

STRATEGIC PLAN 2014 - 2018

**A PLAN FOR AN OUTSTANDING, INNOVATIVE AND
FINANCIALLY SECURE COLLEGE**

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TOWER HAMLETS COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN 2014 - 2018

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WHY DO WE NEED A STRATEGIC PLAN?

POLICY AND RESPONSE

The environment in which we operate is changing, perhaps more rapidly than at any time since Colleges became independent, twenty years ago. In Tower Hamlets, all secondary schools have now extended their offer to include post 16 provision. Whilst many of the new sixth forms are very small, they are also very close to us – the most recent being in Stepney and Bow; part of our traditional recruitment area. Students that would have transferred to us will now have the option of staying in a familiar setting.

Over the past four years, our 16-18 numbers have declined by 300 or 15%, mirroring the rise in local school post 16 recruitment. Although we remain the first choice for year 11 leavers in Tower Hamlets (Table 1) we are vulnerable, not only to new entrants but also to more students wishing to travel out of Borough – 30% already do so, aided by good transportation and abundant choice.

Funding, too, for young people, presents a challenge. Despite rigorous and widespread opposition, funding for 18 year olds will be cut by 17.5% from 2014/5. A quarter of our young people are affected by this change, demonstrating the oft quoted ‘second chance’ provided by FE will no longer be afforded the same level of resource as those young people who pass smoothly from year 11 to year 13.

More dramatically, funding for adults will have fallen by a third during the lifetime of the current parliament (2011-2015). This seismic shift in the funding landscape, driven by successive rounds of austerity, has heralded the introduction of loans for learners aged over 24 and a continuous pressure on costs. The narrative is now one of co-investment between the individual and the state and an assumption that FE will make student loans work in the same way that HE has.

Finally, our work with employers is also in the midst of considerable policy change. We have seen five reviews of apprenticeships in four years, the results of which have yet to be fully implemented. The already announced outcome, however, is that funding for this highly successful and growing programme will move to employers by 2016/7. The price of training contracted from Colleges will be fully deregulated and open to market competition. Colleges will need to position themselves quite differently to take advantage of this change which fundamentally alters the environment for skills training.

Taken together, these measures represent a considerable challenge for the sector in general and for the College in particular. Over the past four years the College’s income has shrunk from £30m to £20m; a result of falling 16-18 numbers, cuts to adult funding and the end of some alternative funding streams such as the European Regional Development Fund.

We are, however, and despite our smaller size, a stronger and more robust College that we were five years ago. In both 2008/9 and 2009/10 the College recorded deficits of more than £1.5m as it struggled to adapt to falling income. Just five years ago, success rates were 65% with achievement at 77%; last year success rates had risen to 87% with achievement at 92%. Our Ofsted grade has improved from 3 (satisfactory/ requires improvement) in 2009 and 2012 to 2 (good) in December 2013. This all gives good reason for optimism. Staff throughout the College are committed to its success. This plan outlines a new vision and strategy to take the College through to 2018 and beyond. It sets out fresh priorities and aims to restate and redefine our markets. Its success or otherwise will be measured by the extent to which we meet the needs and aspirations of our present and future learners and enable them to fulfil their potential.

VISION, MISSION AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The development of a new strategic vision for the College must take into account our local context and the environment in which we operate. The report *Colleges in their Communities* (Baroness Sharp, 2011) extolls Colleges to be at the heart of their local infrastructure with a strong emphasis on driving participation, economic prosperity and aspiration. This has always been part of the College's mission. For many years, the College has sought to remove barriers and raise achievement. This, the College has done. Since 2008/9, achievement has risen from 77% to 93%, in turn lifting success rates from 65% to 89%. In doing so, we removed the barriers to learning for thousands of learners, tackling poverty of ambition, circumstance and locality.

The College in 2014 is better equipped to meet the present and future needs of the east London community, buoyed by a strong recent inspection, a sound financial position and talented staff. It is now appropriate to set a new mission, one that attempts to capture the responsibility we owe to our community, the opportunities we have for growth and the centrality of teaching and learning to our purpose.

VISION

By 2018, Tower Hamlets College will be an outstanding provider of education, training and skills, enabling our students to access a broad range of progression opportunities that help them fulfil their potential.

MISSION

Creating opportunity through inspiring teaching and learning.

