

**REPORT OF THE EDUCATION, CHILDREN & FAMILIES SELECT
COMMITTEE
2018/19**

**LIFELONG LEARNING IN A
RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD OF WORK**

Meeting Date: Wednesday 13 MARCH 2019

The Committee gives its sincere thanks to the witnesses for their contribution to the Select Committee's Review.

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Fifth Report of the Education Children and Families Select Committee 2018/19

Foreword

Someone once said:

“People who are interested in things are interested in things!”

In other words; people with hobbies and interests are curious and inquisitive about a lot of things and tend to have a lively approach to life.

A former mayor commented “when I go to local events whether it be community groups, local societies or voluntary organisations I often meet the same people often well into old age but still naturally active and enjoying life.”

The importance of lifelong learning for career and employment enhancement is well appreciated. This report also highlights the importance of lifelong learning in the wellbeing of retired people across Bromley.



Cllr Nicholas Bennett JP
Chairman
Education, Children and Families Select Committee

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Education Children and Families Select Committee met on 13th March 2019, to consider Lifelong Learning in a rapidly changing world of work.
- 1.2 The Committee also undertook a short review into Corporate Parenting and the Role of the Elected Member. In addition the Committee received an update on St Olaves as well as its regular update from the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families. Details can be found in the [minutes](#)¹ from the meeting.

2. Executive Summary of Recommendations

- 2.1 **That opportunities for Artificial intelligence to support the provision of English as a Second Language Courses be explored and investigated.**
- 2.2 **That the possibility of securing sponsorship from nationally recognised companies for the upgrade to the Bromley Adult Education IT system be investigated.**
- 2.3 **That Bromley Adult Education College further develop partnerships with local employers in order to enhance the lifelong learning offer across the Borough.**
- 2.4 **That a co-ordinated approach be adopted to the provision of support directed at entrepreneurs seeking to establish businesses across the Borough.**
- 2.5 **That a website signposting lifelong learners in London to the many opportunities for cultural enrichment and lifelong learning available across the Capital be developed by the Mayor of London.**

3. Lifelong Learning in a Rapidly Changing World of Work

- 3.1. The Select Committee's main enquiry for this meeting focused on Lifelong Learning in a rapidly changing world of work. The purpose of the review was to examine how further opportunities for learning can be provided for individuals who are navigating a rapidly changing world of work.
- 3.2 The Committee heard evidence from three key witnesses at the meeting:
 - Ms Carol Arnfield, Head of Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education (LBB);
 - Ms Tracey Davis, Vice-Principal, London South East Colleges
 - Mr Colin Maclean, Chief Executive, Community Links Bromley

¹ Minutes can be found on the London Borough of Bromley Website at: <https://cde.bromley.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=584&MId=6322>

In addition to the witnesses outlined above, the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, and Families also supported and contributed to the Committee's enquiry.

- 3.3 In advance of the meeting the Committee had been provided with a range of written evidence. This included a comprehensive report providing an overview of Lifelong Learning and an outline of some of the opportunities available across the Borough, a submission from the Bromley Branch of the University of the Third Age (U3A), and a submission from Community Links Bromley which provided a perspective from the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector on the volunteering opportunities that existed across the Borough and how these could contribute to lifelong learning.

3.4 Introduction

- 3.4.1 The employment landscape is undergoing a period of rapid change as a result of the digital revolution. In the last thirty years, the ongoing development of computers, automation, digital communication and the internet, and more recently developments around artificial intelligence have presented opportunities and challenges in equal measure. This ever evolving technological landscape means that it is more important than ever for adults to become lifelong learners in order to remain both active in the world of work and engaged with the changing technologies that impact on almost every aspect of daily life.

- 3.4.2 Lifelong learning is not just about job prospects and surviving in the rapidly changing world of work. The ability to embrace lifelong learning brings with it wider life skills and benefits such as increased confidence, improved mental health and wellbeing, and the ability to maintain cognitive functions in later life all of which have a positive impact on social skills and social interaction.

