

The London Borough of Merton

MAL Pound Plus Policy

24-25

Patricia Carlisle

Merton Adult Learning

July 2024

Introduction

The London Borough of Merton is committed to providing high quality and sustainable adult learning to improve the social, economic, health and wellbeing outcomes of our residents. We deliver this through a strategic investment approach: commissioning provision to the best delivery partners in the field and by developing sophisticated evidence-based approaches to what we deliver.

The Service operates through a commissioned learning service with partners across Merton. We work in partnership with representatives from these organisations to agree where responsibilities lie in relation to the requirements of this policy.

Within this document 'partners' refers to delivery partners listed on the Merton Adult Learning Approved Provider List (APL).

This policy is reviewed annually, or before in the event of any significant changes to guidance or policy.

Context

Pound Plus was developed in 2013 to help adult learning services across the country show how they add value to the money provided by government for community learning, known as tailored learning from 24-25. It does this by looking at the additional investment (or savings made) in tailored learning which can be estimated in monetary terms and explaining how this is then used to support the most disadvantaged learners in the borough.

Pound Plus shows how learning partners make the most of public funding. This is important because making the most of the income which supports tailored learning helps increase participation in adult learning at a time when government funding is reducing.

Pound Plus adds up various elements that contribute to adult learning, such as direct income, cost savings, value for money and fees. It also looks at how this income or saving is re-invested in tailored learning. According to the Greater London Authority (GLA) and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), "the 'Pound' represents the public pound, the 'Plus' is everything else that you can generate in addition to your non-formula tailored learning funding allocation, such as fee income, funding from other sources, resources in kind and other sources of revenue / sponsorship / volunteering".

Merton Adult Learning (MAL) receives funding from the GLA and the ESFA to run its learning provision. The GLA and ESFA has Funding and Performance Management Rules for Grant-funded providers which require all organisations to publish a Pound Plus policy. This policy explains how Pound Plus fee income / savings are invested for the people who most need, and can least afford, tailored learning provision.

Aim

MAL and our partners will look to use Pound Plus to help to show that the money provided by government can deliver learning over and above the amount of the initial investment, and for every £1 of public funding given to MAL, it creates additional investment to get more local residents into the learning that they need.

Using Pound Plus

MAL works with partners, local organisations, and stakeholders to deliver a diverse course offer enabling a wide range of adults to have access to learning in Merton. It is important that we all work hard to generate additional income and revenue to maximise the opportunity of delivery.

MAL will use Pound Plus to measure how much extra value is being added by our partners to tailored learning by additional income, cost efficiencies and savings. This extra value can be through our partners charging course fees to those who can afford it, working with local groups or organisations, developing volunteers, applying for extra funding and grants, and making sure our systems are effective.

Pound Plus provides a way for the additional value created to be recognised and recorded.

We will ask our partners to:

- Build Pound Plus calculations into all their planning and delivery.
- Encourage financial contributions from learners where they can afford it.
- Encourage financial contributions from employers where appropriate and feasible.
- Encourage financial and in-kind contributions from community organisations.
- Increase the involvement of volunteers in the delivery of tailored learning.
- Use annual data to create a set of baseline Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) relating to Pound Plus to evidence how additional income and/or efficiencies are adding to the GLA & ESFA allocation.
- Use these KPIs to set appropriate targets for future years.
- Review and evaluate progress as part of the annual quality cycle against KPIs.
- Develop and strengthen internal partnerships with other Merton Council directorates (including enterprise, jobs and skills, libraries, early years, regeneration, community development), supporting services which strive to meet the needs of residents.
- Develop and strengthen external partnerships across Merton (including employers, community centre, schools, faith groups, hostels, sheltered schemes, job centres and children's centres).
- Develop and strengthen external partnerships across the adult learning sector (including the GLA, the ESFA, other local authority groups, FE Colleges, independent training providers).

- Look to develop sponsorship, grants, tenders, and bids for additional funding from central government departments, charities and trusts.
- Look for funding from other sources (including income from local authorities to deliver targeted programmes such as health, offenders, guidance interviews from the National Careers Service, public health funding).

Using Pound Plus MAL will look to invest more in tailored learning delivering courses and support to our most disadvantaged residents in a way that would not be possible with using only the government allocation of funding. This sits with our work in achieving one of our key strategic objectives; to widen participation in learning, especially by providing opportunities for our priority groups who are disadvantaged either socially or economically.

We will deliver courses that can:

- Focus on people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate.
- Offer more provision in the local community.
- Extend and widen provision at no cost to those unable to pay.
- Support progression to further learning and work.
- Support key skills around English, maths, employment, and digital skills.
- Contribute to family learning, health and wellbeing.
- Develop stronger and more engaged communities.
- Develop new courses and curriculum (including a focus on employment training and health/wellbeing).
- Expand our outreach work to more communities and individuals.
- Upgrade our equipment, including mobile IT resources for community venues.

Monitoring

MAL will monitor Pound Plus through contractual arrangements and quality assurance of our partners.

The joint strategic and curriculum planning with all the organisations who are part of MAL will make sure that the money saved or created is used to benefit learners. Additional funds or savings will be directed to our priority groups and to those who might otherwise not be able to take part in learning.

MAL expects partners to consider, monitor and measure the following as part of Pound Plus:

Additional funding:

- Fee income.
- Bids for additional funding.
- Funding from other government departments.

Savings:

- In-kind contributions, such as free publicity for courses, reduced or free hire of venues, use of equipment or consumables.
- Volunteer activities (including learner support in the classroom or other activities, learning champions, curriculum development, signposting, advice, infrastructure, or delivery support).

Active partnerships:

- Working with other learning partners to share expertise.
- Working with local people, services and organisations to create a joined-up approach to adult learning and wellbeing.
- Working with other agencies and council services.

Efficiencies:

- Sharing services and/or premises.
- Pooling resources.
- Sharing professional training and development for staff and tutors.
- More coordinated planning with contacts and organisations.
- Reviewing operational systems to minimise waste.

Rationalisation:

- Improving and/or refocussing of the curriculum offer, reduced duplication.
- Better progression pathways.