We will develop students' skills, knowledge, curiosity, resilience and employability. Our mission is to create opportunities for students to fulfil their potential, facilitating progression to employment, self-employment, higher level study and improved economic prosperity. Creative and committed staff will endeavour to inspire learning through innovative teaching that challenges students to excel.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

To deliver our mission, we set ourselves three strategic priorities for the period to 2018:

- To be recognised as an outstanding College
- To be an innovative learning organisation
- To develop financial resilience and security

THE COLLEGE NOW

Tower Hamlets College is a general further education College in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) in East London with a total budgeted income of £20.5 million for 2014/5. The College operates from two main centres: Poplar next to Canary Wharf which houses the main College administrative functions, 16-19 A level, vocational programmes and Access to HE, and Arbour Square in Stepney which mainly provides adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Skills for Life (SfL).

George Green is the centre for TowerSkills, which includes corporate training and the delivery of employability programmes. In addition, the College offers part time ESOL provision in nine community venues across the borough. A small TradeSkills centre for 16-18 students was opened at Arbour Square in September 2013.

Since the 2009 Ofsted inspection, urgent action has been taken to address areas of poor performance, to raise success rates and to improve the College's financial health. This has been undertaken during a period of reductions in core and project funding. Curriculum and management have been restructured, business reviews have been undertaken in most support areas to improve operational effectiveness and courses that no longer meet funding body requirements or have poor outcomes have been removed.

Curriculum offer developments have resulted in better outcomes. ESOL courses are now clearly linked to vocational pathways and the broader adult offer has been repositioned for the unemployed including establishing embedded programmes specifically for JCP referrals. This approach has helped significant numbers of students find local employment.

To respond to an identified need in the local community, the College opened a technical skills centre at its Poplar campus in 2011. This new curriculum offer for young people provides the only construction, craft and skills training in the borough and attracted 150 students in 2012/13. This provision was extended further in 2013 including higher level courses at Arbour Square.

The College provides programmes for both young people and adults in 12 of the 15 subject sector areas. The range of full-time vocational and academic qualifications offered for 16-19 students and for adults at all levels up to Level 3 (GCE A Level equivalent) focuses on balancing the interests of students with local employment needs and higher education aspirations. The College offers a limited provision of courses and professional qualifications at Level 4. Employer responsive provision is offered in administration, health and care, construction, design, Skills for Life and customer service. The College has no franchised / sub-contracted delivery partners in 2013/14. In 2013 the College had an average of 200 apprentices of which 50 were aged 16-18.

The Ofsted Socio-economic Performance Indicator Report (2011) confirmed the College's IMD ranking at 1.7% which means the College serves a cohort which is amongst the most deprived in the UK.

The economy of east London is dynamic and growing. The expansion of Canary Wharf (Wood Wharf) and other major developments such as Blackwall Reach and London Wall (the site vacated by News International in Wapping) will create new employment opportunities and strengthen future growth prospects.

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

Tower Hamlets is a borough of complex, multiple and severe deprivation. It ranks 7th of the 294 English local authority areas in the 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation overall and most deprived in terms of income and housing deprivation. Forty percent of borough residents live in wards that are within the 10% most deprived nationally. Unemployment remains significant, particularly amongst young people. The unemployment rate of 13.4% makes it the joint highest of all the London Boroughs and the third highest in Great Britain. Youth unemployment is 19.9% compared to 21.0% nationally.

Child poverty is considerable. Tower Hamlets has the most severe income deprivation for children in England; 49% of children live in income deprived families compared to a London average of 32% and a national average of 21%. 61% of young people in 2011/12 in Tower Hamlets schools were in receipt of free school meals.

Tower Hamlets is a young and ethnically diverse Borough. In 2010, the population of Tower Hamlets was 238,000, making the area the third most densely populated borough in England. From 2001-2010 the borough's population grew by 18%, three times the national average.

Residents in Tower Hamlets come from over 130 countries. 41% were born outside the UK. 47% of the population is non-white and 61% are under 39 years of age. The largest ethnic group other than white British is Bangladeshi, accounting for 30% of residents. 47% of residents are from BME groups. There is a large demand for ESOL provision from this community. At primary school level, three quarters of students speak English as a second language. Borough residents are well qualified compared to national averages at Level 4 and above (36% compared to 31% nationally). However, 23% have no qualifications, compared to 12% in London as a whole.