- 3.4.3 During its enquiry, the Committee explored a number of themes and issues with the witnesses.

3.5 Benefits of Lifelong Learning in the Changing World of Work

- 3.5.1 There is little doubt that technology is shaking up the employment market, it is changing the nature of most jobs and altering the specific skills and tasks associated with them. While it is still generally advantageous to pursue high levels of formal education, the future for both low- and high-skilled workers looks increasingly uncertain.

- 3.5.2 It is clear that we now live in a learning economy. Jobs that have traditionally required relatively static knowledge – from assembly line work to book keeping – continue to shift to machines. The recent developments in artificial intelligence (AI), now often referred to as the fourth revolution, are expected to have even further far reaching impacts on future employment opportunities. There are mixed opinions regarding the volume of jobs that will be displaced

as a result of AI compared to the numbers of opportunities to create new jobs. Given current AI developments it seems logical to assume that roles requiring elements of creativity and teamwork, which robotic machines find difficult to replicate, will remain secure in the foreseeable future.

- 3.5.3 Most workers will end up switching jobs a number of times. Many will change careers at least once. And even those who are fortunate enough to remain in the same job over a long period of time will almost certainly see the nature of the work they do shift rapidly. The Government's *UK Digital Skills Strategy* (2017) identified that many jobs now have a digital element. The report predicted that within 20 years 90% of all jobs will require some element of digital skills. Digital literacy is now as much a key requirement for employment in the UK as good levels of English and maths.
- 3.5.4 It is clear that there are numerous economic, intellectual and cognitive benefits to lifelong learning. The wider benefits of learning in adult life, beyond those of employability and increased earnings, are well documented at individual, community and wider society level. Students report increased confidence and self-esteem, personal fulfillment and improved feelings of wellbeing. Adult learning is of great benefit to older people. It can help people to remain active and engaged after retirement. There is also evidence to suggest that the impact on cognitive skills of continued education throughout life may delay the onset of dementia.
- 3.5.5 There are positive impacts on emotional health and wellbeing gained from participation in adult learning. A recent report released by the Workers Educational Association (WEA) identified that 82% of students who had declared mental ill health claimed that their courses helped them with their condition, 68% reported reduced stress levels, and 65% stated that they managed their stress better as a result of attending their courses. Whilst adults participate in learning as individuals, the benefits gained can have a ripple effect that reaches out to their family and the wider community. For example, adults who participate in learning themselves are more likely to engage in their children's or grandchildren's education, more likely to volunteer as school governors or become active volunteers in other community roles.

3.6 Opportunities for Lifelong Learning in Bromley

3.6.1 Bromley Adult Education and London and South East Colleges

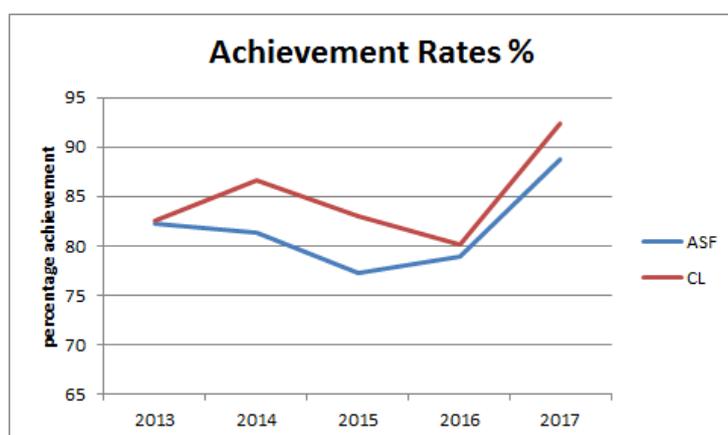
- 3.6.1.1 The Local Authority currently secures funding in the form of a grant from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to support adult learning opportunities for local residents. For the 2019/20 academic year Bromley will receive £1.5 million Adult Education budget (AEB) funding. 48% of this grant is used to provide approved qualification courses for local residents. These are focused on the priority areas of English and maths, English for speakers of other languages, digital skills, sign language, and a small range of vocational qualifications.

