



Education Strategy Year 1 Annual Report

Introduction

This annual report summarises the first year of delivery against the City of London Corporation's Education Strategy 2024-2029. The strategy sets out how the City Corporation will work to extend and enrich education for City-linked learners, using the City's assets, partnerships, networks and convening power to provide 'additionality' that will help learners flourish in a rapidly changing world. It is underpinned by a commitment to increasing social mobility for learners facing disadvantage.

Delivery is structured around five priority areas:

- **Supporting Educational Excellence**
- **Reinforcing Safety, Health and Wellbeing**
- **Embracing Culture, Creativity and the Arts**
- **Promoting Personal Development**
- **Improving Employability**

Within each priority area sit a number of strategic actions, supported through a mix of projects, events, tools and funding mechanisms - many of which naturally contribute to more than one priority area. The design of these activity strands was informed by input from key stakeholders before being approved by Members of the City Corporation's Education Board.

As a new strategy this first year has balanced established delivery with the careful piloting of new activity, ranging from very small, targeted projects through to large-scale programmes and events. Activity design has been informed by ongoing engagement with school leaders, teachers, learners, employers and academics.

As anticipated in the strategy, baseline measures and performance capture processes are being introduced and will be iterated annually. This first year has focused on establishing a stable foundation for activity and reporting, recognising the contribution of City-led initiatives overseen by the Education Strategy Unit (ESU), whilst also referencing school-led activity supported through the City Premium Grant (CPG).

Executive Summary

The Education Strategy Unit (ESU) delivered a broad first-year programme against the City of London Corporation's Education Strategy 2024-2029. In total, the ESU delivered **38 initiatives, events and tools**, engaging over **10,000 learners** and over **300 education sector professionals**. In parallel, the ESU managed the funding and evaluation **of a further 130 projects** through the City Premium Grant, School Visits Fund and Cultural & Creative Learning funding, utilising £2.41m and engaging over **46,000 participants** - predominantly from schools in disadvantaged areas.

Participant feedback tells us activity across priority areas has helped educators and learners build advocacy for healthier choices and outdoor learning, build personal confidence and Fusion Skills, engage more deeply with culture, creativity and the arts, improve their understanding of the workplace and career pathways, and benefit from educational enhancement through events, grant-funded projects and strengthened collaboration across the City Family of Schools. Teachers have shared their appreciation for the wide range of opportunities provided throughout the year, telling us they are highly valued and that their learners gain a great deal from taking part.

Supporting Educational Excellence combined grant management, events delivery, inter-school collaboration, and sector-facing research and stakeholder engagement. The City Premium Grant funded 118 improvement-focused projects with 86% reporting positive outcomes and 78% of schools applying learnings from previous projects. Guildhall-based events (including the London Careers Festival, City Maths Challenge, City Chess Tournament and the City Schools Concert) reached 10,655 learners with 90% of learners and 91% of educators reporting these opportunities were beneficial and enhanced learning experiences. Alongside this, professional dialogue was cultivated through forums and 183 external education-focused professionals were engaged through conferences and network events. The ESU also oversaw two research projects, which sparked external interest across the education sector, central government and parts of the wider academic community.

Activity under **Reinforcing Safety, Health and Wellbeing** focused on identifying and creating opportunities to improve advocacy around healthy living and environmental and outdoor learning. The new City Schools Health Challenge brought together 187 learners from five schools in an unconventional non-competitive format. 74% of participants said they enjoyed the experience, with 62% reporting increased motivation to stay fit. 67% of teacher attendees reported they felt the event had helped to encourage a positive long-term attitude to health and wellbeing. Throughout the year our 'EOL InfoHub' and sustained communications signposted or connected educators with 98 environmental and outdoor learning partners,

opportunities and resources.

Embracing Culture, Creativity and the Arts activity continued to broaden access to high-quality creative and cultural enrichment. Approximately 1,000 learners from disadvantaged backgrounds accessed bespoke experiences delivered by cultural and creative learning partners, with strong enjoyment and an increased interest in arts and culture reported. Alongside this around 1,500 learners accessed creative and cultural experiences via the School Visits Fund, and an EDI-focused CPD offer for cultural partners designed to strengthen inclusive delivery achieved 100% reported confidence gains, strengthening inclusion for learners with SEND and those facing disadvantage.

Promoting Personal Development centred on building social capital, amplifying learner voice and developing Fusion Skills. The ESU launched 'Step Up Mentoring', a brand new 3 year, London-wide programme for care-experienced young Londoners, funded through the Town Clerk's Transformation Fund and intended to help build life skills, networks and prospects. Alongside this, a new learner engagement initiative strengthened co-production, and saw 75% of participants report increased confidence voicing their opinions on the design of their education experience as well as increased motivation to invest in their personal development. Additionally a creative personal development pilot demonstrated strong short-term skills gains, but also highlighted a need to redesign the offer to better encourage sustained behaviour change.

Improving Employability placed an emphasis on exposure, connections and clarity of pathways. The ESU established or strengthened relationships with 82 Square Mile employers and introduced 19 additional organisations from a range of employment sub-sectors to *London Bridge the Gap*. New insight events on apprenticeships and entrepreneurship were well received. 100% of apprenticeships event respondents reported improved understanding and confidence around the nature of and routes to apprenticeships, and 71% of Future Entrepreneurs respondents reported increased confidence to pursue their entrepreneurial aspirations. Additionally, FindFusion, (the City Corporation's bespoke platform designed to signpost learners and educators to skills development opportunities), was completely redesigned and soft-launched for testing.

