Minutes

Minutes of meeting
Date 24 May 2005
Subject Equality and Diversity Committee meeting
Location Grosvenor Gardens, London
Time 10:30
LSC office National Office
Publication intent Internal

Present Shirley Cramer, (SC) Jeremy Crook, (JC) David Barker, (DB)
Patrick Grattan, (PG) Peter Lavender, (PL) Yvonne Thompson, (YT)
Amir Kabul, (AK) Nicola Dandridge, (ND) Hilary Wiseman, (HW)

In attendance Caroline Slocock, (CS) Paul Turner (PT) (for Susan Pember),
Steve Haines (SH) (for Nick O’Brien), Dr Marc Verlot, (MV)
Simon Christmas and Rose Dowling, SHM, (item 5)

LSC staff Caroline Neville, (CN) Kit Roberts, (KR) Alison Kakoura, (AKak)
Rob Wye (RW) (item 2) David Hughes (DH) (item 3),

Apologies Apologies have been received from:
Judith Norrington (JN)

Item 1. Welcome and introductions
1.1 The Chair welcomed all present and thanked Rob Wye and David Hughes for
attending and showing their commitment to the Committee’s agenda.
1.2 She also thanked the members of the Committee for their work on the subgroups
1.3 She was pleased to advise members that financial resources amounting to £50,000
had been made available to the Committee.

Item 2. Levers in agenda for change – presentation by Rob Wye
2.1 RW gave a presentation with slides on the routes to Equality and Diversity and
tabled a paper by Cathy Robinson, Council Solicitor, which set out the legal duties of
the LSC in respect of the promotion of Equality and Diversity.
2.2 RW outlined the current legislation and informed members of the LSC’s approach to
embedding Equality and Diversity both within the organisation and with providers.
He highlighted four main areas of work:

Policy and programme design
• Equality and Diversity should be designed in from the start
• Impact measures would be assessed
• Guidance and instructions kept to a minimum
• Performance measures would be inbuilt – recognising what works and what doesn’t, and why.
• Ensuring data analysis is accurate and honestly reflects reality.

**Capacity building**
• Ensuring the LSC has the expertise to manage/understand issues.
• Recognition that embedding the culture was difficult but leadership role was crucial
• Referenced the National Audit Office report on Governance, recommending joint training

**Reflecting Diversity**
• Recruitment of non-executive members should reflect diversity. Reference to DfES study undertaken in collaboration with the LSC.
• Diversity should be reflected across the whole post 16 sector including the LSC, Colleges and other providers, learning programmes and learners’ participation.
• Ensuring choice is allowed, not forced.

**Marketing and Communication**
• Improving equality proofing of marketing materials
• Positive promotion of diversity through marketing materials
• Referenced “the source” magazine, some excellent articles illustrating LSC’s positive approach to marketing

2.3 After the presentation the Chair invited comments and questions from members. Members were generally pleased with the LSC approach and cited several examples of where they were aware of schemes and ways of working which were helping to bring about the mainstreaming of Equality and Diversity throughout the organisation. These included:
• The LSC Chair was working with the DfES to promote/encourage the recruitment of black and minority members to the non-executive Committees.
• YT said she was working with London Central LSC on a pilot scheme to address this issue. PT agreed to inform DfES colleagues.

2.4 At this point members requested that the National Employment Panel Report should be an item on the next meeting’s agenda

**Action: A Kakoura / KRoberts to ensure NEP report is on the next agenda**

2.5 Members AK and HW both commented that E&D should be embedded in all organisations for moral reasons and not merely because there was a legal obligation to do so. In order to mainstream E&D it was only necessary for people to do their jobs properly.

2.6 SME commented favourably on the achievements so far regarding marketing but added that the LSC had more to do.

2.7 Alyson M commented on the recruitment of Consultants in the LSC and whether the same diversity rules applied as for other staff recruitment.

2.8 The Director for Learning advised members that resources were being moved around to enable HR to take forward the E&D agenda.

