Dear colleague,

Publication of Framework for Excellence in 2009

I am writing to let you know about some important decisions concerning the release of Framework for Excellence (FfE) data in 2009 and the future publication of results in 2010.

You will be aware that there have been ongoing discussions between colleagues in the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) and sector representative organisations about concerns over the planned publication of limited Framework results in 2009.

We have made significant progress over the last year and the Framework is now positioned at the heart of the post-16 education and training system. It will help to drive and support the new local authority commissioning arrangements as well as the new arrangements for performance management. We have also explored with learners and employers how access to detailed information at course and subject level can help them make choices.

Thanks to you and your staff, the first year of the Framework has been successfully implemented. Over 1,200 providers and half a million learners were involved; systems were tested and your results provided to you. Nationally these results are very encouraging and show an overall picture of high levels of quality throughout the sector.

The pilot on the use of the Framework by schools with sixth forms has also been launched, with the intention of extending the Framework to include school sixth forms in 2010.

However, there are timing considerations. New arrangements for commissioning and performance management do not come into force until April 2010. Detailed information to inform learner and employer choice will only start to become available from 2010. The Framework has also exposed some data issues, which have now been resolved.

We also recognise that there is further work to do. This includes helping people to better understand what the Framework results show them; explaining why certain results may be different from other sources of information; helping to interpret and use these differences to improve quality and achievements; and improve understanding of how you and others can use Framework data to best effect. We have agreed to work co-operatively and collaboratively on these issues with provider representative organisations.
With all of this in mind, Ministers have decided that we will not put individual results in the public domain in 2009. We will however publish some national headlines from this year’s exercise, which you will be able to use for comparison and benchmarking purposes. In summer 2010 we will release the full set of providers’ grades and provide the first access to learners and employers for some of the detailed information.

In the meantime, 2009 will be treated as a shadow year for using results and developing the Framework further. You should use the data on the Provider Gateway to help understand your performance and identify areas where improvements may need to be made as part of your self assessment process. LSC colleagues will also use the data in discussing performance with you during the year.

We will shortly publish the 2009 Framework for Excellence Policy Document, which will set out the progress that has been made so far and, critically, the future direction of the Framework as the central component of our future approach to performance management. We will also publish updated and detailed technical information in the Provider Guide.

Ministers and all signatories to the Statement of Intent attached to this letter are committed to the ambition for the Framework to become the unified assessment tool for all post-16 provision. Our joint commitment will help us deliver what is needed for 2010 and beyond. We believe that this will result in a stronger Framework, which will be invaluable in future years. We will use the next 12 months to work collaboratively towards full publication of results next year.

Yours faithfully,

Geoff Russell
Chief Executive