Our work in the first year of the new strategy aligned closely with the Government's recent Curriculum and Assessment Review, which calls for a broader, more balanced education that equips young people with the knowledge and capabilities they need for work and life, alongside strong inclusion and engagement. In year two, we will build on the foundations established this year by strengthening connections between activity streams, improving longer-term impact evaluation, and scaling the partnerships and activity strands that are delivering the strongest outcomes for learners - particularly those facing disadvantage. **A more detailed description of activity within each priority area now follows.**

Supporting Educational Excellence



The City of London Corporation defines educational excellence as the combination of academic attainment, achievement, and personal growth. While high attainment remains essential, we also value broader achievement and personal growth as a way to recognise and motivate all learners.

Teaching excellence is also central to this vision, supporting more diverse learning needs and inspiring curiosity and creativity. Through initiatives like the City Premium Grant, we will continue to invest in innovative teaching, pastoral support, and expanded opportunities for both learners and educators. Areas of activity in this area are summarized below.

Stimulating Connections and Interaction Between the Family of Schools

Strategic Action:

Strengthen existing synergies and collaboration by revitalising the concept of the City Family of Schools, reviving the sense of benefit for member schools, reintroducing a shared ethos, and encouraging more sharing of skills, knowledge and resources.

Started

Active/Completed

Delayed

Cancelled

Our response

The ESU has worked to support synergies between schools through delivery of termly forums that convene headteachers, creative leads, partnerships leads and skills leads as distinct groups. Agendas for forums cover a selection of items relevant to the interests of the group and the sessions create an opportunity for rich dialogue between leads, along with the sharing of knowledge, practise and resources. To complement these dialogues, a comms document has been developed and shared with teachers to clearly illustrate the considerable value of being a member of the City Family of Schools, and in turn, encourage richer innovation and collaboration. A focus in the year ahead will be to increase attendee numbers across forums.

Immediate measured impacts

100% of teachers reporting they see value in being a member of the Family of Schools

53% of teachers reporting our work helps them maintain active dialogues with other City schools

164 forum attendees throughout the year

Intended long-term impacts

- School-to-school learning accelerates improvement and innovation, strengthening outcomes and enabling schools to respond more effectively to emerging needs
- Learners across the Family of Schools benefit from improved use of the collective skills, knowledge and resources of the group

City Premium Grant Management

Strategic Action:

Continue to improve education experiences, learning outcomes and future pathways for learners across the Family of Schools - especially those who do not have equal access and those with SEND - by improving how effectively the City Premium Grant is deployed, and ensuring schools align funded activity with our strategic priorities.

Started

Active/Completed

Delayed

Cancelled

Our response

The ESU managed all aspects of City Premium Grant applications and awarding, whilst working with CoLAT and ImpactEd to further improve aspects of the application, data collection and evaluation processes. 100% of schools are now using ImpactEd to submit project applications and data collection has improved again, with more data submitted at this point in the cycle than in previous years. The vast majority of projects reported positive outcomes. Further, specific mechanisms will be introduced to support and encourage data collection where final gaps remain. With the foundations of the new system established, schools report that they are starting to use learnings from previous years to iteratively improve the projects they design. A standalone report has been produced to provide further detail for this area of activity.

Immediate measured impacts

118 improvement-focused projects, tools or initiatives funded by the City of London Corporation

89% of projects reporting positive outcomes on ImpactEd

78% of schools utilising learnings from previous CPG funded projects

Intended long-term impacts

- Learners in the Family of Schools have an education experience which is uniquely enhanced by the City Corporation and has a positive impact on their life outcomes
- Learners facing disadvantage and those with SEND experience more equitable access to high-quality support, contributing to reduced attainment and opportunity gaps over time

Research & Innovation

Strategic Action:

Through research and collaboration we will connect City-linked educators with leading-edge thinking, practices and opportunities that support innovation in education - with a particular focus on supporting learners who do not have equal access and those with SEND.

Started

Active/Completed

Delayed

Cancelled

Our response

Academics, educators, Livery Companies, employers and parents were engaged across a range of different initiatives which included the City Schools Conference, unique research in SEND provision and music education, ongoing support for the Liveries Education Network, and a well-received Q&A session with Sir Martyn Oliver on the new Ofsted inspection framework.

As well as sparking external interest across the education sector, central government and the wider academic community, these initiatives helped create new insights via research and knowledge sharing, as well as encourage positive change through collaboration and innovation. Insights, information and opportunities derived from these areas as well as from weekly desk research was distributed to nearly 200 educators via the ESU's weekly City School's Newsletter. The vast majority of event attendees and newsletter recipients reported a stronger inclination to embrace and drive innovation in education.

Immediate measured impacts

95% of attendees and partners reported event experiences had been beneficial to them

91% of participants reported they feel more inclined to embrace and help drive innovation in education

199 insights and opportunities shared via City Schools Newsletter

Intended long-term impacts

- City-linked learners benefit from future-facing education experiences that have innovation at their heart
- City-linked education partners use research insights to strengthen practice and policy decisions, improving the quality of education experiences over time

Events at the Guildhall



Strategic Action:

Offer learners unique, enriching off-site experiences by leveraging our access to the City Corporation's physical assets and venues, such as the Guildhall, our open spaces, our markets and cultural institutions.

Our response

Throughout the year the ESU invited thousands of learners from across all of London into unique City Corporation spaces through a range of events spanning a mix of areas of interest.

