

WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM - 30th SEPTEMBER 2009

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

**RAISING EXPECTATIONS: ENABLING THE SYSTEM TO DELIVER
MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT CHANGES**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines the current stage in preparing for the transition of commissioning and funding of post-16 provision from the Learning and Skills Council to the Local Authority. Full transfer of commissioning and funding of post-16 funding will take place in 2010.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Machinery of Government changes announced on 28th June 2007 proposed that funding for 16-18 education and training would be delivered through Local Authorities – subject to full consultation and when the necessary legislation has facilitated this. These functions are currently carried out by the Learning and Skills Council. Legislation is currently going through Parliament. If approved, the LSC will be abolished from April 2010 when the commissioning and funding of post-16 provision will transfer to the Local Authority.
- 1.2 The purposes of these changes are to:
 - put commissioning of provision for all 0-19 year olds in the hands of a single body, reflecting the principles of local decision making at the right level and supporting the delivery of the 14-19 entitlement;
 - enable Local Authorities to take a more integrated approach to provision of all Children's Services;
 - create, at a regional level, a good join up with regional economic planning;
 - simultaneously allow government to streamline the post-19 skills system to better support the policies in World-Class Skills, and therefore make faster progress towards our 2020 skills ambitions.
- 1.3 The basic objectives are:
 - to build on the year-on-year improvements that the Learning and Skills Council has helped deliver since its creation in 2001;
 - to drive the ambition to raise the participation age for every young person to pursue a programme that engages them and enables them to progress;
 - to place local leadership firmly with Local Authorities to successfully implement this vision;
 - to drive towards a more dynamic, demand-led approach within the adult education and skills market;
 - to ensure that we intervene less where there is success but take robust action where there is failure and minimise unnecessary costs and bureaucracy to support those delivering to focus on success;

- to ensure that funding follows the learner's choice and comparable funding will be provided for comparable provision within a national funding formula.

2. Main Points of the Machinery of Government Changes

2.1 The participation in education or training will be raised to age 18 by 2015.

2.2 Every young person is entitled to the new 14-19 curriculum which has the following "learning suites":

- strengthened GCSEs and A levels
- new Diplomas
- the guarantee of an Apprenticeship or pre-Apprenticeship place
- Foundation Learning

Central to the changes are also:

- making sure there is good quality Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) to all young people through the transition of Connexions to Local Authorities and the development of Targeted Youth Support;
- making sure that those young people who need it get financial support especially for children with Learning Disabilities and/or Difficulties and through the support of Education Maintenance Allowances;
- support for every young person to make the transition from pre- to post-16 learning successfully by implementing the September Guarantee and extending this to age 17.

2.3 New national organisations have been or will be set up:

- a streamlined Skills Funding Agency, designed to oversee the development of the FE sector and to route public funding effectively to where it is most needed;
- a Young People's Learning Agency, which will have responsibilities for budgetary control;
- a new National Apprenticeship Service (NAS).

2.4 Local authorities individually and through the sub-regional grouping will judge demand for different forms of provision, and the extent to which the available supply meets that demand and makes a full reality of the new entitlements. Local Authorities and the sub-regional grouping will then decide where to commission more provision, where to expand the best provision to fill gaps, and where to remove the least effective provision. In doing so, they will aim to make the new entitlements available in full to all young people at the highest possible standard.

2.5 As part of its Children and Young People's Plan, the Local Authority will be expected to produce a commissioning plan for post-16 learning. It must take particular account of the need to raise participation, raise achievement at levels 2 and 3 by age 19 and reduce the number of young people who are NEET. When it has been agreed, it will then provide the basis for funding allocation.

- 2.6 Knowing what young people want is important to ensure that the correct provision is commissioned. Since September 2007, it has been a requirement that every local area has an online prospectus setting out information about each course available across the area to inform choice. DCSF is strongly encouraging Local Authorities to develop a common online application process alongside the prospectus to manage and track post-16 applications.
- 2.7 Further Education Colleges and training providers may draw students from many Local Authority areas and so Local have come together in sub-regional groupings to commission provision. This will involve sharing their 16-18 commissioning plans, analysing together how learners move across and within their borders and make sure that their collective plans accommodate them; aggregating demands for Apprenticeships in order to commission the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS); and deciding who is responsible for leading the planning, commissioning, procuring and funding for each college and provider.
- 2.8 Some specialist provision will have to be commissioned on a regional basis.
- 2.9 This framework will be supplemented by a national Young People's Learning Agency, which will have reserve powers to step in to secure coherence of plans and budgetary control in the event that agreement cannot be reached. The idea of this agency with some budgetary control is that funding can be plan-led rather than 'lagged' i.e. based on the previous year's student numbers.
- 2.10 Sixth Form Colleges will become a distinct legal category for the first time.
- 2.11 Academies will be expected to collaborate and contribute through the local 14-19 Partnership. Where an Academy is unable to agree with the Local Authority what its provision should be, the Secretary of State has powers to decide.
- 2.12 Local Authorities will be primarily responsible for planning and funding of provision for learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LLDD), who have an entitlement to education or training up to the age of 25 and for the education and training of young people in juvenile custody.
- 2.13 The "home" Local Authority will have the lead responsibility for improving quality and raising standards in relation to School Sixth Forms and Sixth Form Colleges, but the Local Authority will need to work through the DIUS Skills Funding Agency in relation to FE Colleges. School Improvement Partners (SIPs) will continue to hold performance discussions with School Sixth Forms on behalf of LA as part of the 'single conversation'.
- 2.14 The DCSF aims to ensure that the system is supported by excellent data, collected in a low-burden way, shared efficiently and in a timely way with those who need it.

3. Commissioning and Funding

- 3.1 A key driver to some of these changes will be the National Commissioning Framework. The National Commissioning Framework (NCF) will set out the core requirements for planning, commissioning, procuring, funding, and accountability of the education and training of 16 - 19 year olds, young people

up to age 25 where a learning difficulty assessment is in place, and young offenders in youth custody. A draft version of the full NCF will be published for consultation and access by all stakeholders in October 2009. The final version will be published, subject to the passage of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill, by the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) in April 2010, as statutory guidance.

- 3.2 The publication of the NCF was discussed at a recent meeting of the 14-19 Partnership and there is the intention for that partnership, on which there is representation from schools alongside strategic partners, colleges and work-based training providers, to respond to the consultation.
- 3.3 There is also a Commissioning Workstream that has been set up within the sub-regional group of Greater Merseyside. Wirral LA is the lead Local Authority on this commissioning development work.
- 3.4 We currently have an outline, published in advance of publication of the full draft version, which is intended as a general statement of the key principles and main elements. Those elements, and the underpinning detail, are subject to development and changes. This document is included as an Appendix.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Schools Forum:

1. notes the progress so far with the Machinery of Government changes
2. considers how it wishes to respond to the consultation on the NCF in the context of the response that will be made by the 14-19 Partnership
3. requests a further progress update at the next meeting