

Key Priorities for Adult Skills Learning Provision 2026/27

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Aiming to improve the quality-of-life skills and employability of residents in the borough, making Wandsworth a vibrant and prosperous learning community.

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Key Priorities for Community Learning and Accredited Provision 2026/27

1 | Introduction

The Wandsworth Lifelong Learning (WCLL) team is part of the Council's Children's Services Department. It is responsible for a wide range of lifelong learning activities and courses across the borough.

WCLL's main functions are to deliver:

- An extensive programme of part-time non-accredited Community Tailored Learning courses through direct and subcontracted delivery, face- to-face, on-line and blended learning.
- Accredited courses through an Adult Skills Fund (ASF), aligned to local and regional London priorities including English, maths, ICT, ESOL, preparation for employment and identified vocational areas. An additional
- Free Courses for Jobs allocation (FCFJ) offers fully funded Level 3 qualifications to eligible adults.
- Apprenticeships to young people and adults, both internally within the local authority and externally.
- Work experience and preparation for employment.
- Other work/funded projects which generate income for young people and adults learning in Wandsworth e.g., UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSP), direct income from services to organisations and individuals.

There is a good level of participation in all programmes from learners of all ages, backgrounds and experiences. WCLL continues to increase its focus on those who are most disadvantaged to improve their access to learning and employment.

The [Wandsworth Council Lifelong Learning Three-Year Development Plan](#) reflects the work undertaken by the team and describes measurable plans for the future. The Plan encompasses local and national priorities with the aim of targeting funding to maximise social and economic inclusion. On a local level the plan is directly linked to Wandsworth Council's Priorities.

Wandsworth Council's Priorities

A fairer Wandsworth

To make Wandsworth fairer we will:

- Work towards ensuring all local people have a genuinely affordable place to call home.
- Support residents impacted by the cost-of-living crisis and COVID-19

A compassionate Wandsworth

To make Wandsworth more compassionate we will:

- Be a compassionate Council that truly listens and is ambitious for all.
- Create safer neighbourhoods where communities feel confident and protected and victims and survivors are supported.

A more sustainable Wandsworth

To make Wandsworth more sustainable we will:

- Tackle climate change by working together with our residents, businesses and communities and will be carbon neutral as a council by 2030.

2 | Wandsworth Council Lifelong Learning's Priorities

1. To lead and manage high quality learning.
2. To increase the number of learners achieving and gaining qualifications.
3. To meet the needs of individuals, communities and employers in Wandsworth to support effective pathways to employment.
4. To widen participation in learning.
5. To link adult skills and community learning to other key strategies and initiatives

3 | Demographic Context

Wandsworth is the second largest inner London borough with a population of 327,502 (2021 Census). The 2021 census revealed that the size and make-up of the local population has changed, particularly in relation to age.

Since the last Census, the Wandsworth population has increased by 6.7%. The borough had the fourth largest population increase in inner London. The local population is now older with the largest increase seen in 55-59 year-olds (+43% since 2011), followed by 50-54 (+33%). There has been a large decrease in 0-4 year-olds (-14% since 2011).

Wandsworth has a lower proportion of 0-19 year-olds and 65+ adults than London and a much higher percentage of 20-44 years olds compared to London and England. However, the census also revealed that there were 4,000 85+ year olds, 307 more (+8.3%) compared to 2011. This is the highest number of 85+ year olds in inner London.

Like most London boroughs, Wandsworth is ethnically diverse with 32.2% of the population from ethnic minority group communities.

The English Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2019) rank Wandsworth as 173 of 317 on the average score, where 1 is the most deprived, and the area ranked 317 is the least deprived. The highest concentration of deprivation in the borough is in the wards of Latchmere, Roehampton and Queenstown. There are also concentrations of deprivation in the West Putney and Tooting areas.

As with most parts of London areas of deprivation are closely located to areas of extreme advantage, and the borough is set to benefit from the regeneration of the Nine Elms area which will provide up to 25,000 jobs over the next 20 years. The Nine Elms development remains one of the largest regeneration projects of its type in Europe.