The well-established City Maths Challenge, and City Chess Tournament continued to be highly popular events. Great pride was clearly felt by participants, passionate about their interest, receiving awards for their achievements in this historic space.

Similarly, the City Schools Concert gave budding musicians a potentially once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to perform their own compositions in the Guildhall's historic Great Hall. Almost 100 learners participated in the concert, and with the guidance of world-renowned music educators from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, performed their own material to a full audience of parents and teachers. Participants overwhelmingly reported that the experience had been beneficial to them.

The City Schools Alumni event was postponed for the year in response to low sign ups to the event registration. To address the lack of traction, the ESU consulted its engaged panel of learners and using their input is redesigning the approach to this activity.

Also in this area was the London Careers Festival which continued to go from strength to strength. The event continues to be respected among careers initiatives with many schools booking year after year, and high demand for all sessions - especially those offered for young people with additional needs. This year between the online and in-person components of the festival, over 10,000 learners attended and had the opportunity to engage with 167 employers or careers organisations. The vast majority of learners reported that the experience had been beneficial to them.

Immediate measured impacts

86% of attendees and partners reporting event experiences have been beneficial to them

71% of educators told us that education experiences for their learners had been enhanced by the additional opportunities and initiatives being provided by the City of London Corporation

10,655 event attendees throughout the year

Participant feedback

"It has given me a more deeper understanding of music" - Learner, City Schools Concert

"It has boosted my confidence in a way I had never expected" - Competitor, City Chess Tournament

"The SEND workshop really opened our eyes to possibilities we hadn't thought of and really raised our aspirations" - Teacher, London Careers Festival

Intended Long-Term Impacts

- Learners across the Family of Schools build personal connections with the places and spaces the City has to offer, feel a sense of belonging and benefit from participation
- Schools increase participation in high-quality enrichment experiences because City assets are leveraged effectively, strengthening the shared offer across the Family of Schools and beyond

City Premium Grant Activity

Alongside the above, a further 51 school-led projects were run via funding from the City Premium Grant. These included activity such as:

Teacher Directed Intervention

Weekly one-hour teacher-led sessions for Years 7-11 offering targeted help, homework support and stretch across subjects, closing gaps for Pupil Premium pupils while boosting confidence and attainment.

Middle Leaders Residential Training Weekend

High-quality training for key staff to boost efficacy and retention, strengthen wellbeing, and drive priorities including SEND First, anti-racist practice, reduced suspensions and excellent teaching.

US SAT Preparation Programme

Dedicated tutoring and application guidance for high-potential students, strengthening subject knowledge, academic skills and confidence to compete for Ivy League and other highly selective university pathways.

Note: A standalone report has been produced to provide further details for CPG-funded activity.

Reinforcing Safety, Health & Wellbeing



Good physical and mental health, and positive learning environments are critical for learners to maximise their potential. These factors are central to the City Corporation's focus on Safety, Health, and Wellbeing. Evidence shows that good health and wellbeing can directly support educational attainment by improving attendance, focus, and emotional development.

Our aim is to support learners in this area, funding and promoting mental health support, physical activity, and deeper relationships with natural environments. We continue to support activity in all of these areas, and help to nurture targeted programmes. This work aligns with broader City Corporation initiatives and increasing momentum in the Environmental and Outdoor Learning area.

Environmental & Outdoor Learning (EOL) Activity

Strategic Action:

Identify and curate EOL specialists to help City-linked educators deliver more curriculum-linked learning in natural environments to benefit the health and wellbeing of learners - especially those with SEND and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Started

Active/Completed

Delayed

Cancelled

Our response

Officers curated a list of high-value opportunities, and connected the Family of Schools with them via the *EOL InfoHub* - our unique digital EOL signposting hub. The InfoHub features a rich spread of organisations, platforms, and resource centres and has a specific area dedicated to Health & Wellbeing. The ESU also supported educators from the Family of Schools and officers from the Natural Environment department in establishing the Natural Environment Youth Board. Additionally, teacher feedback told us that 50% of schools utilising our School Visits Fund visited either Hampsted Heath or Epping Forest. This translates to around 750 learners connecting with nature in our spaces.

In parallel to all of this, EOL items were woven into the Family of Schools forums to raise awareness with teaching leads across different subject areas and items were shared weekly in the City Schools Newsletter to help EOL maintain a high profile throughout the year and alert teachers to time-bound opportunities.

Immediate measured impacts

98 EOL partners, platforms and resources signposted or introduced to educators

38% of educators told us they now feel more motivated, or better equipped to explore aspects of environmental and outdoor learning

Intended long-term impacts

- Learners are offered more opportunities to engage with the natural environment, encouraging a stronger connection with nature and therefore its benefits
- Schools establish long-term partnerships with EOL providers, increasing the frequency, quality and reach of nature-based

Online Parent & Carer Support Sessions

Strategic Action:

Deliver a suite of online sessions that offer extra guidance to parents and carers, helping them better support pupils across a range of areas, including exam preparation, risky behaviours, and support with SEND

Started

Active/Completed

Delayed

Cancelled

Our response

This activity is planned for the second year of the Education Strategy and initial work has begun. A growing number of options are becoming available to parents for this type of support, so the ESU has conducted a survey with parents to identify areas where they feel gaps or shortfalls in support exist. At present a programme of 1-hour online sessions is being developed across areas including online safety and digital wellbeing, supporting your child's mental health and wellbeing, and helping your child build resilience and manage exam stress.

