for good practice, which members were urged to refer to.
* We were really pleased to hear that several members put in place new actions off the back of that session, including:

1. Gemma Cook (London City Airport) – who ran sessions on disability for line managers with support from Business Disability Forum.
2. Janet Gardner (Waltham Forest College) – who shared how the college has been re-assessing the use of language around disability and holding 1:1 conversations with existing staff to understand if their access / adjustment needs have changed over time.

* **Our second session on 26th June** focused on race and ethnicity, facilitated by the Equal Group.
* The CEO, Mac Alonge, emphasised the importance of obtaining and tracking granular EDI data across the workforce at every stage of the employee’s journey to understand issues and challenges with representation.
* Colleagues who participated in the Workforce Integration Network programme focused on young Black Men also shared their experiences, including Poonam from Cloud Reach who highlighted the importance of involving hiring managers in race and ethnicity conversations and securing CEO and senior buy-in to efforts to diversify the workforce.
* **Our third session in October** focused on retention and progression of colleagues from under-represented backgrounds and developing a granular understanding of the workforce.
* Hamida Ali from the GLA, Jackie Chapman from Capital City College Group and Dr Randhir Auluck from the University of Westminster, presented on targeted programmes implemented at the GLA as case studies for organisations focusing on retention and progression of colleagues from under-represented backgrounds.
* Hamida Ali and Karima discussed tracking existing colleagues’ socio-economic backgrounds and seeing whether this also has an impact on issues like progression. They also emphasised on collecting socio-economic data on new hires and analysing data from exit interviews to identify any trends in relation to staff leaving the business.

1. **Update on progress made by members since joining the Hiring and Skills Working Group**

* It was re-iterated that the goal and deliverables for the H&SWG is to:
* Help more Londoners from under-represented backgrounds into ‘good work’ paying at least the London Living Wage.
* Taking steps towards making our workforce representative at all levels.
* Make progress in closing their gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps.

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* Rachel provided the following updates:
  + 7200 Londoners’ have seen a pay uplift each year through your London Living Wage commitment;
  + Over 4000 apprenticeships have been offered in your organisations;
  + You have supported Londoners from underrepresented backgrounds into good work, including prison leavers, care leavers, refugees and neurodiverse young people;
  + Seven members have narrowed their gender pay gap;
  + Four members have narrowed their ethnicity pay gap and two members have published their ethnicity pay gap for the first time this year;
  + Four members have narrowed their disability pay gap.
* Bloomberg Associate recently did interviews with some LAIN members, and they said the network has the following benefits:
* Peer learning;
* Peer pressure- challenging each other to do more or increase the pace;
* Focus on practical action, not just talking;
* An opportunity to promote what organisations are proud of.
* Janet opened the discussion with all the attending members to provide a short update highlighting any key achievements or challenges since they have joined the working group:

Update from James Lloyd (Transport for London)

* There has been focus and updates on 3 of their pledges: 1. transfer of 1m of levy funds to SMEs supporting a fair city 2. Introduction of new employability programmes supporting people with little/no work experience 3. Increase opportunities being offered to women, those from ethnic minority backgrounds and individuals declaring a disability year on year until representative of London’s economically active population.
* They will do levy transfer to organisations which align with the priorities set out in the recover missions, particularly relevant are Good Work for All and A Green New Deal
* An additional criterion was added in 2022 which is: no more the 50% of pledged funds transferred to any one employer
* Their partner organisations are London Progressions Collaboration. They expanded this is 2023 to the Co-op and to receive direct requests.
* Since November 2021, £759k has been pledged directly to organisations. Organisations include: Vorboss and Citizens Tickets.
* For the employability programme, Activate is a new 12-week programme in the ‘Ways into Work’ pathway designed to support people aged 19+ with little to no work experience. It is designed for people who will benefit from technical training, personal development, professional development, work experience. It is delivered in partnership with Lewisham College who work with TfL to ensure that the programme is designed around the skills and knowledge required in their organisation and wider sector.
* They are taking a vacancy led approach i.e. starting with a particular vacancy or discipline in mind, anchors the choices made in technical skills training and the support offered to individuals. There is no commitment from TfL or the individuals on the programme to employment, however, a key performance indicator is positive progression into employment. This can be employment within TfL their supply chain or beyond.
* It’s the first year for them to take their pledge to increase opportunities being offered to women, those from ethnic minority backgrounds and individuals declaring a disability and they are above London economically active population.
* On declaration, people find it comfortable to declare to their training provider. The numbers are 12-16%.