3.6.1.2 Currently, basic literacy and numeracy courses up to level 2 (including GCSE English and maths) are free to eligible adults in England. From September 2020 this entitlement will be extended to include digital literacy. The remaining portion of the grant, referred to as the Community Learning (CL) fund, is used to deliver non-qualification courses. The purpose of this element of funding is set out in the government document *New Chances, New Challenges* (2011). As part of the restructure of BAEC in 2016 it was determined that the main focus of the CL funding in Bromley would be the provision of targeted community learning courses to support and develop the skills of vulnerable adults and communities.

3.6.1.3 Around 30 percent of the CL funding is used to offer mainstream non-qualification courses for open enrolment. These courses are subsidised to the end user with 50% of the costs covered by the grant and the remainder charged to the learners. The fee income generated helps to support the infrastructure costs of running the service, whilst ensuring that learning opportunities are available to a wider range of residents than only those who can afford the full fee costs.

3.6.1.4 BAEC operates out of two dedicated sites, the Kentwood Centre in Penge and the Poverest Centre in Orpington. These two sites, situated in areas close to some of the Council's most disadvantaged communities, together with the use of approximately 35 community venues, are in alignment with the aim of supporting Bromley's vulnerable adults and communities.

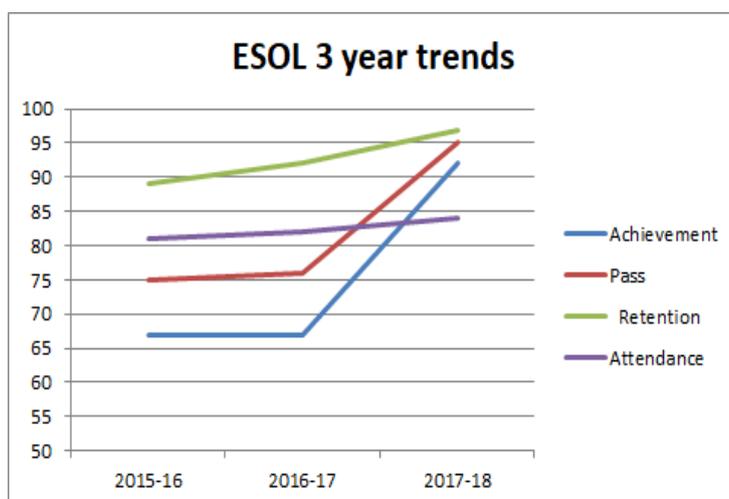
3.6.1.5 The Adult Education Service was inspected by Ofsted in January 2019, and the Committee wishes to congratulate the Head of Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education and all the staff within Bromley Adult Education College on the successful outcome of the Inspection. Bromley Adult Education was rated as 'Good' across all areas with a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across BAEC. Part time curriculum leaders have been appointed and given a brief that includes follow-up and support of their peers where areas for improvement were identified during lesson observations and learning walks. These interventions have contributed to the notable improvement in learner outcomes across the service in 2017/2018.