Immediate measured impacts

Activity not yet started

Intended long-term impacts

- Parents and carers are better equipped to support learners through key challenges (including exam preparation, risky behaviours and SEND-related needs)
- As a result of improved parental support, learners are more engaged with and better supported through their education journeys resulting in better outcomes

Safeguarding Training Sessions

Strategic Action:

Expand our commitment to exceptional safeguarding by extending our safeguarding training offer to Members, external partners, City-linked educators and Governors.

Started

Active/Completed

Delayed

Cancelled

Our response

The training offer is now in the early stages of logistical planning. A key priority with this activity was to establish the appropriate areas and levels of training across stakeholder groups. This is to ensure that the offer is appropriately targeted and aligned with their work. We have begun evaluating the practical requirements needed to support appropriate training provision. We are also exploring the most suitable formats and tiered levels of training, ranging from access to individual licences for a pre-recorded safeguarding course (which can be made available on demand to our wider cohort) to the delivery of a series of live virtual sessions. This will inform the final design, scope, and rollout timeline of the training programme in the coming months.

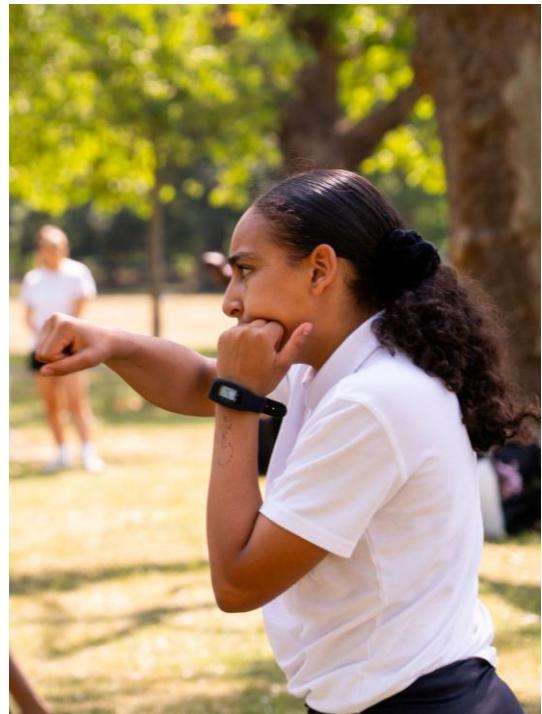
Immediate measured impacts

Activity not yet started

Intended long-term impacts

- All City-linked learning settings acknowledge the highest levels of safeguarding practise
- Any risks to learners are identified earlier and addressed more effectively

City Schools Health Challenge



Strategic Action:

In consultation with Heads of Sport across the Family of Schools, establish a 'City Schools Sports Tournament', launched by a high-profile sports influencer, which brings the Family of Schools together around a series of sporting competitions designed to celebrate the value of physical activity and healthy living.

Our response

Working with Heads of Sport across the Family of Schools the ESU designed, developed and delivered a brand new, large-scale inter-school event that encouraged learners to come together and enjoy a number of fun-focused physical activities.

Engagement with Heads of Sport across the schools highlighted the fact that whilst a large number of competitive sporting opportunities exist both within schools and externally, a missing opportunity was a non-competitive event designed to attract learners who would not ordinarily consider sport-based activity.

This led to the development of a multi-faceted activity day that saw over 150 learners from 5 schools participate in 4 activities - Dance, Scavenger Hunt, Boxercise and Team Building - and also included the opportunity to meet an Olympic gold medallist.

Not all activities were enjoyed by all participants, but the majority enjoyed the opportunity to be physically active in ways that were new and unexpected, and responded well to the opportunity to be active and socialise with new people. A healthy proportion of students reported they enjoyed the experience and it had left them feeling more motivated to improve their physical wellbeing in fun ways. Despite a positive reception, there is room for improvement overall and modifications are currently under consideration for the next event.

Immediate measured impacts

187 learner participants

5 schools participated

74% reported a positive experience

62% reported stronger advocacy for physical wellbeing

67% of teachers felt the event encouraged a positive long-term attitude to health & wellbeing

Participant feedback

"Hopefully we can come back 😊" - Participant, City Schools Health Challenge

"That we got watches that can record how much steps we had is fascinating!" - Participant, City Schools Health Challenge

"I had a lot of fun and we got to explore nature" - Participant, City Schools Health Challenge

Intended Long-Term Impacts

- Participants value their physical wellbeing and become advocates for healthier living
- Schools consider expanding their health and wellbeing approaches to increase participation among learners who are less likely to engage in traditional sport

City Premium Grant Activity

Alongside the above, a further 28 school-led projects were run via funding from the City Premium Grant. These included activity such as:

Wellbeing Fund

A package of targeted support including R-U-N mentoring, child psychotherapist sessions and mindfulness for students and staff, strengthening mental health, reducing stress and anxiety, and improving engagement in learning.

Boxing Therapy

Weekly sessions with Islington Boxing Club for targeted pupils, using structured coaching and mentorship to build self-regulation, reduce exclusions and improve peer relationships while supporting health and wellbeing.

Year 5 and Year 7 Residential

Two adventure residential giving pupils immersive outdoor learning, building confidence, independence and teamwork, broadening experiences beyond the classroom and strengthening wellbeing and engagement.

Note: A standalone report has been produced to provide further details for CPG-funded activity.