Update from Rosemary Oduntan-Oke (London Borough of Barking & Dagenham)

* They have recently launched an initiative to declare disabilities in their workplace. As it is still in its early stages, they are awaiting outcomes of this.
* They are encouraging apprentices with disabilities to apply in their organisation.
* They have recently made some changes to their selection process. Specifically on the skills section to make sure there is extra coaching provided and by streamlining the application process. They want to bring the best out of the candidates, and they have prioritised people with disabilities who they want to be able to support through these changes.
* They are making sure they have support for managers, and this is done through their engagement with business disability forum. This is all for apprenticeships.
* They are working closely with local groups to see opportunities within the borough. In the last cohort, they had conducted management training programmes. This is so they can provide the best support in the application stages.
* They have conducted some interview coaching programmes to train their staff
* They have partnered with a local college in Barking and Dagenham to work towards internship increase. Through this they are working with managers. Their aim is that rather than providing for a one-week experience, they have something in place for longer for people with special needs and disabilities.

Update from Gemma Cook (London City Airport)

* The London City Airport has done a lot of work around disability and has provided support to passengers. They have developed some training content for their staff and on effectively interacting with passengers.
* They have worked around using the correct language around disability. They have had conversations around flexible working to which the staff members have responded quite positively to and as a result have stepped forward to request for support where needed.
* A lot of work has gone into upskilling.
* They are looking at changing a few things so they can measure data effectively.
* **Action=>**Gemma was asked by the group that if she has attended training on this it would be good to feed this back and share with the group.

Update from Claire Churchill (NHS)

* The number of NHS Trusts accredited as LLW employers has nearly tripled from 8 to 23 in the last 18 months
* 7200 people received a pay up lift
* 4829 Londoners got employment, apprenticeships or placements, including 1594 from underrepresented groups
* Through the Princes Trust they have supported 555 job starts for young Londoners aged 16-30.
* In 2022-23 financial year, 25 out of 35 trusts have reported a reduction in the mean pay gap from 2021-22.
* 8 out of 35 NHS Trusts in London have recently published their ethnicity pay gap. The mean ethnicity pay gaps range from 3-18.6%. A further 2 Trusts have committed to publishing theirs soon.
* 33 trusts have signed up on the Disability Confident Scheme as committed employer or leader.

Update from Jackie Chapman (Capital City College Group)

* They have started a hardship fund for their staff. They launched it recently and the funds would be allocated to the stuff who apply for it.
* Taking an action like this can have a knock-on effect and address other challenging issues.

Update from Janet Gardner (Waltham Forest College)

* The College has become a ‘London Living Wage’ employer and is GWS accredited.
* They have flexible family friendly policies for recruiting and retention of staff.
* Sickness rate of staff has reduced by 16%.
* Number of supported internship programmes have doubled.
* Janet updated the group on a recent discussion with co-chair Karima Khandker. They suggest that the group focus efforts over the next 6-12 months on disability as an area where most members have furthest to go.
* Janet opened a general discussion amongst the members to take their views on what areas the group should address and what is working well for members in general. The key points that were shared include:
* To tackle staff developing disability later in their life, it would be good to train line manager to be able to have open conversations with the staff members so they can feel comfortable in sharing information on an on-going basis.
* It appears that organisations have the biggest gap in publishing disability pay gap.
* The GLA has done good work around collecting metrics.
* The stigma around staff not sharing information about their disability is a stigma that needs to be addressed and if issues around disability is addressed, other challenges come into alignment.
* A professional organisation could be brought along to help the group address issues around disability in their organisation as a collective group.
* Members would like to hear from organisations who work on disability and understanding how to address the problem of disability amongst different groups of people as different people have different needs and disabilities cannot be group under one umbrella.
* The group needs to be clear on what they would like to achieve and what it is that they are delivering. Publishing disability pay gaps is a good starting point to work towards setting a goal and is a positive step.
* Changing terminology around how to capture data is a positive step towards tackling disability at the workforce.
* It was reinforced that senior leaders play an important role in addressing issues around disability. It would be good if senior leaders and managers can talk about their own disabilities and about their personal and career experiences and journey as it inspires other staff members to come forward and talk about their challenges.

