Minutes

Date 13 July 2007
Subject Equality and Diversity meeting
Location Grosvenor Gardens
Time 10:30
LSC office National Office
Publication intent Internal

Present Shirley Cramer (Chair)
Nicola Dandridge
Patrick Grattan
Amir Kabal
Peter Lavender
Alyson Malach

In attendance Paul Turner
Paula Chapman (items 4 and 5 only)
Jane Cowell (item 6 only)

LSC staff Lee Probert
Pete Sanders
Stephanie Jones

Apologies Apologies have been received from:
Jeremy Crook
Sally McEnhill
Judith Norrington
David Barker
Mike Adams
Lisa Boardman
Caroline Slocok

Item 1. Welcome and introductions
1.1 The Chair welcomed the Committee and introduced Stephanie Jones who is currently on work experience in Lee Probert’s team.
1.2 The Chair reassured members that recent changes to the Cabinet will have no impact on this Committee. Early indications show that equality and diversity will be higher on ministers’ agendas then it has been previously.
1.3 The grant letter will still be sent to the LSC in the autumn, however both this will now come from both the DSCF and DIUS, via John Denham. The last
grant letter had a statement about equality and diversity, this should be retained in this years letter.

**Action: Paul Turner to ensure there is a statement around equality and diversity in the grant letter.**

1.4 The new Further Education and Training Bill is still going ahead as planned, and will be discussed in parliament later today. It may prove difficult to recruit to the new Regional Boards as few people would be interested in joining for such a time-limited period.

**Item 2. Minutes of last meeting**

2.1 The minutes were approved.

**Item 3. Matters arising**

3.1 Letters have gone out to all members inviting them to extend their appointment on the Committee. Members are asked to sign and return these letters as soon as possible. The vacancies will be filled when the exact numbers are known.

**Action: Members to sign and return their letters as soon as possible.**

**Item 4. Leitch Implementation**

4.1 Paula Chapman was welcomed to the Committee.

4.2 The Leitch implementation plan is now due to be published on 17 July. This was originally planned for 9 July, however the new minister requested additional time to better understand the situation and implications.

4.3 The key aims of the Leitch report are to make the UK a world class leader in skills, increase support to the learner, and to give enable employers to have more input into the skills agenda.

4.4 The changes to the targets are still to be confirmed, this will happen at the next comprehensive spending review. It is understood that the targets will be lower than the Leitch report recommended, however comparisons to current targets will be difficult as they are for different age groups.

4.5 Key initiatives include the introduction of Skills Accounts, a transformation of jobcentre plus, the introduction of the Skills Development Fund and a move to embed a culture of learning. The establishment of a Commission for Employment and Skills was announced last month, as well as four new National Skills Academies. The Skills Pledge has already attracted 160 employers.

4.6 There is still a lot of work to be done in working out the detail, but there is a broad understanding of what needs to be done. The Leitch Implementation Group is currently being established which Steven Marston will Chair, sub groups will look at each chapter.

4.7 Not all of the recommendations made by Leitch are right, but the LSC has no choice but to implement them. It should be remembered that there is a big difference between abilities and qualifications; many learners with learning difficulties and or disabilities have the ability to do a job but will never be able
to achieve a level 2 qualification. This will discriminate against them getting a job.

4.8 There is an agreement that training for learners first level 2 qualification will be free, however the same provision isn’t made for ESOL courses. Being able to speak the language is a large factor in employability.

**Action:** Lee Probert and Paula Chapman to feedback the concerns of the Committee.

**Item 5. Train to Gain**

5.1 Train to Gain is an independent and impartial brokerage service to diagnose business and training needs, sourcing training and wider business development activities.

5.2 The scheme is aimed particularly at small businesses. There is a genuine desire to finding a tailor made package for each business which will meet their needs. Indications already show that the year end target of 47,770 engaged employers will be exceeded and there is a high level of satisfaction with the service as a whole, and with the skills brokers.

5.3 It is expected that as a result of this programme at least 190,000 adults will start a level 2 qualification this year, of which 4% have a disability. Daniel Simon has already circulated more detailed breakdowns of the ethnicity data.

5.4 The exact cost per learner achieving a level 2 is not currently available, however the spend on train to gain is in the public domain.

5.5 Of the two options ‘assess only’ has had low take up, with the majority of employers preferring the ‘train and assess’ option.

5.6 When train to gain was first established this Committee ensured that many of the equality and diversity issues were addressed. Measuring how successful this has been will be extremely difficult. Members noted that there is a distinct lack of data available. Evaluation should have been an integral part of this scheme from the beginning, rather than something than is only now being considered with a view to implement next year. Rob Wye is leading on this work.

5.7 Headline figures and easy to measure targets do not provide a clear enough picture of the success of this project. The numbers that are present need clearer explanation. 85% of learners on this scheme are white, but it is not clear whether this is representative of the demographics of the workforce. 18% of learners are over 50, this is an encouraging figure. 11% are aged 19 to 24 and this is a serious concern. These people have only just been through the school system and they did not manage to achieve a level 2 qualification. One explanation is that these were people previously in the NEET group who have now managed to find employment.