Embracing Culture, Creativity & The Arts



Cultural and creative learning (CCL) can play a vital role in developing learners' creativity and imagination, as well as supporting development of their personal skills, wellbeing, and even future employability through valued creative skills like problem-solving and innovation. However, access to arts education is often limited, particularly within the state education system.

The City's rich cultural landscape offers a unique opportunity to address this gap. We are committed to expanding access to high-quality cultural venues and creative communities and careers, building on our existing programmes in the Square Mile. By strengthening these links, we aim to enrich learning both within educational settings and through wider cultural engagement across all age groups.

Connecting City Schools with the City's Creative Opportunities

Strategic Action:

Engage the City's creative communities and highlight the range of cultural and creative experiences available to City-linked learners, inspiring them to appreciate the arts and culture, explore their creative potential and consider creative careers.

Started

Active/Completed

Delayed

Cancelled

Our response

The ESU now regularly identifies, approaches and collaborates with City-based creative businesses and practitioners that already engage aspiring creatives, and finds ways to connect these organisations with the Family of schools.

This included facilitating termly engagement between organisations and creative leads across the Family of Schools, regular sharing of high-quality creative learning opportunities via the Schools Newsletter, and a partnership with two high-profile City-based creative educators to design and deliver the City Schools Concert.

Immediate measured impacts

9 City-linked CCL opportunities identified and shared with the FoS via forums

30 City-linked CCL opportunities identified and shared with the FoS via the Schools Newsletter

76% of teachers reported that awareness of these offers is valuable to them and their learners

Intended long-term impacts

- City-linked learners are familiar with a wider range of creative practises and better informed if considering creative careers – especially within the Square Mile
- City-linked learners are more likely to develop stronger cultural capital and a sense of belonging in the City's cultural spaces, increasing repeat participation and long-term engagement with the arts

School Visits Fund and Cultural & Creative Learning Funding

Strategic Action:

Increase the breadth and depth of cultural and creative learning experiences available through our cultural and creative partners by funding unique programmes, encouraging them to work collaboratively, and consistently strengthening the list of partners we work with.

Started

Active/Completed

Delayed

Cancelled

Our response

Through structured assessment of project proposals and management of funding for Cultural & Creative Learning Partners in the Square Mile, the ESU has supported the provision of a variety of bespoke creative workshops and programmes that aim specifically to engage learners without equal access.

Through the effective administration of this funding, along with the Schools Visits Fund, thousands of learners across London have enjoyed participating in high-value cultural and creative activity designed for them and located within the Square Mile. 97% of teacher respondents reported that they would re-visit their chosen venue. Alongside this, the ESU has continuously explored options for new partners that might broaden the range of opportunities available to learners even further. A standalone report has been produced to provide further detail for this area of activity.

Immediate measured impacts

Approx **1000** learners from disadvantaged backgrounds accessed bespoke experiences provided by cultural and creative learning partners

86% of learner participants surveyed reported enhanced interest in culture, creativity and the arts (Note: only one cohort of participants surveyed)

1512 disadvantaged learners accessed cultural and creative learning experiences via the School Visits Funds

Intended long-term impacts

- There is a richer variety of accessible opportunities for learners facing disadvantage to explore their creativity and build their cultural capital
- Cultural partners develop stronger long-term, inclusive offers for young Londoners challenged by disadvantage because funding and richer collaboration supports better planning, improved quality and sustained engagement

EEDI Training for Arts Partners



Strategic Action:

Strengthen knowledge and skills across our cultural and creative learning partners so they are more confident when working with learners who experience significant barriers to learning such as those with SEND or those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Our response

The ESU worked with Embracing Arts to develop an equity, equality, diversity and inclusion (EEDI) CPD opportunity for cultural education partners to improve their facilitation and programme design skillsets when delivering to young people facing additional challenges.

The training took place at Theatre Deli where participants were introduced to the principles of sensory delivery, given practical ideas of changes they could make to make their programmes more accessible, and invited to take part in activities to put what they had learned into practice.

The workshop was extremely well received, with all participants stating that it had increased their confidence in working with young people with additional needs. All participants also stated that they anticipate improved engagement from learners with additional needs in their sessions as a result of what they had learned through the training.

Immediate measured impacts

100% of partner participants reported increased confidence and improved skillset

100% of learners reported they felt comfortable and accepted during engagements

8 partner organisations participated in training

Participant feedback

“Really engaging content - reframed a lot of ideas on language and accessibility plus sparked ideas to make our sessions more inclusive” - Training recipient

“The workshop was so engaging and I learnt so much. The facilities were great in communicating the information across. I am very pleased I attended and will be incorporating what I learnt in my learning workshops. Thank you very much!” - Training recipient

Intended Long-Term Impacts

- Learners from all backgrounds feel comfortable and respected when engaging in partner-led cultural and creative learning experiences, and are more likely to access the City's cultural and creative spaces
- Partners strengthen the quality of programme design (including facilitation style, accessibility and sensory considerations), contributing to improved standards across the wider cultural learning ecosystem

City Premium Grant Activity

Alongside the above, a further 11 school-led projects were run via funding from the City Premium Grant. These included activity such as:

Instrumental Program

Heavily subsidised music tuition for all Year 7 pupils, prioritising Pupil Premium learners, building cultural capital, Fusion Skills and confidence while strengthening engagement and attainment through high-quality arts access.

Live Theatre Experiences & Productions Program

Theatre trips and a school production giving all pupils access to high-quality arts experiences, building creativity and self-expression, and developing teamwork and problem-solving while widening awareness of careers in the arts.

