Date: 15 January 2008
Subject: External Advisory Group
Location: Russell Hotel, London
Time: 10.30 - 1.00
LSC office: National Office
Publication intent: Public

Present:
- David Hughes
- Andrew Jones
- Carol Bannerman
- David Lawrence
- Elaine McMahon
- John Dallinson
- John Guy
- Di Dale
- Steve Gray
- Sue Rimmer
- Mark Crawley
- Bob Powell
- Julian Gravatt
- Graham Hoyle
- Stewart Segal
- Susan Pember
- Helen Sexton
- Verity Bullough

In attendance:
- David Russell (DIUS)

LSC staff:
- Geoff Daniels
- Judi Douglas
- Gareth Thomas
- Janet Ryland
- Rebecca Loveday

Apologies:
Apologies have been received from:
- Marion Plant
- Malcolm Trobe
- Lindsey Wharmby
- Nick Lewis
- Ian Pryce
- Donald Rae
Minutes

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David Collins
Sue Meyer
Geoff Hall

Item 1. Welcome and introductions
1.1 Members were welcomed to the meeting.

Item 2. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising
2.1 The minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the previous meeting.
2.2 Matters arising from the minutes were reported as follows:
   • 1.5: On hold. John Denham has asked that the organisational structure and intervention powers be agreed before they are formally transferred to the LSC.
     Action: Item be brought to a future meeting of the EAG on the new models of delivery and intervention powers (SP)
   • 2.14: A paper on the Vocational Qualification Reform Programme was on the agenda.
   • 2.15: An item on capital investment in private providers would be brought to the meeting in March
   • 3.3: The Change Board had considered the EAG’s recommendation that the 2008/09 Provider Allocations Framework and End to End process maps be published externally. It was decided these were too detailed to be appropriate for external use. To make them otherwise would be time consuming and therefore, published beyond the date of their usefulness.
     Recommendation: The 2009/10 Provider Allocations Framework be written so as to be suitable for an external audience (Jim Minogue)
   • 4.5: Clarification and communication of the role of NES in provider engagement would be provided within the NES Commissioning Plan.
   • 5.2: The LSC was actively encouraging stakeholders and partners to use the Skills Campaign imagery and messages in marketing and skills communications.
     Action: Members to contact Rebecca Loveday in the first instance if they continue to experience difficulties in publishing their contact details on campaign literature (All)
     • The minutes from the External Advisory Group meetings were now published on the internet.
     Action: A link to the internet site for the External Advisory Group be circulated to members (RL)
   • All future meetings of the Group would take place in London.
     Action: The impact of the funding models on college and provider allocations be presented to the Group (GD/Colin Stronach)
Item 3. Update: Machinery of Government

3.1 David Russell of DIUS was welcomed to the meeting. He presented to the Group an update on the proposed contents of the consultation on the Machinery of Government (MoG) changes, which would be published shortly.

3.2 Members made a number of comments regarding the proposals.

Action: Further comments/views on the MoG Consultation to be forwarded to Susan Pember (All)

Item 4. Business Cycle: Forward Look

4.1 Judi Douglas presented a paper on the key outputs within the LSC’s Business Cycle over the next three months and the associated risks and issues.

4.2 It was noted this was an internal document but was useful to members to view and comment on, highlighting risks and issues arising from the programme of work.

4.3 It was confirmed the funding guidance would be issued in a suite of documents. The first of these was now published in draft, with the remainder published shortly. A breakdown of the suite of documents would be provided within the cycle’s plan.

4.4 Allocation discussions between partnership teams and providers and colleges would consider all funding streams at the same time, not in isolation of each other.

4.5 Members recommended that as much notice as possible be given to the sector where there was any slippage, to enable colleges and providers to manage any risks arising from that slippage.

Item 5. Jobcentre Plus: Flexible and Responsive Provision

5.1 Gareth Thomas presented the initial findings arising from trials of flexible and responsive provision with Jobcentre Plus. This focused on existing provision but with an increased focus on Jobcentre Plus clients.

5.2 Members made the following comments:

5.3 Government expected an increase in this area of delivery. Therefore, a different funding mechanism may be needed which did not focus on short-term success rates but longer-term progression and sustainable employment. Minimum Levels of Performance should also take into account the need for greater flexibility for providers who dealt with the unemployed.

5.4 Jobcentre Plus was very stringent in its contractual approach. This could dissuade providers from entering into agreements with the organisation.

5.5 Two barriers to the success of this project were employer commitment and learner tracking. The LSC was continuing in its drive for systems that would enable all partners to work together in any local area.

5.6 This had a wider application than Jobcentre Plus outputs: Local Authority-led regeneration areas were also applicable.

5.7 The costs of infrastructure and time in getting learners into employment should also be taken into account within the funding mechanism.

5.8 Multi-agency co-operation was critical for Jobcentre Plus clients, through the use of sub-contracting or multiple area agreements.

Item 6. Vocational Qualification Reform Programme

6.1 Janet Ryland was welcomed to the meeting. Janet updated members on the UK Vocational Qualifications Reform Programme (VQRP) and the key issues facing the LSC and the sector as qualification reform is implemented.
6.2 The impact of a credit framework on the funding mechanism, including SLNs, would be examined before role out in August 2009.

6.3 The VQRP and its impact were not widely understood by the sector nor internally by the LSC, which needed to be addressed. A communications and marketing campaign was required, utilising the useful and clear explanatory diagram within the paper.

6.4 The proposals were complex but with the publication of the Statement of Priorities Addendum, there remained a commitment to deliver the programme. However, there were a number of issues that needed to be resolved, which the External Advisory Group and Change Board would be asked to advise on.

6.5 The capacity and credibility of the Sector Skills Councils in their approval role was a risk. Whereas some SSCs were very strong, others were small and needed support in discharging this function.

**Action:** VQ Reform Programme to be brought back to the EAG meeting, including a consideration of the issues and planning for implementation of the programme (JR)

**Item 7. Any other business**

7.1 There was no other business.

**Item 8. Date of next meeting**

8.1 The next meeting will take place on 5 March, beginning at 10.30. The venue will be London.

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**Meeting chair** David Hughes

**Minute taker** Rebecca Loveday

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