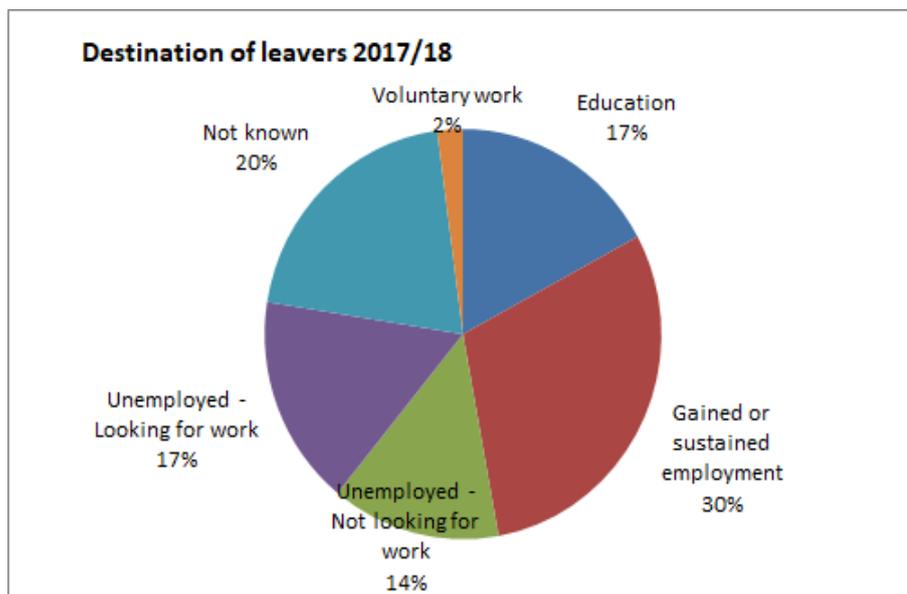
NB: ASF = accredited provision
CL=Non-accredited provision

3.6.1.6 Improvements were most significant in the ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) provision where achievement rates increased from 66% at the end of 2016/2017 to 92% by summer 2018 (see chart 2). In the ESOL provision the Service undertook a re-organisation of the curriculum to better meet the needs of learners. This combined with the robust monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment resulted in improvements across all indicators. The Committee notes that one of the challenges facing Bromley Adult Education College in the future is the region-wide shortage of ESOL tutors. The possibility of a partnership with London south East Colleges is being investigated to see if there is any potential for sharing staff. In addition to this, it is worth noting that the cost of the software that is available is reducing and this may present opportunities for Artificial Intelligence to support ESOL courses. Whilst there are certainly opportunities that are worth exploring, the Committee does recognise the numerous benefits to learners of being in a classroom and interacting with peers.

Recommendation 1: That opportunities for Artificial intelligence to support the provision of English as a Second Language Courses be explored and investigated.



3.6.1.7 In order to better understand the impacts of its curriculum offer, BAEC collects a range of destination data from learners who have attended qualification courses. Capturing and recording this data is a requirement of the funding agreement with the ESFA. The data indicated that around a third of respondents gained or sustained employment during or after the end of their courses. This is in line with national expectations. The number of learners going onto further study was higher than in the previous year. Around 85% of respondents who progressed onto further study chose to do so at BAEC.



3.6.1.9 It is clear that a robust monitoring of the returns is necessary in order to achieve a reasonable representative sample of responses and provide data that is sufficiently meaningful for use in curriculum planning and decision making. The adult education service regularly receives and captures feedback from learners via other means regarding the impact that their learning has had on their lives. The feedback illustrates that residents attending adult education provision benefit from a range of positive impacts. This mirrors the ever-increasing body of evidence that shows participation in learning can have a wide range of positive impacts on health and well-being as well as families and communities. Therefore increasing access to lifelong learning is not just crucial to the future prosperity of the Borough, but also the well-being and inclusion of our residents.

3.6.1.10 As a result of the low levels of unemployment in the Borough, much of BAEC's targeted work is focussed on the adults that are furthest away from employment. Community outreach work is often used to encourage residents with negative previous experiences of education back into learning. The Committee notes that for the last few years BAEC has provided a weekly work club at the Kentwood Centre in Penge and in the Cotmandene Centre in St Paul's Cray. This has provided local residents with an opportunity to improve the transferable and digital skills that often represent the first steps towards employment. This free service has provided unemployed residents access to computers along with a skilled tutor and volunteers, providing practical support with activities such as job search, CV writing and submitting applications. The majority of users have little or no IT skills when they arrive so the support is essential to help them develop skills and confidence.