The Arts and Additional Outdoor Learning Enhancement

Specialist music and arts provision plus a school gardener, enriching learning for all pupils, boosting creativity, wellbeing and cultural capital, and nature connection, with strong benefits for Pupil Premium learners.

Note: A standalone report has been produced to provide further details for CPG-funded activity.

Promoting Personal Development



Personal development is a vital complement to academic learning, helping learners grow into responsible, capable individuals. Personal Development can include a broad mix of skills, values and competencies that can help to build confidence and independence.

At the core of all this are Fusion Skills - creative, cognitive, and interpersonal abilities like critical thinking, communication, resilience and problem-solving - that are essential for future success, particularly in the workplace. The City Corporation is committed to ensuring all learners, especially those facing disadvantage, can access extra opportunities to develop these skills.

Creative Personal Development Workshop Pilot

Strategic Action:

Work with outdoor learning and cultural partners to pilot or expand programmes and experiences for learners and educators that use creativity, culture, and natural environments as vehicles for the development of personal skills and competencies.

Started

Active/Completed

Delayed

Cancelled

Our response

Officers commissioned and worked with *Urban Learners* in the development and delivery of a programme that used creativity as a vehicle to promote personal development. Working together for their mutual benefit, primary and secondary-age learners were supported by professional architects to respond to a creative brief by developing and presenting team proposals for playful spaces situated in the Square Mile. The aim was to offer learners a fun, unusual way to further develop skills such as teamwork, oral communication, critical thinking and problem solving. Learners reported that the programme offered useful practical tips in the moment but this didn't appear to translate into an ongoing investment in developing their personal skills. With this in mind the activity will be redesigned from the ground up in the year ahead.

Immediate measured impacts

86% of respondents reported participation helped them improve their personal skills

45% of respondents reported engaging with our tools or initiatives has further motivated them to invest in their future personal development.

37 learner participants took part

Intended long-term impacts

- Learners better understand the value in strengthening their Fusion Skills and feel more inclined to do so in the long-term
- Learners understand their personal skills can be developed in a wide range of settings and environments and are more motivated to look for these opportunities throughout their lives

City Schools Learner Engagement

Strategic Action:

Establish a dialogue between the City Corporation and learners across the Family of Schools by hosting input sessions that give learners the opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions on activity the ESU is planning.

Started

Active/Completed

Delayed

Cancelled

Our response

The ESU has established a dialogue with a selection of Year 12 learners from across the Family of Schools. This consists of two layers - an ongoing digital dialogue and periodic, interactive online sessions. This connection has already delivered valuable feedback, helping the ESU to re-configure the City Schools Alumni activity, and more broadly, highlighting areas of interest to learners where new activity can be designed and delivered. In return for their contribution, learners are offered early access to events and opportunities, supported to build their skillset and confidence when communicating with a corporate organisation, and will be offered LinkedIn recommendations on leaving school.

Immediate measured impacts

75% of participants reporting improved confidence in voicing their opinions on the design of their education experience

50% of participants reporting improved confidence when interacting with a corporate organisation

10 first phase participants

Intended long-term impacts

- ESU activity becomes even more relevant, accessible and impactful because learner input informs priorities, communications and delivery methods
- Attendees have an out-of-the-ordinary opportunity to develop their critical thinking and communication skills and build confidence in voicing their opinions in a formal, non-school setting

Step Up Mentoring



STEP UP MENTORING

**Help care-experienced young Londoners
improve their life skills and career prospects**

Why Step Up?

- Be part of a social impact initiative funded by the City of London Corporation
- Build meaningful, long-term relationships with young people
- Gain accredited training in trauma-informed, care-aware mentoring
- Develop your leadership, empathy, and communication skills

For more info:

- omg.training/step-up-mentoring
- info@omg.training
- 0208 159 3838



Strategic Action:

Establish a new programme and event/s designed to promote the development of interpersonal skills and social capital for secondary-age learners - including those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with SEND.

Our response

The ESU has led the design and development of Step Up Mentoring, a carefully targeted new programme that will help care-experienced young Londoners aged 16-30 connect with employers in the Square Mile and improve their life-skills, networks and career prospects.

The programme, designed with input from care-experienced young people, will be delivered by OMG Training and will combine online and in-person sessions, with many of the face-to-face meetings taking place in the Square Mile. This will give participants the chance to experience the City for themselves and see that it's a place of opportunity for them too.

Service users will be matched with relatable, trained mentors who will help them break down barriers to employment and independent living by offering practical guidance, sharing career insights, and helping to build their confidence.

Active mentoring will begin in January 2026. The programme will run for 3 years and support up to 150 care-experienced young people from across all of London.

Immediate measured impacts

Activity starts in January 2026

Stakeholder feedback

"This programme is not just about helping young people into jobs – it's about building their confidence, showing them that the City is a place of opportunity for them too, and making sure they know they have what it takes to thrive"
- Jamal Miah, OMG Training

"This scheme will make a tangible difference to the lives of the young people who need it most, giving them the networks, confidence, and life skills to thrive - personally and professionally" - Naresh Sonpar, Chair of the City of London Corporation Education Board

Intended Long-Term Impacts

- Mentees enrich their networks and build a richer set of personal skills for themselves, and as a result feel more confident and capable as adults
- Mentors, and in turn their employers, strengthen inclusive practice and understanding of barriers faced by care-experienced young people, supporting longer-term systems change in opportunity and recruitment

City Premium Grant Activity

Alongside the above, a further 20 school-led projects were run via funding from the City Premium Grant. These included activity such as:

Controversies & Critical Thinking Conference

A one-day UCL-led conference at City of London School for pupils across the City Family, developing critical thinking, oracy and respectful debate to help young people “disagree well”.