2.9 CS commented that resources should be improved at local level where they would have the biggest impact. It was important to carry out robust impact assessments of
changes to processes. KR advised that there would be opportunity for discussion of EDIMS later during the meeting.

2.10 RW stated that the LSC needed to work at getting people to take E&D seriously and not using a “tick box” structure just to meet legal obligations

2.11 ND asked about what was actually happening at local level to embed the E&D culture. RW referred to the next presentation to be made by David Hughes, LSC Regional Director for East Midlands

2.12 A comment was made about the confusing and "labrynthine" state of the LSC website and what was being done to improve it. KR informed members that external consultants had been advising the LSC to ensure it developed an accessible website.

**Action: Sue Ashe to report to the next meeting.**

2.13 PG commented on the LSC Act and the Age perspective and that there needed to be a clearer picture of what was being achieved and whether the data reflected that.

2.14 AM wanted to know how far the LSC had travelled in real terms. RW explained that whilst measurable progress had been made there was still some way to go. AM suggested that a log should be drawn up of EDIMS in the context of all key policies both internal and external. KR confirmed that EDIMs were primarily external facing and that the workforce milestones provided internal measures.

2.15 The Chair then thanked Rob Wye for his presentation and introduced David Hughes, RD for East Midlands Region.

**Item 3. Funding in “agenda for change” and Equality and Diversity in East Midlands**

3.1 David began his presentation by explaining how his role as Regional Director spanned the whole of the organisation, from local to national levels, and gave him an insight into how policies set at national level were working at ground level.

3.2 He distributed a document, which detailed some of the good practice and also the top Equality and Diversity challenges for the East Midlands region.

3.3 In more general terms David highlighted the key issues for Equality and Diversity not just in East Midlands but across the LSC:

- The implementation of policy was very important – there was a need to express policy in real terms and get beyond the fear of doing or saying the wrong thing – keep language plain and simple.
- There needed to be more sharing of good practice within and across regions and there were still barriers to break down.
- Work was needed to set up measurable targets both general and specific.
- Employer engagement of Equality and Diversity, in particular with regard to Learners with Learning Difficulties and /or Disabilities mainstreaming, was also a challenge given the pressure for resources.
- Local providers needed to have ownership of Equality and Diversity EDIMS and policies and more use should be made of providers resources to do this..
- There was a need to drive through Life Long Learning for all and for courses to match needs and not vice versa.
- Current research on LLDD involves mystery shopper type research which indicates there is a cultural issue to be overcome. Work is ongoing to look at how the LSC can get the focus right.

3.4 David described the funding aspect in agenda for change. Whilst radical, there was no change to the mechanism of funding but the change was to the way the LSC
thought about funding. It involved more creative use of the resources available and more sophisticated priorities for planning. Targets were smarter, with answers to the ‘who, what, where, why and how’.

3.5 Committee members expressed a number of comments and concerns. PL asked about the pressures on adult provision and Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities and what the East Midland region was doing. DH reported that Specialist Colleges were working with mainstream Colleges to create partnerships.

3.6 CN confirmed that this partnership working would be taken up in other regions as good practice. She added that it was not a new issue and that the nature of the curriculum and its subsequent funding was an issue under discussion with QCA - how to achieve coherence with collaborative funding.

3.7 DH agreed to share with PL examples of how funding had been secured from other organisations within the East Midlands Region.

**Action: Peter Lavender to liaise with David Hughes**

3.8 AK asked about capacity building at the local level and the consequences to sustainability given the frequent changes to funding processes. DH replied that although there was no easy answer the way forward was to improve local partnership working with voluntary and community organisations and look for answers to joint issues such as poverty and health. One example from the East Midlands region was to set up a forum for the Voluntary and Community Sector to access/share mainstream funding.

3.9 Alyson M commented on the issue of recruitment of staff who did not share the values or missions of existing staff and how to train them into the expectations of the organisation. DH reported that results of work done around this issue indicated that the issue was a cultural one and not simply training. If, however, the LSC was perceived as an Equality and Diversity Champion then it would attract the kind of staff/people with the same values. The issue was that the LSC needed to send out a louder message.