3.6.1.11 In the autumn term 2018 the work club at the Kentwood site was rebranded as the Digital Drop-In (DDI) Centre. This has widened the scope and range

of digitally related activities and helped to attract users from amongst existing learners for whom attending a “work club” did not appeal.

- 3.6.1.12 The majority of Bromley Adult Education College’s IT resources are four or more years old and are in need of replacement. The wireless network at both the Kentwood and Poverest centres struggle to cope with the current demands of the service. Some of the classrooms at Kentwood have little or no reception thus restricting any form of digital enhancement to teaching and learning to a few hotspots. In addition to this, access is often slow which discourages use. The Committee notes that due to funding restrictions the IT system across the Bromley Adult Education service will need to be upgraded on a phased basis. Acknowledging that the Local Authority is subject to strict procurement rules, the Committee queries whether it would be possible to seek some form of sponsorship from nationally recognised IT companies for any of the work that would be involved.

Recommendation 2: That the possibility of securing sponsorship from nationally recognised companies for the upgrade to the Bromley Adult Education IT system be investigated.

- 3.6.1.13 Current partnership work includes provision delivered with local schools, Bromley Children Project, housing associations, Magpie Dance, Bromley Well, Carers Bromley, Cotmandene Community Resource Centre, Motttingham Community and Learning Shop, Age UK Bromley, Certitude and Heritage Care. However, partnerships with local employers are underdeveloped.
- 3.6.1.14 The Committee considers that more should be done to develop relationships and access the resources available to some of the larger companies across the Borough. The Committee notes that larger companies often provide their own bespoke training however it is important that further education providers understand industry requirements in order to ensure that people engaging in further education are developing relevant, and future-proof skills.

Recommendation 3: That Bromley Adult Education College further develop partnerships with local employers in order to enhance the lifelong learning offer across the Borough.

- 3.6.1.15 In 2017/2018 46% of learners enrolled on qualification courses at BAEC were aged 40-59. Bromley residents in their 40s and 50s are key users of the adult education service, making up 36 percent of the total cohort of learners. In the non-accredited provision adults aged 60+ form the largest cohort at 38 percent with those in the 40-59 age group coming a close second at 33 percent.
- 3.6.1.16 The Committee also received evidence concerning the vocational offer from London South East Colleges. There are currently 12,000 learners

undertaking a range of vocational programmes which offer “real skills for the real world”. The Committee is pleased that the College works alongside a variety of employers to ensure that the programmes on offer provide participants with the skills that are being sought by industries.

- 3.6.1.17 The Committee notes that London South East Colleges provide a range of courses to support entrepreneurs seeking to establish their own business. The Committee is aware that there are a number of entrepreneurs across the Borough and that Bromley has one of the highest rates of company start-ups. Entrepreneurs seeking to establish their own businesses need to be provided with the support they require and there should be a co-ordinated approach to the provision of such support across the Borough.

Recommendation 4: That a co-ordinated approach be adopted to the provision of support directed at entrepreneurs seeking to establish businesses across the Borough.

3.6.2 The Future of Adult Education Funding

- 3.6.2.1 Funding for post-16 learning and skills (excluding that for Apprenticeships) across London is due to be devolved to the Office for the Mayor of London with effect from August 2019. As part of the devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB), the Mayor will be legally required to continue to deliver the adult statutory entitlements of functional skills English and maths including GCSE, along with the new statutory basic digital skills entitlement from 2020/2021. Outside of the statutory entitlements, the Mayor will have the freedom and responsibility to determine the funding priorities for the remaining portion of the devolved AEB.

- 3.6.2.2 The Committee notes that the GLA has published its own strategy (*Skills for Londoners* (2018)) which sets out immediate priorities for skills and education over the next few years. The long-term ambition set out in the Strategy is to create a strategic integrated skills and education offer for London that will ensure Londoners, employers and businesses have the skills they need to thrive and prosper.

