

## City Lit - STRATEGIC OVERVIEW 2009/2012

City Lit is a Specialist Designated Institute (SDI) under the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, receiving a major part of its income from public funds, but with significantly increasing fees from students and employers. City Lit's main provision has always been non-accredited learning for adults and it has a great reputation as a provider of high quality, diverse learning, which meets the demands of London's adults.

City Lit is Europe's largest adult education centre and has been described as 'Britain's pre-eminent adult education institution' (The Guardian). We now offer over 3,500 courses a year to over 30,000 adult students. Subject areas include: performing and visual arts, languages, psychology and counselling, humanities, health and movement studies, computing, care work, teacher training, access to higher education and English and maths. We also have specialist provision in speech therapy, courses for Deaf adults, for people with learning difficulties, community outreach, family learning and for homeless people.

Based in Covent Garden in a purpose built building, which was opened in 2004, the main facilities include:

- 56 Bright, modern classrooms
- 8 additional tutorial rooms
- 5 student lounges and balconies
- roof-top sculpture court and garden
- improved computer facilities
- a comprehensive and well equipped library and learning support centre
- information and advice centre
- modern catering facility
- specialist facilities for music, dance, drama, art, health, complementary therapies and for Deaf people
- extensive Integrated Learning Technology systems

In addition we rent 16 additional classrooms offsite in evenings and some on Saturdays.

City Lit's key areas of provision are:

- Non-accredited courses
- Accredited courses – namely attract a national qualification
- Skills for life courses (English and Maths)
- Train to Gain provision for employers
- Community Outreach programmes
- Employer sponsored learning

As part of our commitment to diversity, City Lit has also set itself the aim of maintaining a proportion of provision to create a “force for good” for adults in London where, due to their circumstances, they may have difficulty in accessing education or need specialist provision, which is important to their lives, employment or contribution to society. This commitment encompasses provision in Deaf education, speech therapy, dedicated courses for those with learning difficulties, outreach work and access to Higher Education. In order to achieve this balance, a cross subsidy is required from more profitable areas of City Lit provision.

All our provision makes a difference to learners in many ways including:

- Helping people with disabilities or learning difficulties
- Helping people, including many with challenging backgrounds, get back into learning and progress to higher and broader areas of study
- Vocational courses aimed at providing a specific skill and qualification for employment, self-employment or as a visual or performing art practitioner
- Enabling people to career change or improve professional skills
- General health and well being, both physical and mental
- Wider social and community benefits
- Lifelong Learning culture in its own right
- Impact on London as a cultural capital

## **Vision**

**To be the best provider of adult lifelong learning in London**

## **Mission**

**To enhance the lives of adults and develop the employers' workforce by providing inspiring life-long learning opportunities**

## Core values

In support of City Lit's mission our core values, which we aim to adhere to, are:

- A consistently high and professional standard in our provision
- Putting the needs of students at the centre of all that we do
- Ensuring that student expectations are exceeded
- Ensuring that employers' needs and expectations are met
- Striving for excellence in success rates, retention and student satisfaction
- Helping adults back into learning and using learning as a tool to combat disadvantage
- Ensuring that all staff are well motivated and qualified to achieve their potential
- Maintaining an open, honest, accountable and fair approach in all our communications and dealings with staff, students and stakeholders
- Valuing and promoting diversity and inclusivity

## Strategic Background

**Funding pressure** - The Government focus on education for 14-18 year olds, the skills agenda, meeting the needs of employers and the current economic pressures, together with the resultant rebalancing of funding priorities, has had a significant impact on City Lit, with reduced or capped Government funding over the last 5 years.

It is difficult to establish at present exactly what the future impact might be. But with the current perilous position of the public sector finances and continued emphasis on priority areas, the college is considering what impact further reductions of public funding over 2-3 years might have.

City Lit, with the other SDIs and adult education organisations, also needs to continue to engage with the Government and the opposition parties to ensure our value and role is well understood.

**Informal Adult Learning (IAL)** – The Government has issued a White Paper 'The Learning Revolution' following on from the IAL consultation. There are a lot of good aspects to the paper, but also risks, primarily around the fact that the majority of our more formal and structured

taught courses are now in the IAL category alongside book clubs and voluntary groups. There is a specific mention of the SDIs in the white paper, which hopefully will give us some longer term stability, although with some caveats which we will need to consider carefully.

**Machinery of Government** - The funding for 14-19yr old students will in the future come via Local Education Authorities (LEA), either locally or regionally, although this is a very small proportion of our income. For adults the Learning and Skills Council is planned to be replaced by a Skills Funding Agency (SFA) in April 2010. There is currently also a debate about the relationship with the regional development agencies. The position of the SDIs in the emerging responsibility/funding matrix is as yet unclear.

**Homeless related projects** - Pressures on European Social Funding, changing priorities over the last couple of years and the increasing emphasis by the big homeless organisations on their own in-house training has made winning significant contracts in this area increasingly difficult. Equally City Lit has built up considerable expertise with our past work. Alternative funding streams, eg charitable grants, might be needed to ensure this excellent work does not disappear.

