

Meeting Local Needs Review

Executive Summary
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About the Review

This Meeting Local Needs Review report considers the activities of Morley College London, and the extent to which they meet local needs. The Review is a new statutory requirement for colleges and Morley is one of a small number of providers nationally who are 'early adopters', contributing in the process to the initiative's roll out later in 2023.

The report looks sequentially in detail at three sources of evidence:

- What Morley College London provides, its role in the wider London education and skills 'ecosystem', its learners, and what is known about the outcomes of learning.
- What is known about local need, from the economic and social perspective, drawing in particular on the new Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).
- What civic, employer, education provider and community stakeholders and learners think about the College and the extent to which it meets local needs.

In each part of the assessment, key implications for the Review are identified, and these inform the final section, which draws conclusions and proposes actions for the College to consider in order to better meet local needs.

What Morley College Does

Morley College London was founded in 1889 and was a pioneer in offering adults equal access to education.

In 2021/22 the College has a turnover of £18.5m, drawn from a range of mainly public sources and has three main centres at Waterloo, North Kensington and Chelsea. In 2022/23 the College planned to have 12,398 learners and 28,118 course enrolments, the bulk of which were 19+ unaccredited courses and 19+ accredited up to and including Level 2, as well as 16-18 study programmes, 19+ accredited Level 3 courses and some Higher Education.

The highest learner volumes across the whole College in 2022/23 are in Community Learning, Applied Studies (industry-focused programmes, including Health and Science, Business and ICT), The Skills Network (work-focused online programmes¹ primarily in Health and Social Care), ESOL, English, Maths and ICT, and a range of arts and creative subjects. Community Learning is expected to remain roughly at the 2021/22 level by the end of 2022/23. Applied Studies has grown significantly as a new subject grouping since 2020/21. Essential Skills (ESOL, English, Maths and Digital) have grown somewhat overall in the last three years. The offer has been driven by the College's curriculum strategy, which sets out growth plans by type of programme and centre.

Morley's learners come from across London and beyond, but are especially concentrated in its 'home Boroughs' of Lambeth, Southwark and RBKC, as well as those adjacent to these. The age spread of learners is pretty evenly spread across age brackets. Females outnumber males 4:1. The proportion of learners who might be considered disabled seems to be roughly equivalent to the overall population. Comparing Morley students' ethnicity data with those for London as a whole, suggests that Asian people account for a lower proportion of students than might be expected and the percentage of White British students is somewhat higher than might be expected. While relatively few learners come from 'low participation (in education) neighbourhoods', students are likely to come from more deprived parts of London. Most Morley learners progress into further learning upon completing their course.

¹ <https://www.theskillsnetwork.com/courses>

What is Known About Local Needs

The existing evidence base on London skills needs (most notably the 2023 Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)), highlights that strong growth in demand for labour is expected across all sectors until 2035, but demand for higher-level skills will remain especially strong, transferable skills will be especially important in changing economic conditions, automation and digitalisation will transform the economy and jobs, as will the transition to a greener economy. The implications of Artificial Intelligence (AI) are only now beginning to be understood. The LSIP identifies particular skills needs for the priority sectors of Built Environment, Creative, Health and Social Care, and Hospitality.

There is also evidence of more local skills needs, which largely reflects the London-wide analysis. Borough-level strategies place an emphasis on helping more disadvantaged groups of people into work by developing skills, typically from a low level, making Essential Skills a key requirement, but also progression to qualifications at higher levels of learning.

Stakeholder Views

The Review engaged a wide range of civic, employer, education provider and community stakeholders, and Morley learners. Those consulted generally took a very positive view of Morley's contribution to meeting local needs, both from the economic and social perspective, and identified a number of specific challenges and opportunities.

Key Conclusions from the Review

The Review identifies the following key issues that should be taken into account in terms of the future development of the College's offer:

(a) What we Mean by 'Needs'

The Review underlines the vital economic importance of Community Learning, Essential Skills, unaccredited short courses and the achievement of lower-level qualifications in aiding labour market inclusion and career progression: people need to build their confidence, achieve at lower levels and develop Essential Skills in order to be employable and progress to intermediate and higher levels of learning. This also matches priorities set by the GLA, the Boroughs and other funders to deliver the wider outcomes of learning, which include health and wellbeing, confidence building and developing stronger communities, and accords with Morley's role as an Institute for Adult Learning (IAL).

