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**February 2009**

**REGIONAL PLANNING GROUP CHAIR UPDATE**

This was the first meeting of the RPG when decisions needed to be taken that would affect the funding of providers and it was a full and lively meeting.

The baseline allocations for providers have been circulated by the LSC and we were all brought up to date on the process, progress and the impact on the South East. The additional learner support and E2E budgets are still to be allocated as is the 1430 funded growth places for 2010/11 targeted at meeting the September Guarantee and ensuring provision for young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). The RPG advised the LSC on its preferred way of allocating these additional places across the region.

There was much discussion about the requirement to plan for the provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who need to attend independent specialist providers, and concern was raised at the slow rate at which information is coming in from the local authorities. I would urge all colleagues to ensure that as many of the 139a assessments for residential placements are submitted as soon as possible and that you ensure that your Connexions provider does meet the deadline of 19<sup>th</sup> March.

The Regional Commissioning Statement was endorsed by the group and is now available. This statement was produced by the LSC and the RPGs commissioning sub group and reflects the needs identified in each local authority area. I would recommend that providers and LA colleagues in particular familiarise themselves with the content and use the information to support, provider planning, 14-19 plans, and to engage with 14-19 Partnerships.

Finally, I continue to be encouraged by the engagement and dedication of colleagues around the region. At the moment the RPG have been meeting monthly which has been essential in order for everyone to familiarise themselves with the issues surrounding the transfer of responsibilities and to monitor how that has been going. As we move forward the role of the RPG changes and its transitional role is largely complete. From April the RPG will oversee the commissioning process and we intend to reduce the number of sub groups and also the frequency of meetings – perhaps 4-6 times a year. This strikes the right balance between meeting at key points in the planning and commissioning cycle and ensuring we make the most effective use of our time.

**Clive Webster  
12 February 2010**

## PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT PERIOD

- Moderation of the allocation of growth and confirm final allocations, all documents issued toward end March.
- Final negotiated Maximum Contract Values: 16-18 Apprenticeships
- Agree mechanism and processes for managing the budget for placements in ISPs.
- Agree young people's ESF specification for 2011-13
- Agree framework for the regional strategic analysis
- Workshop for RPG members to explore the detail of the National Commissioning Framework which will be used for the commissioning process for 2011/12.

## NEXT RPG MEETING

- 17 March, Holiday Inn, Guildford

## RPG ACTIVITIES

### Update from February RPG

- The RPG were alerted to the publication of the *South East Regional Commissioning Statement (RCS) 2010-11*. It has been informed by the YPLA's regional Young People's Strategic Analysis and Local Authorities' Statements of Needs and was finalised in discussion with the Funding and Commissioning Sub Group.
- The RPG were alerted to the risks associated with the, at present, small number of returns from LAs indicating the anticipated number of learners requiring placements at Independent Specialist Providers (ISP) and LAs were asked to send in their returns ASAP. The group discussed funding in relation to ISP provision and potential overspend and have requested a written position on the issue from DCSF. RPG have actioned the LLDD sub group to develop a pro forma for assessing the submissions.
- Proposals for the allocation of over 1,400 additional funded growth places for 2010/11 were discussed. It was agreed that the process for allocating these places across the region will be on the basis of average numbers of NEET and local decisions will be informed by requirements to meet the September Guarantee and provide for those who are NEET. The allocations process will be undertaken by the LSC in consultation with the local authority/sub regional group.
- After discussion, the group's terms of reference were revised and proposals were accepted to reduce the number of sub groups and to reduce the number of meetings to between 4-6 per year at times required by the planning and commissioning cycle. A small group of DCS's has been identified by the SE DCS group to oversee the work of the RPG.
- It was agreed that the structure of the sub groups currently reporting to the RPG would change and that there would now be 3 sub groups: Funding, LLDD and Information, Advice and Guidance. The HR sub group will complete its work in early summer when all HR issues around the transfer have been resolved. It was agreed that a task and finish group on European Social Fund would report to the Funding sub group.

### HR

The HR subgroup met on 26<sup>th</sup> January and raised a number of issues that continue to cause concern as the transfer date approaches. Meetings and discussions will continue with individual HR teams as necessary. The group will meet for the last time on the 1<sup>st</sup> March.

### LLDD

At its meeting on 13th January 2010 the regional planning group tasked the LLDD sub group members with developing sub-regional commissioning plans for learners with LLDD in order to inform commissioning for 2011/12. The group will draw on good practice and activity which may already be in train both regionally and nationally and develop a framework/template and support authorities in taking forward their commissioning plans for this learner group. This activity outlined above complements another task being undertaken by the sub group - that of developing a single 139 template which can be used to support commissioning across sub-regions and out of area. The work will also draw on national practice.

