Minutes

Date  7 December 2007
Subject  External Advisory Group
Location  Village Hotel, Coventry
Time  11:00
LSC office  National Office
Publication intent  Public

Present  Andrew Jones
David Hughes
David Lawrence
Geoff Hall
Helen Sexton
John Guy
Malcolm Trobe
Marion Plant
Nick Lewis
Steve Gray
Stewart Segal
Sue Rimmer

LSC staff  Geoff Daniels
Jaine Clarke
Rebecca Loveday (minutes)
Lorraine Laing

Apologies  Apologies have been received from:
Adrian Holmes
Carol Bannerman
Di Dale
Donald Rae
Graham Hoyle
Ian Pryce
John Dallinson
Judi Douglas
Julian Gravatt
Lindsey Wharmby
Mark Crawley
Tim Ward
Verity Bullough
Item 1. Welcome and introductions
1.1 Members were welcomed to the meeting. The apologies were noted.
1.2 The Chair apologised for the rescheduling of the meeting, caused by the delay in the publication of the Statement of Priorities.
1.3 A provisional date of 9 May had been set for Mark Haysom to attend an External Advisory Group meeting. This would be confirmed as part of the wider task of setting future meeting dates for the Group.
1.4 A representative from DCSF was still being sought. This would be taken forward as part of a review of membership of the Group (discussed under item 6)
1.5 Discussions were ongoing with DCSF regarding the inclusion of the Disability Living Allowance within the fee remission category. The current timetable for any changes was 2009/10 but the LSC were working to bring this deadline forward.

Action: A report be submitted to the Group on the progress of DIUS’ review of the advice published for colleges on the new models of delivery, as discussed previously by the Group (SP)

Item 2. Statement of Priorities
2.1 Geoff Daniels gave a presentation on the LSC’s Statement of Priorities.
2.2 Incentives could encourage employers to offer apprenticeships, followed by permanent employment (for example, Tax Credits).
2.3 Targets took into account population growth and migration.
2.4 The Public Sector should be encouraged to increase the number of apprenticeships offered by their organisations.
2.5 There were tensions to be managed between increasing participation and success rates.
2.6 A longer-term plan was required to ensure an appropriate offer was made to young people which engaged them.
2.7 The milestone targets did not include Programme led Pathways, the name of which was being reviewed.
2.8 The LSC should consider longer-term interpretation of policies (particularly by other bodies outside of the LSC) regarding the classification of priority / non-priority provision.
2.9 All academies had sixth forms, making planning within their local areas more challenging.
2.10 Funding between Young People and Adults was fixed. However, it was possible for the LSC to make a virement within those budget blocks, provided targets and Government drivers were not put at risk.

2.11 It was of concern that the funding for the most vulnerable learners was also the most volatile. A longer-term rationale for deprived areas was needed and funding streams brought together to enable a simplified offer. It was noted that there were a number of reviews ongoing at the moment which could address this latter point, for example, QIA, MOG etc.

2.12 It was noted the procurement processes of Jobcentre Plus and the LSC were not consistent.

2.13 All references to Levels 2 and 3 meant full Level 2 and 3.

2.14 BTEC qualifications would be funded for 16-18 but would not count towards full Level 3 targets.

   Action: A paper to be brought to the next meeting of the Group on the Vocational Qualification Reforms Programme (Janet Ryland)

2.15 Clarification on the use of the LSC’s spending within the capital budget was required, with particular reference to private providers.

   Action: Paper on capital investment in private providers to be brought to the next meeting of the Group (Phil Head)

Item 3. Demand Led Funding Suite of Documents and End to End Budget and Allocations Process

3.1 Geoff Daniels updated members on the progress of the Demand Led Funding suite of documents.

3.2 The budget and allocations timetable offered greater consistency across all Young People and across Adults and Employers. Allocations were a little later than previous years to enable that consistency, to ensure appropriate transition and because of the delay in the agreement of the CSR and receipt of the Grant Letter.

3.3 Members recommended that the 2008/09 Provider Allocations Framework and End to End Process Maps be published externally, to enable providers and partnership teams to enter into informed discussions during this transitional year.

   Action: The Change Board be recommended to approve the publication of the 2008/09 Provider Allocations Framework and End to End Process Maps (RL)

Item 4. Train to Gain Growth Plan

4.1 Jaine Clarke presented the Train to Gain Growth Plan to the Group.

4.2 Members welcomed the Lessons Learnt Review. However, the rate of evolution of Train to Gain needed to be increased.

4.3 The Train to Gain process should be simplified to minimise the threat of fraudulent practices, with a particular focus on consortia arrangements where the LSC had no direct relationship with all parties. The LSC’s Audit Team were working to ensure this risk was managed.
4.4 Success Rates were currently 61%. Programmes should be tailored to meet the needs of harder to reach learners to increase this rate; the QIA were assisting in this.

4.5 It was confirmed that providers were able to engage with employers without the involvement of NES.

**Action:** Clarification and communication of the role of NES in provider and employer engagement, including cross-country borders was required (JC)

4.6 The New Standard should be examined to ensure it was not overly stringent in some circumstances (for example, existing small scale provision).

4.7 Train to Gain would be brought back to the Group for further discussion at a later date.

**Item 5. Skills Campaign**

5.1 The contents of the paper were noted by members.

5.2 There was concern the LSC’s Communications agency was preventing colleges using their own contact details on the campaign literature.

**Action:** The LSC to clarify and communicate if college contact details can be used within the Skills Campaign literature (Nicky Brunker)

**Item 6. Any other business**

6.1 It was noted that the Group’s role of providing the LSC with a sector representative view on proposals for change was an important one and should continue. The LSC’s Change Board would consider the Group’s membership and scope at its meeting on 18 January.

6.2 It was recommended that the Group should consider and monitor the major Skills/Post-19 Programmes, thereby providing a single vision.

6.3 It was agreed that to enable representation from both the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and Department of Innovation, University and Skills (DIUS), future meetings would be held in London.

**Action:** Minutes from the External Advisory Group to be published on the LSC Website (Rebecca Loveday)

**Action:** All future meetings to take place in London (Rebecca Loveday)

**Item 7. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Group is 15 January 2008 10.30 at the Russell Hotel, London.