4 | Delivering Council Values

Think bigger

Embrace difference

Connect better

Lead by example

Put people first

5 | Key Delivery Priorities for Adult Skills Provision – Priority Groups 2026/27

The Lifelong Learning team includes staff who work with community providers to develop learning opportunities to encourage hard-to-reach and priority groups, including those who:

- are adult learners accessing education and training opportunities that promote better and more sustainable ways of living and working
- are ex-offenders
- are furthest away from work
- are in low paid employment and/or are low qualified
- are learners whose first language is not English
- are learners without a level 2 qualification
- are men who are traditionally under-represented in adult learning
- are older learners who would benefit from more social interaction
- are socially isolated (or at risk of social isolation)
- are underachieving or under-represented
- have a government entitlement to basic skills and/or up to level 2
- have a learning difficulty or disability
- have been severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic (employment, financial, wellbeing)
- lack digital skills and/or experience barriers to access digital technology
- live in an area of poor social cohesion
- need to retrain
- would benefit from improved health or wellbeing

6 | Key Delivery Priorities for Adult Skills Provision – Curriculum 2026/27

Key priorities have been determined as courses or activities that:

- support improved maths skills,
- support increased English language skills for those for whom English is a second language, specifically in the Roehampton and Battersea lower deprivation factor wards,
- support learners into work or further study, offering employability skills and tailored training provision to engage those furthest from the workplace or learning,
- support enterprise and,
- improve ICT skills for employment and digital tasks required for everyday life, and to promote a more secure technological environment.

Health and wellbeing courses or activities that:

- promote and develop confidence building, communication skills, personal presentation, and individual resilience,
- support health and quality of life by helping learners with limited physical ability remain physically and mentally active, promoting their overall fitness and wellbeing, and
- support healthy lifestyles, nutrition and wellbeing.

In addition, courses or activities that:

- support and promote Family Learning activities,
- provide clear progression routes, including informal ESOL and Functional Skills that act as stepping-stones to formal or regulated learning
- will engage disadvantaged priority groups in learning, specifically engaging adults with special needs (disability and learning difficulties), the socially isolated, adults suffering from mental health conditions, adults moving towards independent living and families on low incomes,
- support communities in combatting climate change and improving the environment and neighbourhoods keeping them clean, green and safe,
- support the Mayor of London's [London Growth Plan](#), and
- enrichment programmes that will improve wellbeing or lead to a job change (provide infrastructure and income generation).

7 | Adult Skills Fund

The Adult Skills Fund (ASF) replaced the Adult Education Budget from August 2024 simplifying the funding and accountability system and giving providers more flexibility to respond to local needs.

There are two main parts to the Adult Skills Fund:

- 1 Skills Fund Adult Core** – for WCLL this would be accredited (regulated qualifications) delivery
- 2 Skills Fund Tailored Learning** – for WCLL this would be non-accredited delivery (what is currently known as Community Learning)

Free Courses for Jobs (Level 3) remains ringfenced as a separate line within providers' funding agreements.

8 | Influencing Strategies – Greater London Authority (GLA) and Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)

The WCLL service works across multiple funding streams to contribute to national, regional and local priorities.

The curriculum is agile and takes account of national priorities, particularly in areas such as personal development, digital, English and maths. There is also a responsiveness to fast-changing circumstances such as Covid, cost of living and work with refugees. Work is also aligned to the Mayor's [Skills Roadmap for London](#) and the [London Local Skills Improvement Plan](#) which outline London-wide priorities.

9 | Criteria for Assessing Expressions of Interest

In addition to the above, all proposed CL provision is required to meet the following criteria:

- The proposed target group is one of those defined above.
- Appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place.
- Mechanisms are in place to properly assess learner needs, and to provide information, advice and guidance to learners.
- Adequate resources are available to learners that are appropriate to the target group.
- All delivery is linked to and in accordance with the Mayor's Skills for Londoners Strategy and up to date GLA Adult Education Budget Funding rules.
- Providers that have previously delivered for WCLL must demonstrate a strong track record of meeting the targets set out in their approved delivery plans, including those relating to Wandsworth residents, the London Learner Survey, Course Evaluation Survey, SAR deadlines, and other required measures.
- There are suitable safe venues for delivery of adult learning.
- The organisation has effective mechanisms and/or strategies to monitor the quality of provision.
- The organisation has up to date policies in place including Health & Safety, Diversity and Safeguarding.
- The organisation has adequate procedures in place to ensure the safeguarding of vulnerable adults.
- The organisation has appropriate insurance cover.
- The organisation is financially viable.
- The organisation has a track record of delivering local community- based learning.
- Due Diligence documentation is provided upon request and deemed to be of sufficient quality and content.
- Suitable references are available.
- The organisation must plan provision in line with [WCLL's Digital Policy](#).