The LLDD sub group is meeting is on 24th February in Centre point.

## **Funding and Commissioning**

The LSC's Young People's Learning Division (YPLD) is near to completing the 16-18 allocations process for 2010/11. Sustainable baseline allocations, including the impact of projected changes in cohort size, have been issued to school sixth forms and colleges. For the South East these show an increase of £23.8m over 2009/10 in funding for 16-18 learners and an increase of nearly 5,500 in the number of places in the region. On top of the growth included in these baseline allocations, the region now has the opportunity to allocate an additional 1,430 growth places. While the formal authority for the allocation of growth funds lies with the LSC, the LSC (YPLD) will consult with LAs - via the RPG and individually – to agree the volumes to be allocated to different parts of the region and the way these additional allocations will complement the allocations already made. The Statement of Priorities includes the commitment to distribute any additional growth in learner number to regions based on the numbers of young people who are NEET. The region's Commissioning Plan priorities the implementation of strategies and plans to reduce the number of NEET and the number in employment without training.

The transition of E2E learner numbers into 2010/11 allocations is yet to be completed, as is the allocation of Maximum Contract Values (and proposed volumes) for 16-18 Apprenticeship provision.

The product development group met for the first time in January, consisting of representatives from several local authorities and the YPLA, Regional Integrated Analytical Services (RIAS) team. The groups remit is to provide advice and guidance on behalf of SRGs to shape the development of the RIAS products in the South East.

## **ESF Group**

The revised Regional Framework is complete and should be available soon on the SEEDA website. The Group will shortly start work on updating the Young People's specification for the 2011-13 contracting round. This must be completed and signed off by the end of March 2010.

## **Connexions Strategic Advisory Group**

The Connexions group met on February 4<sup>th</sup> and received papers on: September Guarantee (Sep 09); NEETs (Dec 09); implementation of the January Guarantee (Jan 10); and commissioning provision for LLDD.

The group discussed the differences in the number of September Guarantee offers made by Connexions services across the south east and agreed that once the guidance was available for 10/11 a meeting of the data sub group would be useful to discuss a uniform approach to completing the data returns for the coming year. The group asked for a NEET analysis by statistical neighbours for the next meeting so that good practice nationally can be identified and investigated by the group. The group feedback on some of the difficulties experienced in implementing the January Guarantee: short timescales; lack of information around procuring different provision and differences in approach across the region; communicating the offer available to young people; and the payments for additional work the Connexions services were undertaking.

The group were then taken through the commissioning process for LLDD in 10/11, the timescales and the likely demand for places, the group agreed to see what they can do to hurry up s139s for those requiring funding.

## **PARTNER UPDATES**

### **Association of Learning Providers South East**

ALPSE and the 5 local provider networks are continuing to contribute to RPA in numerous ways. To highlight just a few of the current activities:

- working with schools has increased to raise awareness of the 4 progression pathways,
- exploring ways to increase the diversity of work based learning provision to meet the needs of learners,
- making available additional learning places are now available to support the January Guarantee,
- mobilizing WBL providers to represent WBL at 14-19 Consortia and Partnerships to ensure consistent representation of this sector and develop positive collaboration.

Of importance at this time is the ALP National response to the consultation on the National Commissioning Framework. This response is endorsed by many providers in the south east and can be viewed at:

[http://www.alpse.co.uk/index.php/category/resources-important\\_documents/](http://www.alpse.co.uk/index.php/category/resources-important_documents/) . This hard hitting response highlights areas of concern under a number of headings. These are a sample of the issues raised:

- Visibility of providers within the system
- Commissioning in the first year
- Plan led vs demand led commissioning
- NAS and LA mismatch of targets

### Association of South East Colleges

An AOSEC event for college senior staff and their local authority colleagues is planned for the afternoon of Feb 18<sup>th</sup> at the Holiday Inn in Guildford. The programme includes an update from Shadow YPLA staff on funding and commissioning processes and also a workshop session on colleges and local authorities working together led by Jo Baty from REACT.

Colleges in the region are asking for more involvement in the future planning of LLDD provision. Many colleges already have extensive experience in this field and would like to take the opportunity of working with the local authority in discussions about future learners needs. Earlier discussions may lead to planning in a more cost effective way.