Key Stage 4 results have almost doubled over the last seven years and at 65% are now 2% above the national average for 5 GCSE A* to C grades including English and maths. Post-16 participation is high, with those not in employment, education or training at 5.5%.

Since 1991, the development of Canary Wharf as a major financial district has brought considerable infrastructure development to Tower Hamlets. Beyond this, the area is typified by a mix of modern apartment accommodation and housing association stock.

Provision for young people and adults in Tower Hamlets and neighbouring boroughs is extensive, including four FE Colleges within a five mile radius. A large number of private training providers operate within the borough and all but two of the 13 secondary schools have established post-16 provision. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets offers a comprehensive accredited and recreational adult offer through its lifelong learning service.

In 2012/13 the College enrolled 6,530 funded students. 1,631 of these were aged 16-18 (including apprentices) and 4,899 were adults. The student profile is given below.

STUDENT RESPONSIVE	16-18	ADULT
Full time	1,393	769
Part time	238	4,130
Male	942	1,477
Female	689	3,422

BY LEVEL	16-18 %	19+ %
Entry	12	37
Level 1	16	17
Level 2	19	25
Level 3	53*	20

OUR CORE BUSINESS

The College will continue to operate in its three core markets, providing education and training for:

- Young people aged 16-18 with a broad range of provision from entry to advanced level
- Adults wishing to develop their own language, vocational, employability and professional skills
- Apprentices and other employed individuals who wish to improve their future prospects

Our core business, with a statement of purpose for each market is summarised below:

CORE MARKET A: 16-18

An outstanding provider of a broad based A level and vocational curriculum with specialist, high quality apprenticeship provision.

16-18 A LEVEL

- Broad offer
- Leading Borough provider
- Excellent progression

16 - 18 VOCATIONAL AND SPECIALIST

- Clear line of sight to work
- Technician level
- Broad range of vocational pathways covering most subject sector areas
- Progression to sector leading employment
- Specialist SEND provision for young people up to 24

16 - 18 APPRENTICES

- Construction / Tradeskills
- Cultural industries
- Business
- High expectations of employers

CORE MARKET B: ADULT

Vocational, language and higher level training and education that provides clear line of sight to employment or further study, developing the economic prosperity of students.

PROGRESS TO HE

- Access provision at L3
- HNCs/HNDs at L4
- Articulation agreement with London Universities

VOCATIONAL

- Professional / Licence to practise
- Care, Early Years, ICT, Nursing, Accounting

ESOL, LITERACY, NUMERACY

- Leading regional provider
- Innovative progression to employment and vocational study

CORE MARKET C: TOWERSKILLS

A leading pan-London training provider with sector leading employer relationships in strategically important industries.

TRADESKILLS

- Broad provision across traditional and emerging trades

MANAGEMENT & PROFESSIONAL

- Supervisory and management training for SMEs and corporates

ESOL, LITERACY, NUMERACY

- NHS and Trust provision across a variety of job roles

PRIORITIES 2014-2018

PRIORITY 1

To be recognised as an outstanding College - The College will:

- Achieve an Outstanding Ofsted grade
- Be regarded as outstanding by students, staff and employers
- Develop sector leading student experiences that promote positive progression
- Develop curricula that enable students to become more economically prosperous

We will do this by:

- Developing excellence in teaching and learning
- Supporting staff through high levels of investment in continuous professional development
- Involving students, staff and employers in the future development of the curriculum

PRIORITY 2

To be an innovative learning organisation - The College will:

- Facilitate innovative approaches to teaching improvement
- Create a culture of peer learning throughout the College
- Allow practical experimentation and the development of new learning approaches
- Consider alternative models of collaboration and partnership

We will do this by:

- Learning from leading practitioners in FE and beyond
- Developing new and original partnerships that allow the College to grow and evolve
- Recognising alternative approaches to delivering support functions that add value to the student experience
- Promoting our existing expertise in language and business provision
- Developing a specialism in construction and trade skills

PRIORITY 3

To develop financial resilience and security - The College will:

- Maintain outstanding financial health unless investing for future growth
- Rebuild its income with an aspirational target of £30m by 2018/19
- Explore alternative markets across the educational landscape that reduce our dependency on grant funding to 70%
- Develop a robust, flexible estate that provides an engaging student experience

We will do this by:

- Retaining a strong balance sheet with low debt and an operating surplus of 2%
- Developing new provision for 14-16 year olds, specialising in English language skills
- Opening a Language School offering higher level English provision
- Developing professional level HE provision
- Becoming London's leading provider of construction and trade skills provision
- Exploring the feasibility of developing provision for the 11-16 age group through a trust school
- Exploring other market opportunities that are aligned to Priorities 1 and 2

New growth areas that will be developed during the life of this plan are outlined in the next page.