New Year 7 Summer

A four-day summer school for incoming pupils and families, introducing routines and expectations, building confidence and belonging, and identifying early support needs for a successful transition into secondary school.

Philosophy Enrichment

A 10-week UCL PhD-led course delivered with Shoreditch Park, developing pupils' Fusion Skills in critical thinking, problem-solving and oral communication while exploring diverse cultural perspectives.

Note: A standalone report has been produced to provide further details for CPG-funded activity.

Improving Employability



Education must go beyond the classroom to effectively prepare learners for the future workplace. This includes creating opportunities that help learners better understand the careers landscape, develop their employability skills and adopt a mindset of lifelong learning. Crucially, learners need meaningful connections with, and real-world exposure to employers.

The City Corporation is well-placed to support such efforts through its proximity to employers and initiatives like the London Careers Festival and CoLAT's 'London Bridge the Gap'. We are expanding our efforts to help learners better understand and connect with the worlds of apprenticeships, entrepreneurialism, work placements and more - ensuring learners can access more of the pathways, knowledge, skills, experiences, and opportunities needed for long-term employability and career success.

Expansion of Employer Contacts Network

Strategic Action:

Better leverage the City Corporation's links with employers to contribute to CoLAT's 'London Bridge the Gap' initiative, to help all learners - including those with SEND, and especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds - understand the landscape of careers and development opportunities in the Square Mile, access world-class careers pathways, and gain professional connections.

Started

Active/Completed

Delayed

Cancelled

Our response

Working with other City Corporation departments, elected Members, adjacent organisations and external partners, the ESU has introduced a new, structured approach to broadening its employer network and with a view to mapping the Square Mile's landscape of employability offers. The aim in each case is to establish a relationship between the employer and the City Corporation and understand the development opportunities offered (e.g. work experience/internships/foundation courses). This information is used within the ESU to enrich other employability activity and is also shared periodically with the *London Bridge the Gap* team to contribute to the number of organisations and industry sectors connected to the initiative.

Immediate measured impacts

19 additional organisations introduced to London Bridge the Gap by the ESU

18 new employment sub-sectors/sectors engaged by the ESU (informed by learner input)

82 employer relationships held by the ESU, with many new connections enriching broader ESU activity in this area

Intended long-term impacts

- City-linked learners benefit from a broader and more diverse range of meaningful employer encounters because the ESU's employer network is strengthened and actively maintained
- Through our support of London Bridge the Gap, we help more school-leavers across London - especially those facing additional challenges - improve their professional prospects and enjoy better life outcomes

Understanding Apprenticeships Insight Event

Strategic Action:

Work collaboratively with ASES and our central apprenticeships team to help students leaving the Family of Schools better understand apprenticeships and access high quality City-based opportunities.

Started

Active/Completed

Delayed

Cancelled

Our response

Working with the City Corporation's central apprenticeships team the ESU designed and developed a new 'Understanding Apprenticeships' event for learners across the Family of Schools. The half-day event helped year 12 and 13 learners better understand the apprenticeships landscape and connect with the range of opportunities available both within the City of London Corporation, and more broadly within the Square Mile. The event was very well received by attendees and the opportunity to scale the event is being explored for the year ahead.

Immediate measured impacts

100% of attendees reported they have a better understanding of the range of apprenticeships available, especially within the City

100% of attendees reported they feel more confident to identify and apply for apprenticeship opportunities in the City Corporation and the Square Mile

Intended long-term impacts

- More learners consider apprenticeships as a high-quality pathway because understanding of routes, requirements and progression is strengthened
- The City Corporation and the Square Mile support more learners leaving the Family of Schools with a valuable career start and the development of excellent future prospects

Find Fusion

Strategic Action:

Refresh and relaunch FindFusion, positioning the platform as a signposting hub that helps educators understand what Fusion Skills are, why they are so important to employers, and how they can help their learners to develop them.

Started

Active/Completed

Delayed

Cancelled

Our response

The FindFusion website has now been fully redesigned both cosmetically and structurally and is being soft-launched for testing. It is now more navigable, and more clearly positioned as a signposting hub designed to connect educators with skills development opportunities for their learners. The website will be updated termly, and periodic engagement will take place with providers, educators and site developers to assess platform effectiveness.

Immediate measured impacts

54 opportunities signposted at soft launch

Full site launch Q1 2026

Intended long-term impacts

- Educators make more strategic use of external opportunities to build Fusion Skills, improving learner confidence, preparedness and progression outcomes over time
- More learners understand the value of Fusion Skills in the context of employability and exhibit the skills, knowledge and behaviours that employers are looking for, giving them a competitive edge

Future Entrepreneurs



Strategic Action:

Better support learners leaving the Family of Schools, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, who are interested in entrepreneurship and innovation by working collaboratively with our Small Business Research + Enterprise Centre (SBREC).

Our response

Working in partnership with SBREC the ESU designed, developed, and delivered the new 'Future Entrepreneurs' inspiration event to aspiring entrepreneurs that will be leaving the Family of Schools in the near future.

The two-day event gave participants a deep insight into the world of entrepreneurship via a programme of highly interactive workshops and presentation sessions.