There continues to be a concern about multiple audit pressures and the uncertainty surrounding mechanisms for measuring performance. AoC have responded to the consultation on the National Commissioning Framework on these points and a number of others. For a copy of the full response please contact [janedrich@aosec.org.uk](mailto:janedrich@aosec.org.uk)

### National Apprenticeship Service

The South East National Apprenticeship team have, with the help of LA colleagues, been negotiating a national agreement over the number of 16-18 year old apprenticeship starts for the 10/11 academic year. This has been a challenge as participation needs to increase across the region towards the aspiration of one in five by 2020, however as we have already seen an increase in the starts in the first five months of this year we are confident the number for the South East, whilst stretching, is realistic. Other key work has included: the first Apprenticeship week (1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> February) since NAS formed last April – a range of activities took place over the region from business breakfasts to distributing leaflets in retail areas to highlight the benefits of the Apprenticeship programme; continued work with Connexions services to ensure data sharing is effective – particularly in providing additional support for candidates who have been unsuccessful in applying for an apprenticeship; work with providers (colleges and private training providers) to ensure their vacancies are on our Apprenticeship Vacancy system ([www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)) so they can be accessed by all; finally, the announcement of grants for employers to take on 16-17 year olds has had a great deal of interest in the region and we have been working to meet the demand. If you have queries about any of these or anything else to do with the Apprenticeship programme please contact David Wales at [David.Wales@apprenticeships.gov.uk](mailto:David.Wales@apprenticeships.gov.uk)

### Involve South East (Third Sector)

The first newsletter has been distributed to third sector networks across the South East region. We have started a region-wide survey to map links between the third sector and statutory partners around skills, learning and employability.

'Inclusion through learning' conference 26 March, Guildford

INVOLVE South East is working with the Third Sector European Network to put on a conference in March around the European theme for 2010 'combating poverty and exclusion', the conference will be concentrating on how learning in the third sector can help people towards inclusion and employment. Colin Byrne, GOSE will be coming from Brussels to give an overall view of the year. There will also be presentations from Surrey Community Action from the perspective of managing a regional community grants contract, a booking form is available on our website :

<http://www.learningcurve.org.uk/involvesoutheast>

### 17 March, third sector employers apprenticeship workshop – Guildford

This workshop is for third sector employers who have the potential to employ apprentices. A speaker from the National Apprenticeship Service will be addressing delegates as well as a speaker from a third sector organisation who have taken on an apprentice – more details about this event will appear on our website shortly

For any further information please contact the project co-ordinator, Marisa McClelland [marisa@learningcurve.org.uk](mailto:marisa@learningcurve.org.uk)

### REAct

The REAct bulletin (<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pagelId=8083751>) focuses on...

1. Conference for local authorities with a Young Offender's Institution in their area
2. Conference for local authorities with a specialist land-based college in their area
3. Councillor briefing sessions
4. Planning for Raising the Participation Age (RPA) - events

### Transfer News

5. Transfer of LSC staff to local authorities
6. 16-19 funding

7. Local authority bank account details and finance contact - *reminder*
8. Apprenticeship planning for 2010/117. Local authority bank account details and finance contact - *reminder*
9. YPLA Data Sharing with Local Authorities

Other upcoming events

10. Sixth Form Colleges Forum celebratory launch event
11. Institute for Education Business Excellence National Conference

## OTHER ITEMS

### Backing Young Britain

Backing Young Britain is a cross-government campaign bringing together business, public sector organisations and the voluntary sector to provide more opportunities for young people. Three major strands are:

- Encouraging employers to offer an Apprenticeship.
- Encouraging employers to offer a young person a job.
- Encouraging employers to offer work experience.

For more information, see: <http://interactive.bis.gov.uk/backingyoungbritain/>

### Opening the door to Apprenticeships

National Apprenticeship Service published their report, 'Opening the doors to Apprenticeships, reaching young people who are disadvantaged and disengaged from Apprenticeships'.

The paper forms part of the ongoing work of the Apprenticeship Pathfinder Project as it seeks to capture the impact of policies, projects and programmes in 'opening doors to Apprenticeships' for young people who are disadvantaged or disengaged. As part one of two linked papers, this first publication looks at the scale of the issues faced by young people who are disadvantaged and disengaged from Apprenticeships. A further paper to be published in the spring of 2010 will look at potential solutions to enable more effective policy and practice responses. See:

<http://offlinehbpl.hbpl.co.uk/Misc/PYC/Both-Resources-Documents/Opening%20the%20Door%20to%20Apprenticeships%20final.pdf>

**For further information please contact David Gardener-Haig on 01273 783655 Email: [david.gardenerhaig@lsc.gov.uk](mailto:david.gardenerhaig@lsc.gov.uk)**

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