10 | Curriculum Offer

Skills Fund Tailored Learning

The total budget for tailored learning (non-accredited Community Learning) provision in this invitation to offer is **£335,000** and for the provision of **face-to-face** delivery only. The indicative allocations for the curriculum packages are as below:

Curriculum package	Indicative funding allocated
British Sign Language	£5,000
Creative/Media	£10,000
Digital skills (£5,000.00 - Roehampton/Battersea based delivery)	£25,000
English and ESOL (Roehampton/Battersea based delivery)	£25,000
Enterprise	£7,000
Family learning	£12,000
Financial skills	£4,000
Green/sustainability	£10,000
Health & Wellbeing	£22,000
LLDD	£90,000
Maths	£10,000
Pre-employment training/Employability	£80,000
Widening participation (Voluntary and Community Sector only)	£35,000

Skills Fund Adult Core

Qualifications from Entry 1 to Level 2 must be listed as approved for funding on the ESFA's 'Find a learning aim' online search: <https://submit-learner-data.service.gov.uk/find-a-learning-aim/>

Qualifications should have sufficient approval time to enable completion of delivery, verification and final certification. The indicative budget for adult core (accredited) provision in this invitation to offer is **£44,000** and for the provision of **face-to-face** delivery only. The indicative allocations for the curriculum packages are as below:

Curriculum package	Indicative funding allocated
Creative/Media	£5,000
Digital skills	£6,000
English	£10,000
ESOL	£10,000
Maths	£6,000
Vocational (Priority areas: Health & Social Care, Hospitality and Catering, Retail)	£7,000

Level 3 Free Courses for Jobs:

These courses must help learners improve wage outcomes and job prospects, and gain skills that employers value.

To check the validity of your qualification for this programme you can go to [Find a Qualification](#)

The total allocation for commissioning for L3 FCFJ is **£40,000** and for the provision of face-to-face and/or online delivery. The indicative allocations for the curriculum packages are as below:

Curriculum package	Indicative funding allocated
Creative/Media	£10,000
Digital skills	£17,000
Vocational Health & Social Care	£13,000

11 | Commissioning Timeframe

Process	Deadline
Adult Skills Priorities Guidance, Expression of Interest and Course Application Form distributed	30/01/2026
Expression of Interest, Funding Application Form and Business Continuity Plans returned to WCLL	06/03/2026
Evaluation of tender	09 - 17/03/2026
Provisional result of Tender and Due Diligence templates distributed	19 - 20/03/2026
Due diligence templates returned	10/04/2026
Contracts issued	TBC – we will need to wait until WCLL contract is issued by GLA/DfE
Signed copies of contract to be returned to WCLL	03/07/2026

12 | Bidding Process

Organisations must complete the following annually, to be considered for funding under the Adult Skills Fund:

- The Expression of Interest Form 2026-27
- Adult Skills Funding Application Form 2026-27
- The Due Diligence document (if successful when provisional results are published on 19-20/03/2026)

The Expression of Interest form asks general questions about your organisation and helps us establish if your organisation can deliver good quality Adult Skills programmes in line with our overall mission and quality framework. We also ask for reference details. The forms need to be completed once every academic year (August - July) by all potential providers whether we have worked with you before or not.

The Due Diligence form should be completed annually, and requests information to perform financial checks, company registration checks, DfE checks, safeguarding, prevent and policy and CPD checks.

The Funding Application Form details the budget requested for the courses it is intended to deliver.

The completed Expression of Interest form is considered by a panel consisting of Wandsworth Council staff and certain members of the Monitoring and Advisory Group if required. You will need to provide 2 referees from 2 different institutions/businesses (preferably providers you have delivered/currently deliver for) whom we will contact for a reference as part of the application process.

Your Business Continuity Plan must include actions in place to ensure that course delivery can continue in the event of any lockdowns and with minimal impact on learning. It must also describe how the provider will move to online learning in a timely manner.

We will not be able to contract with you if your organisation:

- Has a current Ofsted rating of 'Urgent improvement' in any categories.
- Does not meet the Department for Education (DfE) and Greater
- London Authority (GLA) Minimum Standards.
- Has an above-average risk warning from a credit agency or if the outcome of your annual financial health assessment is inadequate, unless we have written permission in advance from the DfE or GLA.
- Has passed a resolution (or the court has made an order) to wind up or liquidate the company, or administrators have been appointed, or
- Statutory accounts are overdue.
- If you have any other DfE or GLA funding (directly or indirectly) and the funding from us takes your organisation over the £100,000 threshold for the funding year, you must ensure that you are listed on the UK Register of Learning Providers beforehand, otherwise we cannot contract with you until you do so.
- If any of the required documents in this process are not returned in the required format and/or without all the required information.
- If any of the funding applied for is not in line with the priorities detailed or referenced in this document (e.g., where we have requested Battersea/Roehampton or face-to-face delivery only, etc.).
- If we are unable to obtain satisfactory references for your organisation.
- If you have delivered for WCLL previously and such delivery was not satisfactory as measured through regular monitoring reports.