Participants were able to hear from, question and connect with a range of sector specialists, and engage in a Q&A with relatable young entrepreneurs. The programme also included a visit to a high-profile start-up incubator, and an extremely effective business simulation workshop that saw participants compete against each other in teams.

The event was very well-received by participants and options to broaden the reach and ongoing benefit of the event are being considered for the next iteration.

Immediate measured impacts

100% of attendees reported they have a better understanding of entrepreneurship

71% of attendees reporting they feel more confident to pursue their entrepreneurial aspirations

Participant feedback

"Talking to entrepreneurs about their journey was really useful. They had a lot of great advice from financials to marketing" - Learner attendee

"I have also learned about resources that are available to budding entrepreneurs." - Learner attendee

"Having a resource such as SBREC available to me will no doubt help me in the future." - Learner attendee

Intended Long-Term Impacts

- Family of Schools alumni interested in entrepreneurship are more confident and better equipped to establish businesses
- Access to support and entrepreneurial networks broadens for learners facing disadvantage, contributing to improved social mobility and longer-term opportunity

City Premium Grant Activity

Alongside the above, a further 8 school-led projects were run via funding from the City Premium Grant. These included activity such as:

Work-related-learning: INSPIRE

University visits, employer workshops and CV/application coaching to secure meaningful work-related learning, aiming for 100% Year 10 participation and improved quality and safety of placements.

Think Forward

An on-site coach supports targeted students to stay engaged in education, access work-related opportunities and apply to aspirational post-16 destinations, reducing the risk of young people becoming NEET.

LSE Mentorpreneurship Programme

A three-and-a-half-day entrepreneurship programme for Year 9 pupils across the City Family of Schools, building enterprise skills, networking opportunities and aspirations for future study and careers.

Note: A standalone report has been produced to provide further details for CPG-funded activity.

Key learnings

The first year of delivery benefitted from the 'test, learn and iterate' approach the ESU has taken. Several initiatives generated strong immediate feedback, but also highlighted where we need deeper design work to secure sustained, long-term impact as the strategy matures. Headline learnings were:

Co-design and responsiveness delivered real value. Activity shaped through regular dialogue with headteachers, leads and learners has been more targeted, better attended and easier for schools to engage with. The strongest new offers were those that responded directly to identified gaps, such as demystifying apprenticeship pathways, teacher-informed practical health and wellbeing activity, and personal development opportunities that are compelling for learners. Learner feedback on the City Schools Alumni event offered a useful reminder of how learner insight can inform not only content, but also timing, comms channels and incentives.

One-off experiences are valuable, but pathways are better. Funding opportunities, strengthened school synergies and unique events continue to create moments of inspiration, aspiration and belonging. The next step is strengthening connections between activity to create subtle 'routes' between offers. This can come in the form of clearer follow-on opportunities, repeat touch-points, and further improved signposting that can help learners convert inspiration into sustained forward momentum (for example through FindFusion, employer networks, or our network of engaged cultural and creative partners). This approach is already being applied to the Step Up mentoring initiative to boost traction and deepen value for participants.

Format affects participation and effectiveness. The City Schools Health Challenge showed that non-competitive, "fun-first" design can help engage learners who might otherwise opt out of physical activity. Conversely, the personal development pilot reinforced that enjoyable interventions do not automatically translate into ongoing behaviour change. Future iterations should build in longer-term reflection and goal-setting tools, and if possible, subtle reinforcement in schools.

Inclusion needs to remain deliberate, not assumed. The EEDI training for cultural partners demonstrated how targeted training can quickly improve confidence and practice when working with learners with SEND and those facing disadvantage. A similar "accessibility by default" mindset should be always be applied across programmes and activity (venue choice, facilitation style, sensory considerations, travel, and pastoral support), particularly for large events and employer-facing activity.

Relationships and stewardship offer significant, but often hidden value.

Significant value came not only from large events and initiatives, but also from the “connective tissue” the ESU created between them and between key stakeholders. Forums and communications that maintain dialogue, employer relationship management that opens pathways, and partner development that improves the quality and volume of opportunities are all examples of the synergies the ESU is well-placed to cultivate. As activity scales, protecting this will allow us to keep improving the volume and quality of opportunities, and maintain a clear sense of evolution and innovation as we iterate.

Closing reflection and looking ahead

The first year of operation focused on putting the Education Strategy into practice and understanding from participants what City-enabled additionality can achieve when it is well targeted, well-coordinated and rooted in strong partnerships. Across the five priority areas, activity has sought to help educators and learners build advocacy for healthier choices and outdoor learning, build personal confidence and Fusion Skills, engage more deeply with culture, creativity and the arts, improve their understanding of the workplace and career pathways, and benefit from educational enhancement through events, grant-funded projects and strengthened collaboration across the City Family of Schools.

Just as importantly, delivery has clarified where there are opportunities for improvement. We have seen the value of “one-off” experiences but also the importance of connecting activity in ways that support sustained progress. We have also seen the value of always ‘designing-in’ inclusion from the outset, and started to understand how we might establish follow-up evaluation to demonstrate long-term impact as delivery scales.

Our direction-of-travel aligns with the Government’s Curriculum and Assessment Review, which emphasises a broader, balanced education and stronger development of capabilities for work and life. In the year ahead, our focus will be to scale what has worked, refine what needs redesign, and deepen the routes that turn enrichment into sustained outcomes for young Londoners – especially those in need of the most support.



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