**Action:** Paula Chapman to send more detailed data. The Committee should decide how this data should be cut.
Item 6. SES: North West Action Plan

6.1 Jane Cowell the Regional Director of Learning Planning and Performance was welcomed to the Committee, during the presentation several key points were raised.

6.2 After careful consideration the LSC felt it best not to establish a new network to join up working. There is already a good network in place in the region involving the EOC, DRC, GO, Jobcentre plus, CBI, Skill and the RDA; being an active member of this network was more important than being the lead member of a new network.

6.3 Robust data is critical. Instead of looking at gender, ethnicity and disadvantage as separate entities, the data can be combined and looked at both geographically by post code and by college. The data is being used in the Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme to ask providers to target specific cohorts. Disadvantage in young people has been identified as the largest factor affecting participation and success, in adults ethnicity was the critical factor.

6.4 Data can be re-analysed in a number of different ways and the results can be used to identify areas, demographics, colleges and programmes which need specific targeting. This data provides a robust evidence base and underpins much of the work in the region. The results are starting to be included in the business plan.

6.5 Learner declaration of disability continues to be an issue, self declaration will always result in some people choosing not to disclose. Declaration is only done at once at enrolment, which for some students is too early. Certain disabilities such as dyslexia haven’t been identified at this stage, and students rarely amend their record later to declare the disability.

6.6 The performance of learning providers in terms of equality and diversity needs better assessment. At present a provider simply needs to submit their Equality and Diversity Plan. Closer scrutiny will be needed in future to assess whether the plan will address the issues. Those providers who cannot address the issues will not be given a contract.

6.7 A web-based tool to ask learners directly about key issues has recently been successfully piloted. It has proved useful in gathering qualitative data on learner opinions. This data will be used to explain current trends in participation and identify whether the learners have been targeted with the correct information.

6.8 Members were impressed with the use of the data and the level of sophistication.

6.9 £340,000 as a one-off fund has been given to strengthen diversity aspect of mainstream activities. It is hoped that this fund will help kick-start a culture change to embed equality and diversity considerations into the activities of the organisation.

6.10 Formal reporting of impact assessment is carried out every six months however it is on the agenda on every monthly management team meeting. Impact assessment will be much more robust when individual learner
numbers are more widespread and learners can be tracked through their learning careers.

6.11 Religion is not included in the data collection, neither has sexuality. This is something that can be added later, but careful consideration must be given. Students become less inclined to provide information if the questions are too intrusive. The web forum can be used to ascertain whether students would be prepared to answer such questions.

**Item 7. Terms of Reference**

7.1 This is currently on hold until early August. Chris Banks wants to hold a meeting to discuss the role of the non-executive in the context of the new Further Education and Training bill, and in light of the recent changes in the cabinet. Chris may want to task this Committee with additional responsibility.

**Item 8. Director’s Report**

8.1 Members were asked to note the report and comment. It was felt that the report is reactive rather than proactive and that the role of the Committee should be to direct work rather than take a snapshot of the current position

8.2 Trevor Phillips has written a letter welcoming the work done so far on the EQUAL project. An association will be established towards the end of the year. This work goes far beyond that of just the LSC and so there needs to be a discussion to identify who is best placed to lead on this. The Commission for Equality and Human Rights have now announced four of the seven Directors and are seen as the logical organisation to own this project when they are fully established.

8.3 The LSC are already some way ahead of the Department in terms of Impact Assessment. Paul Turner requested that Lee Probert share the work of the LSC particularly around the training programme.

**Action:** Lee Probert to share the Impact Assessment work with Paul Turner.

**Item 9. Updates**

**Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities**

9.1 The Chair has written to Mark Haysom highlighting the Committee’s concerns around the loss of provision for learners. The letter called for the research to be re-visited in a more robust way and for the sector not to make any more changes without prior consultation.

**Muslim Communities**

9.2 A meeting has taken place recently to discuss the results of the research presented to the Committee at the last meeting. The aim is to provide colleges with some practical activities along with the results of the research.

9.3 Bill Rammell is hosting a Community Cohesion summit next week. Mike Pettifer is attending on behalf of the LSC. It is not yet known what the potential outcomes will be.
9.4 A professional development programme for Faith Leaders is being piloted in October with the full roll-out planned for the 2008-09 academic year.

**Voluntary Sector**

9.5 The recent e-tendering exercise has enabled many more voluntary organisations to bid than in previous years. The number of successful bids will be known next week.

9.6 In 2002 legal proceedings by the LSC were started against a voluntary organisation. This is still continuing and recently hit the headlines. With current measures the situation would not be able to arise today, however it is causing bad publicity to the LSC.

**Item 10. Any other business**

10.1 The next meeting will be the 12 September, with a celebration dinner the previous night for all members of the Committee and sub-groups. It is planned that a minister will give a short speech. The venue is yet to be confirmed.

**Item 11. Date of next meeting**

11.1 The next meeting of the Committee will take place on 12 September.

**Meeting chair** Shirly Cramer  
**Minute taker** Pete Sanders  
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