Minutes

Date: 13 November 2007
Subject: Equality and Diversity
Location: Centre Point
Time: 10:30
LSC office: National Office
Publication intent: Internal

Present
Jeremy Crook (Chair)
David Barker
Nicola Dandridge
Patrick Grattan
Peter Lavender
Sally McEnhill

In attendance
Julie Nugent
Sarah Millett
Jane Watts

LSC staff
Lee Probert
Pete Sanders

Apologies
Apologies have been received from:
Shirley Cramer
Amir Kabal
Alyson Malach
Judith Norrington

Item 1. Welcome and introductions
1.1 The Chair welcomed the Committee and noted the apologies.

Item 2. Minutes of last meeting
2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were approved subject to a list of amendments handed to the Clerk.

Item 3. Matters arising

Item 4. Machinery of Government
4.1 The Chair welcomed Julie Nugent to the meeting, who briefly talked through the history to date of the Machinery of Government starting with Gordon.
Brown splitting the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) into the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and transferring 14-19 provision in Local Education Authorities.

4.2 The LSC has been proactive in its work and is looking for opportunities to contribute to the transition and to pass on knowledge to LEAs. A joint letter from DIUS and DCSF is due out within the next few days which will set out the terms of the consultation.

4.3 The LSC is considering mirroring LEA structures to enable more coherent joint working. This will result in splitting the LSC functions and supporting both sides by shared services. This is not a splitting of the LSC as an organisation.

4.4 Apprenticeships will sit wholly within DIUS even though it is a key area for both Departments.

4.5 The new Further Education and Training Bill has now received Royal Assent but Commencement orders have not been issued as some debate is still necessary. The secondary legislations will have to go through both houses which may delay the process further. The House of Commons are hoping to debate this before Christmas and if the vote is successful it can then be sent to the House of Lords.

4.6 The Bill can be delayed at any time, and even cancelled by not implementing the Commencement Orders. This is extremely unlikely and would be politically embarrassing.

4.7 There is uncertainty over the future of the LSC and many local Councils appear to not be meeting anymore which has created a vacuum. This makes progressing work very difficult and care must be taken to ensure that learners are not negatively affected during this uncertainty. There must be a move to Regional Councils at the earliest opportunity.

**Action:** An Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment should be done by DIUS as part of this transition work. DIUS should be contacted by Shirley Cramer or Chris Banks.

4.8 The Secretary of State will be speaking about the Machinery of Government at the Association of Colleges conference later next week.

4.9 DfES had their own Equality and Diversity; this has also been split so that DIUS and DCSF each have a Committee. Representatives from both should be invited to present their work to this Committee.

**Action:** DIUS and DCSF representatives to be invited to a future Committee meeting.

**Action:** Lee Probert to e-mail Committee members with the timetable for recruitment to Regional Boards.

**Item 5. Level 3 Pilots for Women**

5.1 Sarah Millett was welcomed to the Committee.

5.2 Level 3 trials were first mentioned in the Skills White Paper, the North West and West Midlands were identified to take the work forward. London was
selected in 2006 for the Level 3 trials for women after the March budget announcement set it as a specific target. The region was chosen as women are disproportionately confined to low paid occupations and constrained to 5 key economic sectors.

5.3 The objectives for the women only level 3 are slightly different than the more general programme; the requirement of SME only employers has been dropped and employer contribution is negotiable not compulsory.

5.4 The trials are being delivered through the main train to gain programme, providers are still able to sign up. This is a four year programme started in October 2006 and has recently had a second advertising campaign which targeted key sectors. The evaluation is ongoing and linked to the wider train to gain programme evaluation. Results are expected around Easter 2008.

5.5 Some members commented that trials have undercut the business in the area by providing free training for courses employers would have paid for anyway. Many sectors including health have a mandatory qualification level for working and will often pay for employees to obtain that level. More thought should be given to determine the most effective way of spending public money and it should be remembered that government targets are not always aligned to what employers want.

5.6 This scheme is part of a wider training package which requires employers to pay for a wider range of training for a bigger cohort of learners in order to take advantage of the free training for women. The full programme will see employers making a compulsory 50% contribution and consideration is being given to excluding mandatory qualifications to ensure that money is not spent on training which would have been paid for anyway using other funds.

5.7 Value for money for employers is often found in improving literacy, numeracy and language skills of employees. Employers may be persuaded to pay salaries and give time off whilst employees are studying literacy and numeracy courses, but they are less prepared to do the same on language courses.