**Demand for courses** – Despite the recession, the demand for City Lit courses has increased over the last few years and this has allowed us to grow year on year, with, for example, enrolments up by 5% in 2008/09 compared to the previous year. Whilst there has been an increase in demand for vocational courses leading to employment, there has also been an equivalent, and in some cases an even greater increase, in demand for courses for personal development and interest. The other area which has seen a significant increase in the recession are more practical courses, such as dress making, where people are perhaps conscious about costs, as well as environmental issues of our consumer society.

Underpinning our growth strategy has been significant improvements in our customer focus, marketing and communications with successful initiatives including:

- A new and more modern website which improves the customer experience and enhances our ability to market courses and new initiatives
- Web based enrolment, with circa 25% of enrolments now fully online

- Customer journey work focussing on enhancing all aspects of the customer journey

### **City Lit has set itself three key objectives:**

#### **All areas to be Grade 1**

To be an outstanding college with all areas aiming to achieve Grade 1 at next inspection in 2011

#### **Expand to meet demand**

To expand and diversify our offer to meet the needs of more of London's individuals and employers

#### **To ensure the college's future financial position**

To ensure a robust financial position in a context of potential reductions in Government subsidies for non-accredited learning

Key actions to support these objectives include:

- Development and implementation of a robust Quality Improvement Plan, which is set against the new common inspection framework from Ofsted. This builds on our self assessment process and aims to make sure that we can show continued improvement and tackle any weak areas
- The further development of a learner involvement strategy to enhance the involvement of learners in college business. Current initiatives include the formation of a student panel, exploration of the concept of student reviews of courses and enhanced use of the website and other social networking sites to improve communications with our learners
- Equality and Diversity are always at the forefront of our thinking, but there is always room to do more, and a number of initiatives are being progressed to improve both physical access to the building and facilities as well as ensuring equality of opportunity for all students
- A process of continuous change to some of our provision to make it more attractive to London workers, for example more short courses including an increased weekend offer
- Level 2/3 provision (Equivalent to 5 GCSEs and A Levels). In line with government and economic priorities we continue to look for ways to increase the number of full Level 2 and Level 3 courses we offer

- Train to Gain; This remains an area for potential further growth in future years, in areas such as care, working with vulnerable adults, Deaf education, IT and Leadership and Management, although the current funding position is likely to curtail our ambition in this area
- On going work to embed the cross college vision and strategy for skills for life
- A detailed strategy to improve the overall College's financial position by Growth and Optimisation; including ensuring profitability of courses (other than those covered by the "force for good" caveat), fee increases to maximise revenue, ensuring classes are full, improving overall room utilisation, as well as overhead efficiencies
- To support future growth the college is also seeking to lease further off-site classroom and studio accommodation
- Working with Department of Business Innovation and Skills as they develop specific proposals from the "Learning Revolution" White Paper
- Managing the impact on us of the changes from the LSC to the Skills Funding Agency

## **Targets**

City Lit's performance is publicly assessed through targets agreed annually with the Learning and Skills Council. They encompass:

- learner numbers both on accredited and non accredited courses
- success rates, including numbers of learners on Skills for Life programmes passing the national test, increasingly these are benchmarked against national minimum levels of performance
- fee income

Other targets are agreed with the Governing Body and key ones are reflected in a Balanced Score Card.

## **Staff**

City Lit staff comprises some 250 fulltime/fractional staff and circa 850 part time tutors. Overall City Lit has a dedicated and committed workforce with a very low turnover and low absence rates, both of which are below benchmarks for equivalent public and private sector organisations. With Investors in People Accreditation, we also have comprehensive and well focussed staff development activities. In two annual staff surveys of both establishment and part time tutors, over

90% of staff said they would recommend City Lit as a good place to work. Key staff development aims for the future include:

- Meeting Government requirements around qualifications of tutors and registration with the Institute for Learning
- Raising awareness of tutors about equality of access and opportunity for disabled learners
- College wide implications of emerging legislation around safeguarding of vulnerable adults

In addition John Laing Integrated Services and its subcontractors provide building maintenance, security, cleaning, catering and general services.

## **Resources**

The current asset base is valued at £18m and a resource budget of £16m, with the income of circa £8m from the LSC, £5.5m from fees and £2m from other contracts.

## **Diversity**

City Lit values and promotes diversity to ensure that people are treated fairly with respect for individual dignity. The concept of diversity is wide-ranging and includes age, belief, cultural background, disability, ethnic origin, gender, gender identity, marital status, national origin, race, religion, and sexual orientation. Changing legislation, inspection and quality requirements and customer expectations means we need to develop our approach to valuing and promoting diversity. Our disability equality scheme, gender equality scheme and race equality policy will be reviewed in 2009/10; the Self Assessment Reviews(SARs) will have increased analysis of student progress by a number of diversity strands and more equality impact assessments will be undertaken and acted upon across the college. We have targets of increasing the number of black and ethnic minority staff and students that are reflected in departmental SARs and we will continue to strive to improve the quality of our teaching by implementing and embedding superior diversity practices.

**Bursary Scheme:** The ability of the less well-off to be able to access City Lit courses is an area of growing concern. To try and alleviate this problem City Lit has launched a bursary scheme and is fundraising. It has already been used to good effect:

Caroline Hunter, said “Going to City Lit has given me that rarest commodity – hope. I was made redundant in the beginning of 2008. Going back to study has made a huge difference to me, it is so exciting to be learning, moving forward and being active. Without the **student bursary**, it would not have been possible.”