1. **Sharing best practices**

* On Apprenticeship Levy
* Jackie Chapman from Capital City College Group discussed removing barriers to levy transfer. She shared the following insights:
* CCCG sought help from London Progression and Collection to help with levy transfer to SMEs.
* They have taken help from Workwhile, which is London’s flagship organisation for this work. They also promote the LLW.
* If you are looking to transferring your own levy from day one that you need to look at what your priorities are as an organisation for e.g. if you’re looking at certain KPIs then you make the case for it around that.
* A lot of councils are transferring their levy pots. Their focus is to get local residents into employment.
* If you want to enhance your own apprenticeships, providers should have easy access to it.
* It is recommended for the employer to do the levy transfer.
* There are micro-SMEs who are doing start-ups and Workwhile was approached to match them. One has been matched to Google, which has a whole team who support levy transfer funds. It is advised that you may want to look at where you would have the biggest impact and then assess what kind of apprenticeship you can transfer. If you have apprentices for micro-organisations that may have limited impact.
* It is key to understand what you want from the levy transfer, e.g. if you are interested to enhance ethnicity, diversity or gender, rather than starting from scratch, you can define by age. For a lot of levy transfers you can define criteria and you may want to start the process with tight criteria in place.
* **Action**=> Jackie will share useful links.
* Rachel Williamson from the GLA added to this discussion on levy transfer by sharing progress made by WorkWhile. Her insights included the following:
* The GLA falls in a much smaller scale than TfL in this respect and has been working with Workwhile to get support.
* The GLA is looking at sectors linked to skills academies, in demand sectors including child-care and early years; the anchor network is an area the GLA would like to focus on for this work.
* The University of London asked Workwhile to conduct an analysis and they found £10m of unspent levy is available. This amount could fund 750 apprenticeships. They have staff capacity to prioritise this and have agreed steps across 17 universities to carry it out and are in the process of building their HR capacity to do this.
* The University of London is going to help share this across the federation and they will do the levy transfer which is a commitment they have made through the LAIN network.
* Sophie Cloutterbuck from London Higher Civic Network pointed out that it would be interesting to see what work the Queen Mary University is doing on apprenticeships and using their levy, from entry level and up. There are 15 universities which all come under one federation and so it would be good to see what others are doing and their practices around this. This can be scoped out through the university network.
* On supporting prison leavers into employment
* Michael Heanue from the GLA shared insights on best practices and challenges around supporting prison leavers into employment.
* Michael presented on an initiative that he is leading on with people with experience of the justice system. Michael showcased a video of good practice in this area by Thames Water. (please see attached).
* Michael explained that in 2021 the mayor pledged to develop partnership with employers to support roles and routes into employment. Michael oversees exploring how this might work.
* Responsibility for education, training and employment (ETE) within prisons and probation rests with the Ministry of Justice. Ministry of justice has direct control over funding for adult education in custody. There is a well-established piece of work within the Ministry of Justice entitled the New Futures Network, which leads on engaging employers in this context i.e. to get them to see the benefits of working with people in custody, which includes addressing vacancy rates as well as contributing to a reduction in re-offending rates.
* Michael has developed some good links/contacts in this area. If any of the members are interested in this work, please get in touch with Michael Heanue (Michael.Heanue@london.gov.uk).
* There are plenty of other organisations, such as Thames Water who are working in this space and provide an example of good practice.
* It is important to note that anyone with experience of the criminal justice system who is based in the community is eligible for the core adult skills offer.
* Unfortunately, the Individual Learner Record which captures data on the learners that we do fund, presently doesn’t allow us to record data on this specific cohort.
* Focusing on employment of female ex-offenders, the GLA has explained to stakeholder partners, including MOPAC, about the work it has done through ESF and about the core offer entitlements. The ESF programme supported around over 1000 candidates with employment support, 10% of whom were female.
* With Multiply, Bootcamps and upcoming UKSPF programme, people with experience of the criminal justice system are among the priority target groups.
* Through some recent capital investment rounds, the GLA has invested £150k in two of London’s prisons.
* What we really need to take forward the manifesto commitment is to get more employers on board. There are hundreds of employers in this space and we need to create awareness of why they support and value this work. The best way to do this would be to raise awareness of the work of the New Futures Network along other business network, such as this group as well as the London Business Forum.
* This should be explored as part of our work with such networks during the new mayoral term.
* **Action =>** If there are any other examples that the members are familiar with regarding employers supporting ex-offenders, please get in touch with Michael.
* Jackie Chapman added to this discussion by informing the members that the Capital City College Group does gather data for safeguarding purposes in which they have a question on whether someone has a conviction or not. One of their challenges is that the GLA funds only those who are no longer in prison. There are a lot of prisoners who want support prior to release from prison. It would be beneficial to offer support before prisoners leave the prison so they have a destination as otherwise you can start to lose people who require support. **Action =>** If anything that can be done for these people pre-release, that would be very beneficial. If we can start looking at this challenge as a group, then we are likely to take this agenda forward.
* When asked whether there was an opportunity for the NHS to engage with this network to support ex-offenders into employment, Michael responded that each prison has its own employability board and that if a particular NHS trust has proximity to a prison, that is one starting point for engagement.