3.10 Observer to the Committee, PT, emphasised the detailed work that had gone into the production of the Skills White paper and that there seemed to be a danger of people picking up on the headline issues and not reading the full text.

3.11 DB agreed with the points made by PL and added his concern that at the same time as promoting widening participation we (providers) were actually seen to be cutting courses and provision. There needed to be a better balance of provision and the Annual Statement of Priorities needed to reflect this.

3.12 DH agreed to take the comments and concerns back to Management Group for them to discuss how to redress the balance.

**Action: David Hughes to refer this discussion to Management Group meeting**

3.13 SMcE commented that the LSC funding policy was not age specific and that FE now lacked the flexibility to respond to local communities, for fear of not meeting targets. She expressed her sense of sadness at this and members agreed that the DFES needed to be aware of these concerns.

**Action: Paul Turner to take concerns to DfES**

3.14 CS reiterated the point that funding had major impact on flexibility and that it was the funding at the margins, which was a problem. Lack of evidence was a drawback and there was a need for analysis to highlight national priorities.
Item 4. Updates:

Age

4.1 PG gave a brief update on the results of a survey/report carried out on the 47 LSCs on the extent to which demographics and age have impact on provision. Results showed that the 16-25 age group was missing out as they were being considered with adults. PG made several recommendations to the Executive:
   - LSC needs to be clearer as to where it stands on targets relating to age
   - The supportive role that EDIMS play
   - Age issues in rural areas need to be examined.
   - Where the LSC stands as an employer on retirement age
   - Workshops would help to increase the understanding

4.2 PG advised the Committee that there was a 2 page summary, which could be circulated to members. Comments on how to respond to the recommendations would then be emailed to Jon Gamble, Director of Adult Learning (Melanie Hunt after 25 May). Caroline Kempner, Director for Data Analysis had agreed to provide the data, some of which was cross cutting.

4.3 Members were pleased at the reduction to a 2-page summary and welcomed the opportunity to engage with the Skills Directorate of National Office.

   Action: K Roberts to circulate report in due course and members to email comments to Sue Yeomans

NOTE: Further updates were dealt with after the next item on the agenda but are recorded here in the order of the agenda.

EDIMS

4.4 KR gave an update on and circulated the summary recommendations from the National Employer Survey and invited members to email her with any comments they had.

4.5 Kit confirmed that she had met with colleagues and was working at producing a more robust toolkit of EDIMs designed to respond to staff on different levels.

4.6 CS commented that people were still unclear as to the key messages of Equality and Diversity and that these should be absolutely clear in the EDIMs.

4.7 One member felt that 4-6 EDIMs was insufficient and that an annual dialogue with local targets was necessary.

4.8 CN informed members of the work underway within agenda for change to ensure there was a system to measure success and that EDIMs needed to be part of the overall framework. KR confirmed she had met with the Business Forum to discuss how EDIMs would fit into the Business Cycle

   Action: KR To liaise further with J Douglas and Beverley Matthews

4.9 AM pointed out that so far there had been no mention of religious or sexual orientation issues. KR replied that local initiatives and EDIMs could cover these.

Race Equality Scheme

4.10 KR thanked the members of the Committee who were involved with working on preparing the RES2 document. She advised members that internal consultation was underway as well as with local stakeholders and that the feedback was proving very useful. She emphasised the very tight timescale for consultation. A revised draft would be ready by 9 June to be sent to National Directors and Regional Directors for their input by 14 June with a final agreement on the document by 24 June at the management group.
4.11 Comments from the members were noted, the main comment being that in some places it was rather vague. There also need to be a reference to Trade Unions. In addition there didn’t seem to be mention of any involvement by Human Resources, or the Investors in People programme. There was no mention either of the REES programme.