NEW GROWTH AREAS

GROWTH PRIORITY AREA	STRATEGIC AMBITION	STRATEGIC DRIVERS	IMPLEMENTATION READINESS
14-16 New Arrivals ESOL	Lead provider for Borough. Centre of excellence.	Significant local demand. Schools provision generally less flexible. Key curriculum strength.	High. At pre implementation stage. Proposal under consideration by LBTH
Language School	2-3 language schools in central and east London.	Expanding market in London. Strategic fit is evident.	High. Broker engaged to identify potentially suitable opportunities for acquisition.
HE and Professional provision in Business & Health	Expansion of provision to level 4, offering progression pathways and new student opportunities.	Provide clear progression pathways. Articulation agreements allow progress into year 2 of degree as added student benefit.	High. HEFCE approval gained. Curriculum developed and ready for launch summer 2014.
Distinctive, significant construction provision	Development of London Construction Academy as the leading provider of construction and trade skills provision in London.	Major and rapidly expanding curriculum area which is poorly served in London. Tier 1 employer links are excellent. Provision introduced in 2011 is now ready for next stage development.	Medium. Next stage of development is a step change and will require close partnership working with employers, Borough, CWG and the LEP.
Cultural Sector Apprenticeships	Niche employer led provision to raise College's profile in culturally significant sectors.	Important sector for London economy with low levels of apprenticeship provision.	Medium. Existing provision is small. Development of robust hub for small organisations is next stage.
11-16 Trust School	Launch of a free or academy school in the Borough with an identified specialism	Strong demographic need for new 11-16 provision. Local pressures suggest pre 16 provision would enable the College to be better able to meet competition.	Low. Very early stages of concept and feasibility.
TowerSkills Recruitment Services	Relaunch and expansion of the College's recruitment enterprise to become the leading recruitment service for those leaving post 16 education.	Gap in current employability provision which TRS is already beginning to fill.	High. Relaunch planned with new staffing and clear income expectations.

RESOURCES, INVESTMENT AND PROPERTY

The College's most important resource is its staff and we will continue to train staff through continuous development programmes and the use of peer to peer, expert practitioner and externally benchmarked support.

Many young people are now coming from schools that have benefitted from high levels of redevelopment and new build programmes. The College will review its property portfolio and shape an investment strategy that is both affordable and supports the strategic plan.

WE WILL

- Continue to invest an amount equivalent to at least the amount of our annual depreciation on maintenance and upgrading of the estate
- Carry out a full property review that will inform a new estates strategy by 2015, for first stage implementation by 2018
- Ensure our geographic coverage, local demography and curriculum offer are complementary now and in the future

MEASURES OF SUCCESS: THE COLLEGE IN 2018

The College will live up to its mission by providing innovative learning experiences that prepare students for positive progression to employment, further study, internships or entrepreneurial self-employment.

We will be recognised as a broad based provider of educational opportunity with a special focus on language development, business and professional courses and trade skills.

Our students will be creative, reflective, self-reliant and well placed to shape their local, professional and learning communities.

Our staff will be recognised as leaders of learning; well trained and resourceful practitioners who learn both from each other and those who are leading sector innovators.

We will have built constructive, robust partnerships that benefit students by offering clear progression pathways and employment opportunities.

We will be a solvent, financially strong institution, encumbered only with debt that has resulted from investment and that produces a small but dependable surplus from an income base of £30m.

By 2018 the College will be an outstanding provider of education, training and skills and will be recognised as such by its key stakeholders.

WE WILL CONTINUE TO:

**CREATE OPPORTUNITY THROUGH
INSPIRING TEACHING AND LEARNING.**

TOWER HAMLETS COLLEGE

POPLAR HIGH STREET, LONDON E14 0AF T: 020 7510 7510 F: 020 7538 9153 W: WWW.TOWER.AC.UK