- 3.6.2.3 The Strategy’s priority groups include those currently identified by LBB and its own adult education service. Increasing the levels of targeted support to the most disadvantaged groups and providing funding to ensure that all adults have access to training to improve basic functional skills is one of the priorities under the Strategy. As part of the AEB, Adult and Community Learning (ACL) is recognised in the Strategy as having an important role to play in helping those furthest away from employment and engagement in society to reconnect with learning. Therefore, it is expected that CL funding will continue as part of AEB following devolution.

- 3.6.2.4 The Committee notes that London’s Further Education and Skills providers who are funded via a grant agreement have been advised that they can reasonably expect their grant for the 2019/2020 academic year to be at

similar levels to the current year, providing they meet their funding targets. Both City Hall and the ESFA have stated they wish to avoid any destabilisation of the sector during the transition period and therefore intend to introduce any changes to future funding methodologies over time. That way, providers have time to plan for any impacts as a result of any potential funding realignment.

3.6.3 University of the Third Age

3.6.3.1 The University of the Third Age (U3A), a self-funded movement, with members learning purely for pleasure, not working towards any qualifications, was established in Bromley in 1990, quickly growing to be the second-largest in the Country. U3A Bromley became too large to function effectively and two new U3As (Beckenham and Orpington) were formed in order to address geographical difficulties and interests. The aim of the U3A movement is to encourage people in their third age (the point in your life when you have the opportunity to undertake learning for its own sake and enjoyment) to continue their enjoyment of learning subjects of interest to them.

3.6.3.2 Delivery of lifelong learning to the approximately 1,700 members of U3A Bromley is done in various ways; but mainly through a network of Study Groups, of which there are two types: Open Groups and Others. These others are further divided by size: those with large enough numbers to require a small hall or seminar room; and those who are the 'home' groups, meeting in members' houses. A very large response to the initial advertisement, or a subsequent increase in numbers could mean that the group will fall into the Open category.

3.6.3.3 Open Study Groups (i.e. not requiring membership of the group) include: Modern World, Local Studies, and Travel. Gardening, and Singing with Friends (which is run in partnership with Age UK), are slightly smaller groups. Other groups that are run include: Rambles, Local Visits and Outings by Public Transport.

3.6.3.4 The areas covered by 'home' groups include: art appreciation, watercolour painting, arts and crafts, quilling, marquetry, languages (different languages at different levels), cards, Mah Jong, literature, music appreciation, playing instruments, psychology, philosophy, science and technology, social studies, tablet/mobile computing, theatre, wine enjoyment, singing, Sunday lunch groups, table tennis, golf, keep fit, practical gardening, genealogy and history. There are currently sixty-seven study groups in total. Where a group is full, a waiting list is kept, or second or third groups are formed on the same subject.

3.6.3.5 Every single member of U3A Bromley can decide how much or how little they wish to participate in activities. Many people attend several of the large, open meetings and never take part in a smaller group, or discussion groups. Friendships are formed with others attending, and some participants may be

going to several events a week. Many people only attend one or two smaller groups, once or twice a month, and many do a combination of small and large, or craft and lecture. Individuals' absences from meetings are noticed by their friends in the larger groups and by the Group Leaders in the smaller ones, and if people do not know about or are not notified in advance of an absence, someone will almost always check on the individual.

3.6.3.6 Continuing attendance at meetings has the benefit of keeping the participants' brains active, particularly if the meetings require active participation in the discussion, or in some cases presenting information to others in the group and leading the discussion. There is also significant social contact resulting from U3A. Going to a meeting will usually involve having coffee or tea with other attendees and friends, or having lunch afterwards. For many, it may be the only regular social contact in their lives, and this is often cited as the biggest benefit of belonging to U3A.