(b) Building on Existing Strengths, not Radical New Directions

Morley occupies a very particular role in the wider London education and skills 'ecosystem'. The Review suggests that, in responding to local needs, the College should build on its existing strengths, and leave subject areas where it has little current expertise to those who do. In practical terms this suggests that Essential Skills, Arts and Creative Industries, Social and Applied Sciences (including Health and Life Sciences) should be considered for further development, while sectors like Built Environment and Hospitality are probably better handled by others, although Morley may have a role to play in pre-employment training for entry-level roles and in signposting learners to programmes relevant to these sectors on offer elsewhere, including apprenticeships.

(c) Local and London-wide

Morley can play an important role in its 'home Boroughs' of RBKC, Lambeth and Southwark, but also in London as a whole. This suggests it can play a role in the solutions developed in response to the LSIP and being a key player in Borough-level employment and skills strategies.

(d) Increase Inclusion

Morley is rightly well-regarded as an inclusive, person-centred provider. The Review has identified opportunities where this could be taken further. Learner data suggests that that more men could be engaged and that there are fewer Asian learners than might be expected. It may also be possible to reach further into so-called 'low participation neighbourhoods'. At the same time partners and policy is placing greater emphasis on labour market inclusion for the over-50s, young parents, refugees and asylum seekers, people who have been involved with the criminal justice system, and Spanish and Portuguese speaking communities.

(e) Improve Progression and Employment Outcomes

Morley plays an important role in equipping people to access learning and then progress into further learning. The Review suggests that local needs would be better met if the College could offer more progression routes in learning, whether with the College itself or third parties. Ideally, this would be part of a wider push to make a more coherent skills system with Careers and Educational Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) and learning pathways into work more easily understood and accessible by individuals and employers. There is also potential to gather more data on learner employment outcomes (subject to cost and feasibility) and to co-develop new pre-employment training programmes with employers, DWP and Borough Councils.

(f) Partnership Development

The Review highlights that the College has strong and productive partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders and partners. There is potential for these to be developed further and for new ones to be created, including:

- **Employers:** relationships with key employers and employer groups could be more focused on co-developing new education and skills programmes and improving employment outcomes for students. Examples include Portobello Business Centre wanting to create even closer links between local businesses and students, and business start-up space at North Kensington and members of the South Bank Employers Group wanting to develop new local talent pools they can access.
- **Sector bodies:** the College already has good links to creative sector organisations, but there is also potential to engage more, for example, with the relevant Integrated Care Boards on workforce planning in London and nationally with organisations like the BCS, the Chartered Institute of IT, which is rolling out Digital T Levels, developing new Higher Technical Qualifications and supporting tutor development in subjects like coding.
- **Civic partners:** Morley is already engaged with the three key 'home Boroughs', all of whom are refreshing or will soon be refreshing local economy, employment and skills plans. The College can play a key role in labour market inclusion aspects of these plans and in terms of its sector skills offer.
- **Providers:** the College could do more to enable progression to apprenticeships, other FE providers and Higher Education, examples would more 'closely coupled' access arrangements with universities (eg Access students guaranteed an interview) and collaboration with universities on developing new Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs).
- **Community:** the College could continue the work of engaging new learner groups through voluntary and community sector organisations. This will vary by locality, but might include organisations connected to Asian communities (given the low proportion of Asian students), organisations that attract men, or individual organisations identified by community stakeholders (Sudanese and Somali communities in North Kensington, for example).
- **Major developments:** work with Borough Councils, developers and other providers to identify a role for Morley in the major developments taking place in the 'home Boroughs'. Details of skills needs are not yet fully understood, but relevant subject areas might include life sciences (SC1), Medtech (Royal Street), range of sectors (Kensal Canalside) and visitor / experience economy (Earls Court).