5.8 This pilot has not been impact assessed by the LSC as it came directly out of the “Women in Work” consultation which Chris Banks was involved in and was well received. The negative impacts of the scheme must also be assessed along with the positives. Charging £600 to the employer for mandatory qualifications for men, yet providing the same course free for women may have unintended and unfair consequences for employment.

Item 6. Annual Statement of Priorities

6.1 This was due to be published yesterday but is now expected on Friday. There is a far greater focus on equality and diversity than previously, despite the specific phrase not featuring very often. The most recent version had an equality and diversity paragraph in the Quality section, but not in Performance Management. This may have changed for the final draft.

Action: Lee Probert to e-mail the Statement of Priorities to members when it is published. Comments should be e-mailed to Lee for collation and presented to National Council.
Item 7. Terms of Reference

7.1 Lee Probert presented the item and hoped it reflected the comments of the Committee. This new document will be used to recruit new members.

**Decision:** The Committee approved the new Terms of Reference.

7.2 A constitution of the Committee needs to be agreed in order to balance it with new recruits, providers and employers need to be included.

7.3 Members will be sent copies of the advertisements when the recruitment campaign starts.


8.1 Jane Watts was welcomed to the Committee.

8.2 This is a very new programme which has only been started in the last month, however it is hoped implementation will be as soon as possible. Marketing materials will be available soon but the message must be sent out as widely as possible as quickly as possible. The support scheme focuses on values and principles, the benefits to employees and employers, and looks to embed best practice.

8.3 The LSC, Learning and Skills Network (LSN) and NIACE are all working together on this. It will be delivered regionally and regional coordinators are already in post at NIACE. Two LSC E+D managers are also involved in the accountability chain. It is hoped that there will be more carrot than stick for providers, but both will be used.

8.4 Regions will have some flexibility and different priorities can be addressed in each, but the same framework will be used nationally to meet the same national objectives. Work done in each region will be shared nationally.

8.5 There will be briefings for providers and LSC staff which will have a common format across all the regions, but will be tailored to address regional priorities. It should be remembered that this programme goes beyond the six strands the law requires to cover the wider respect agenda.

8.6 The evaluation will be integral to monitoring success, inform providers and adjust the programme iteratively to continually improve the scheme. LSC will be charged with the evaluation, although this will be done by a team completely separate from the team who will be responsible for delivery.

8.7 Jane was congratulated on the good presentation of a well planned project.

8.8 A Committee member should be involved in the management of this support programme.

**Action:** Lee Probert to contact members for nominations.

Single Equality Scheme

8.9 Peter Lavender updated the Committee on the work done to review the SES so far. Regional staff have been interviewed, mostly with positive feedback and there has generally been more enthusiasm than anticipated.

8.10 It is now a year since the “Learning for Living and Work” scheme was launched. 22 headline actions were identified and, to date, most have not
been achieved nor are they likely to be achieved within the timescales. Work is happening, it has simply been much slower than expected.

8.11 £35million has been spent nationally and appears to have had a positive contribution in some regions particularly where a small number of projects have been well funded. Other regions have less to show for their investment.

8.12 The LSC may be vulnerable to criticism for this work, if this were assessed on a traffic light system we would currently be moving from amber to red. A national audit of the scheme will be necessary. There is still another year of funding available and Regional Directors have time to turn this around. Some of the 22 actions are easier to target than others and will give us bigger improvements; these should be focussed on first.

Item 9. Director’s Report

9.1 Members commented that this is one of the more helpful reports, although there mental health strategy has not been included. This will be coming forward in the next report.

9.2 The work on data must continue; a strategic analyst has been engaged to help on this. The data on completion and achievement from the last academic year will be available before the next meeting and will give a more accurate picture of the progress made so far.

Item 10. Any other business

    National Association of Equality Workers

10.1 There are mixed perceptions of this group, and HE practitioners appear to be most vocal about them. The LSC remains happy to support the group in their work.

    Apprenticeships Ambassadors Network

10.2 This is Chaired by Rod Ken Kenyon who is also Chair of London West LSC. They are holding a conference in December, the information will be available soon.

Item 11. Date of next meeting

11.1 The next meeting of the Committee will take place on 27 March 2008.

Meeting chair         Jeremy Crook
Minute taker          Pete Sanders
Date created          5 December 2007