4.12 KR explained that in reducing the size of the document it had been necessary to lose a lot of detail, but that HR had indeed been busy constructing a training programme to support staff in taking the work forward.

4.13 PG commented that whilst it was a good stand-alone document, it appeared to be suspended in a vacuum and that the LSCs real problem had yet to be identified. Altogether it was felt that the Document needed a lighter touch.

4.14 Other questions included:
- What was the baseline data?
- Was the volume of BME learners increasing?
- Were the Equality Action plans being implemented through LSC staff?

4.15 KR agreed to take these comments forward and to send a final draft version to YT Alyson M, JC and AK for comments on behalf of the Equality and Diversity Committee.

Item 5. Learner Engagement Presentation -

5.1 The Chair welcomed Dr Simon Christmas and Rose Dowling of SHM Ltd, to the meeting and invited Simon to talk to the members about the work they have done with engaging disenchanted learners and improving post 16 participation in the Bristol area.

5.2 Simon gave an overview of the programme, identified the key themes running throughout and then described some examples of the success of the programme.

5.3 The key approach to the programme was ensuring that the learner was at the heart of all decision making, and that young people themselves found the solutions to the problems.

5.4 The key themes were as follows:
- Changing the learners perception of what learning was about
- Working with young people as partners in collaborative working
- Recognition of the capacity of young people to come up with new ideas and new ways of learning

5.5 The Chair thanked Simon for the presentation and invited the members to ask questions.

5.6 Members responded with very positive feedback and some contributed with reports of seeing similar work done all over the country. The comments in the main included:
- All agreed that the ‘ask the learners’ method worked but the LSC needed to look at the implications of this for all learners
- Simon Christmas confirmed that workshops had been held in various places and it was hoped that there would be a ripple effect from the LSC outward to other partners and providers, who would recognise what a powerful resource this approach was to successfully engaging and motivating learners.
- The work could be expanded on the same principle to different groups of learners. The Disability Rights Commission was about to publish Phase 1 of a study into the experience of disabled learners and this would be an invaluable
resource for future learner engagement programmes. Simon Christmas agreed to contact SH of the Disability Rights Commission directly to discuss further.

- The E2E programme was good but needed a funding framework to facilitate a qualifications structure
- What was needed was a complete change of mindset both by learners and by providers of learning.
- It should not be the job of only the LSC to turn out such programmes but colleges and schools should also have a major role to play
- The LSC was fully engaged in taking the work forward and would carry on doing so, despite limitations.

5.7 HW said that STONEWALL would be interested in the SHM DVD and advised Simon Christmas to contact Stephen Frost.

**Item 6. Annual Equality and Diversity Report**

6.1 The Chair noted the publication of this and suggested that the Committee did not need to discuss any further at this point

6.2 Nevertheless, PT informed the group of the DfES new ministerial team and promised to find relevant information about them and other ministers across the Government with an Equality and Diversity remit. He suggested that an Equality and Diversity summit might be held with DfES/LSC and other stakeholders using the Equality and Diversity report as a basis for discussion. This proposal was supported by members.

**Item 7. Equality and Diversity Director's Report**

7.1 Members noted the content of the report and the updates of ongoing E&D work

**Item 8. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising**

8.1 These were agreed as a true record of the discussions.

8.2 One member drew attention to the fact that in some places in the minutes members were referred to as being representatives of the organisations they worked for, instead of recognising their roles as individuals. It was agreed that in these and future minutes, when members were quoted or referred to, the minute taker would use the speakers initials.

**Item 9. Records of Actions log**

9.1 Members noted this and the Action Plan for information

**Item 10. Date of next meeting**

10.1 The date for the next meeting was confirmed as a joint meeting of the YPLC, ALC and E&D Committees on 5/6 July 2005 at a venue to be confirmed by the end of the week. The Clerk was asked to forward provisional dates for 2006 to the Chair and KR for clearance and subsequent distribution at the next meeting.

**Action:** A Kakoura to find dates for 2006 Equality and Diversity Committee meetings and forward to Chair for clearance.