Meeting Local Needs Review Questions

DfE 'early adopter' guidance for Meeting Local Needs Reviews proposes seven questions that Governing Bodies should consider through the Review process. These are detailed in section 5 of the report and suggest that the College is performing well in terms of meeting local needs, albeit with a number of potential areas for improvement being identified.

Next Steps

The Review identifies the following opportunities for **curriculum development**:

- a) Expand the Essential Skills offer: there is evidence of unmet need and this is a key strength of the College. This will require additional public funding (Adult Education Budget).
- b) Proceed with the planned expansion of unaccredited 19+ courses and Community Learning, as a way of engaging people in learning, creating progression opportunities and improve labour market inclusion.
- c) Develop and grow 16-18 study programmes, 19+ Advanced learning programmes and Higher Education in Creative Industries; Digital; Health and Care; Life Sciences; and Finance, Business and Administration. Specific opportunities to be explored include the following skills shortage roles identified in the LSIP:

London-wide	Central London Forward
<p>Creative Photographers, audio-visual and broadcasting equipment operators Programmers for games development (major growth sector) Holistic creative skills sets below Level 3 Basic digital skills</p> <p>Health and Social Care Roles across the breadth of the nursing profession Paramedics Care workers, including at senior level A wide range of back-office roles including those across IT technicians Data analysts</p> <p>Hospitality Basic digital and transferable skills</p>	<p>Financial and Professional Services Management, administration, finance and accountancy, data analysis</p> <p>Information and Communication Technology Programmers and developers, data analysts, and web designers. Technical skills including programming and coding, cyber security, and soft skills.</p> <p>Arts, Entertainment and Recreation Video game designers, production staff, technicians and backstage skilled trades. Creativity, communication skills, and digital skills.</p> <p>Health and Social Care Care workers, nurses and doctors. Alongside health skills, employers are looking for empathy, and communication skills. Digital and ESOL, and increasing demand from life sciences, a key growth sector for central London.</p>

- d) Explore responses to London's cross-cutting skills needs, in particular:
 - Digital skills: Entry-level skills, such as Essential Digital Skills, which are required for most desk-based jobs; basic skills needed for specific jobs, such as web design, digital marketing and basic cloud; advanced digital skills, which are mostly cross-sector, such as data analytics, advanced cloud, advanced coding.
 - Green skills: 'green and carbon literacy and numeracy', embedding green skills across the curriculum, pathways to specific job roles, such as carbon and sustainability manager Higher and Degree-level qualifications.
 - Transferable skills: perhaps including a particular focus on creativity and building on work with partners on 'fusion skills' and the wider outcomes of learning. Scope for standalone programmes or modules, or embedded more explicitly in courses.

- e) Targeted, short labour market inclusion programmes, such as short pre-employment training courses delivered in partnership with employers, employer bodies, DWP and local Councils. This might include Sector-based Work Academy employability programmes that give access to entry-level jobs in Health and Care, Hospitality / Visitor Economy, arts organisations and museums.

The Review also identifies the following **other actions to be considered** to help the College better meet local needs:

- a) Develop outreach and engagement, and curriculum when appropriate, that engages more men, more Asian learners and people from 'low participation neighbourhoods'. Outreach and engagement could also engage more community organisations who could provide a route to disadvantaged groups and help to address further the issue of labour market inclusion.
- b) Improve progression and employment outcomes by identifying and communicating progression routes in learning (within Morley and to other providers) and into careers (working with sector bodies and major employers). This should include engaging with Borough Council and LSIP initiatives to improve CEIAG. The College should also explore ways that student employment outcomes can be tracked more effectively (subject to cost and feasibility).
- c) Develop further sector and employer partnerships, focused on co-development of new and improved curriculum. Opportunities include working closely with the Integrated Care Boards (London Health and Care employers) and sector bodies like BCS, the Chartered Institute of IT on Digital skills.
- d) Engage in Borough-level employment and skills initiatives, such as the local Council economic, employment and skills strategies and partnerships, as partnerships building around the major developments, as these proceed to implementation.

The College should also share the learning from being an 'early adopter' of the Meeting Local Needs Review process with other colleges, and use this report to inform discussions with provider partners to improve the coordination of offers and learner progression into further learning and work.