3.6.3.7 We are particularly fortunate in Bromley to live in a world class capital city with excellent transport links and a plethora of museums and higher education institutions. The range of learner societies based in London is unparalleled. The extramural departments of a number of London universities have extensive lecture programmes as do the capital museums. It would be really useful if the new devolved adult education budget held by the Mayor of London could sponsor a website signposting the myriad causes, events and lectures available on a weekly basis across London.

3.6.4 Lifelong Learning through Volunteering

3.6.4.1 Community Links Bromley provided the Committee with a perspective from the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector for the opportunities that exist for learning.

3.6.4.2 Bromley Mencap Services supports a number of programmes including: Pathways to Employments, a supported work experience programme; Supported Internship; Bromley Well, training and support for people with learning disabilities; and, Step Forward, a programme which provides an opportunity for people with complex needs to work towards paid employment or voluntary work.

3.6.4.3 The Bromley Recovery College is a model of lifelong learning run by Bromley Lewisham and Greenwich Mind. The provision is for people with mental health problems and is structured much like an adult education college, but with all courses co-designed and co-facilitated by people who have personal experience of mental health problems. Courses are aimed at supporting people to manage their mental health problems, develop their skill, engage with the community, and look after their physical wellbeing and creativity.

3.6.4.4 The Committee notes that the National Director of Community Engagement for Deloitte commented that: "*It's clear that the skill and experience gained*

through volunteering are respected and that they provide an edge for job candidates during the hiring process.” In addition to doing good and helping others, volunteering can bring great benefits to people’s careers, from learning new skills and honing existing ones to meeting new people and boosting creativity. Volunteering also gives people the chance to expand their network, explore different occupations and industry sectors as well as building their confidence, especially if they have been unemployed for a while.

3.6.5 Lifelong Learning and the ‘Fourth Revolution’

3.6.5.1 Today there is talk of a fourth industrial revolution consisting of developments in information technologies combined with Artificial Intelligence, robotisation, automation of tasks, and the internet of things.

3.6.5.2 Consideration needs to be given to who might be excluded from using and accessing digital services. There are currently approximately 7.8 million people in the United Kingdom who do not use the internet². The majority of the 7.8 million are older, from disadvantaged backgrounds and less educated. This statistics clearly needs to be a consideration when developing lifelong learning courses going forward.

3.6.5.3 Alongside potential job replacements, changing job requirements and the creation of new jobs, the digitalisation of the workplace will no doubt also lead to radical changes in working conditions across all sectors. There are many opportunities but also many challenges and there must be structures in place to address these challenges.

3.7 Conclusion

3.7.1 With an ageing population and rapid economic change people need to constantly learn and adapt. This applies equally to both young people starting out on their career path and older adults who need to adapt for second or third careers later in life.

3.7.2 Lifelong learning needs to be an essential part of our culture if we are to enable all levels of society to adapt to the ever-changing skills demands of the modern workplace and remain economically active into later life. In order to achieve this we need to find ways to encourage and enable people to become lifelong learners. There is currently no dedicated website to signpost those with an interest in lifelong learning to the vast array of cultural enrichment opportunities across the Capital. It would be helpful if such a website could be developed and launched by the Mayor of London.

Recommendation 5: That a website signposting lifelong learners in London to the many opportunities for cultural enrichment and lifelong learning available across the Capital be developed by the Mayor of London.

² Birtwistle et al, *The Road Ahead: A Review of the voluntary sector’s operating environment* (NCVO)

- 3.7.3 Changing patterns of work and busy modern lives means that learning needs to be available flexibly. This presents many opportunities for the use of Artificial Intelligence. To this end, it is clear that basic skills in digital literacy are as important today as basic maths and English skills. Delivering lifelong learning is not just the mission of adult education services. There is a wide variety of opportunities for lifelong learning available. The Council may wish to consider the development of a Lifelong Learning Strategy to consider how services can be delivered an integrated way going forward to encourage a culture of lifelong learning across all its communities.

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