**Action =>** Michael to introduce the NHS to the New Futures Network

1. **LAIN programme updates**

Rachel’s updates included the following:

* The LAIN steering committee met in December 2023. Updates were shared, the working group will be interested to hear that the ‘place based working group’ will be taking forward a project to create better pathways for local people moving into in-demand NHS jobs, supported by local authority employment brokerage services. Also the ‘Childcare working group’ has come together and will be looking at family friendly work practices. We will share tips and learning from these groups with hiring and skills.
* The LAIN Steering Committee heard an update from the mid-year reporting.
* In February, City Hall will host the next LAIN conference. This will be an opportunity for the Working Group to come together to network, learn and reflect together.

1. **Wrap up and next steps**

* Members to consider if there are any specific topics they would like to investigate.
* Members were asked to get in touch with Shehreen ([Shehreen.najam@london.gov.uk](mailto:Shehreen.najam@london.gov.uk)) if they want to receive any previous resources/papers that were shared during the working group sessions.
* Dates and venue of the meeting will be shared shortly.
* James Lloyd from TfL was invited to a roundtable on the Step Up campaign they launched for the first time last year. During this event, there were employers pushing opportunities to young people and parents to understand the landscape. They were keen to understand and learn more about the anchors work. If any member wants to contribute to this, please contact James (James.Lloyd@tfl.gov.uk).

**Next meeting:**

* In-person meeting, 2-4pm, Tuesday 23 of April 2024. Venue TBC shortly.

Top tips from the meeting on 15th January 2024:

* To make your workforce more inclusive, it would be helpful to encourage apprentices with disabilities to apply in your organisation.
* It is important to establish an inclusive culture where colleagues feel they can share information/data (such as identifying as being disabled) with their organisation and see the value in doing this.
* Providing training and support to line managers (such as training programmes conducted by Business Disability Forum) would help staff members with disabilities to have open conversations and share more information on an on-going basis, as the managers will be trained/equipped to handle the staff with more sensitivity around this subject.
* To bring about positive change in the workforce, it is helpful to see how data can be measured effectively.
* Capital City College Group has started a hardship fund for their staff. Such actions have a knock-on effect and address other challenging issues in the workforce.
* The GLA has done good work on collecting metrics (of their workforce) in their organisations, and is a good example to learn from.
* The stigma around staff not sharing information about their disability is a stigma that needs to be addressed and if issues around disability are addressed, other challenges come into alignment.
* Publishing disability pay gaps is a good starting point to work towards setting a goal and is a positive step.
* Changing terminology around how to capture data on disability is a positive step towards tackling disability in the workforce.
* Senior leaders play a pivotal role in addressing issues around disability and so senior managers must be encouraged to speak more about it in their organisations.
* If you are looking to transferring your own Levy, from day one you need to be sure of what your priorities are as an organisation (i.e. set priorities around your KPIs)
* If you want to enhance your own apprenticeships, providers should have easy access to it.
* It is recommended for the employer to do the levy transfer.
* It is key to understand what you want from the levy transfer, e.g. if you are interested to enhance ethnicity, diversity or gender, rather than starting from scratch, you can define by age. For a lot of levy transfers you can define the criteria and you may want to start the process with tight criteria in place.
* It is important to note that anyone with experience of the criminal justice system who is based in the community is eligible for the core adult skills offer.

Actions:

* Gemma Cook from London City Airport was requested by the group members to share more insight on disability if she has attended training for it.
* Members of the group would like to hear from other organisations who work on disability and understand how to address the problem of disability amongst different groups of people as different people have different needs and disabilities.
* Jackie Chapman has offered to share more useful links/resources on Levy Transfers.
* Michael Heanue has developed some good links/contacts within supporting prison leavers into employment. If any of the members are interested in this work, please get in touch with Michael ([Michael.Heanue@london.gov.uk](mailto:Michael.Heanue@london.gov.uk))
* If the members of the working group can do anything to help prison leavers (find work) pre-release, that would be beneficial. This is a challenge that the working group can work towards as an agenda forward.
* Michael Heanue to introduce the NHS to the New Futures Network.
* Members to consider if there are any specific topics they would like to investigate.
* Members were asked to get in touch with me (via [email-shehreen.najam@london.gov.uk](mailto:email-shehreen.najam@london.gov.uk)) if they want to receive any previous resources/papers that were shared during the working group sessions.
* James Lloyd from TfL was invited to a roundtable on the Step Up campaign they launched for the first time last year. During this event, there were employers pushing opportunities to young people and parents to understand the landscape. They were keen to understand and learn more about the anchors work. If any member wants to contribute to this, please contact James ([James.Lloyd@tfl.gov.uk](mailto:James.Lloyd@tfl.gov.uk)).