

LSIS Policy Update

7 July – 21 July 2010



Further education, skills and the economy

July 20th – Government announces simplification of 16-19 funding

The Department for Education (DfE) has **announced** moves to *'reduce bureaucracy and red tape in 16-19 education'*.

Stating that the current funding processes were *'too complex'* and had *'too many layers'*, schools minister Nick Gibb said that the new measures will simplify the system by:

- freeing up local authorities to *'focus on their strategic role in 16-19 education'*;
- scrapping the need for local authorities to set up *'sub-regional groups'* and *'regional planning groups'*. The new system will cut back on planning points in the allocations process, including the need for detailed annual statements and plans by YPLA and local authorities, and cut out the requirement on colleges for detailed planning submissions in order to access funding; and
- paying further education colleges, sixth form colleges and other training providers direct from the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA), the change coming in from August.

Ministers added that further simplification would be introduced for the 2011/12 allocations round, with education institutions' annual funding shares for 16 to 19 being based on the previous year's student numbers to *'ensure funding follows the student'* and ending the need for *'drawn-out planning involving lengthy local negotiations'*. It was also announced that institutions will be *'free'* to decide on their curriculum, responding to the needs of students and employers.

Nick Gibb said *'These measures will cut red tape and allow local authorities to focus on their strategic role as champions of young people, taking action where they identify significant issues in terms of gaps in supply or quality, particularly in ensuring access amongst the most vulnerable groups'*.

July 14th – John Hayes speaks at ALP summer conference

Speaking at the Association of Learning Providers' (ALP) summer conference, John Hayes, minister of state for further education, skills and lifelong learning, described ALP as *'the voice of learning in the workplace'*. The minister stressed the *'potentially incredibly great'* role of colleges and training organisations in the transformation of local economies particularly in close cooperation with local enterprise partnerships. *'I would like you to develop effective networks that will enable you to offer your local enterprise partnership a coordinated view of the economic priorities for the area, and to agree how you can help them to respond to those priorities'*.

The minister invited ALP to comment on the interchange across formal and informal learning and in particular what public funding for non-Apprenticeship workplace training might look like after Train to Gain *'I would welcome more thoughts on this subject, and on how to encourage progression and interchange between the different styles of formal and informal learning... And that is something for which I'll be asking sooner rather than later'*.

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John Hayes also called for the expansion of apprenticeships at Level 3 stating that those who gain an Apprenticeship at Level 3 are likely to receive a salary, on average, nearly a fifth higher again than those qualified up to Level 2. The minister also made the following announcements:

- Key Skills in Apprenticeship Frameworks will be extended until March next year to allow providers the choice of offering either Functional Skills or Key Skills in the interim. This is a temporary measure to allow more flexibility for providers and more time for collaboration on the right form of implementation. The minister did, however, encourage those who are ready to deliver Functional Skills from September 2010 to go ahead and do so. John Hayes said *'I know that many providers will be finalising their preparations for delivery of Functional Skills from April 2011. They should still identify and access the support they need to develop their capacity to deliver Functional Skills, with which the Learning and Skills Improvement Service can help'*.
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- Graham Hoyle, through his position as chair of the National Improvement Partnership Board, will be taking forward the UKCES proposal to introduce a course and provider labelling system.
- The Skills Funding Agency has been asked to ensure they take *'swift action'* where they identify any unsatisfactory provision, *'prompt improvement will follow, or public funding will be removed and reinvested in providers who can deliver to the standards learners and employers expect and deserve'*.

July 20th – John Hayes announces review of offender learning

John Hayes, minister for further education and skills, has **announced** a review of learning for offenders in prisons and in the community. The government's review has been designed to complement the autumn consultation announced last month by Justice Secretary Kenneth Clarke, into reforming the justice system.

John Hayes said:

'In this country crime costs us around £60bn a year: a truly staggering figure. And we know that over £9bn of that is the result of reoffending.

'This is clearly wrong and we need to focus on protecting the public from the costs and effects of crime. With effective and relevant courses, ex-offenders will be better able to find work and so be less of a concern to the wider community and more of an asset to the economy.

'But we must also have value for money. The review I am undertaking will look at current courses and where they can be better tailored to social needs. Effective education is, and always will be, key to reform of the justice system.'

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July 20th – Ofsted say targeted support from local authorities and their partners helps vulnerable young people

Ofsted has published ***Supporting young people: an evaluation of recent reforms to youth support services in 11 local areas*** which suggests that targeted support from local authorities and their partners is helping to meet the needs of vulnerable young people, according. However, the report finds that local authorities have made *'limited progress'* in involving voluntary, community and private groups in providing youth services, and that the focus on providing services for 'at risk' young people could undermine the youth activities available to all young people.

The report examines the progress made by local authorities and various youth support services, including youth offending teams, youth services, the Connexions service, voluntary and community sectors, education welfare officers and substance misuse teams to work together for young people.

In the best examples, the report found that local authorities took the lead in shaping youth services, working closely with a range of partners, including those from the voluntary and community sectors. These local authorities worked to engage all young people, including the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in activities such as volunteering, sport, cultural pursuits and youth work. These constructive activities helped young people to develop positive attitudes and equipped them with the skills to contribute to their communities.

July 20th - Balance between cuts and growth must be struck for sustainable economic future – Cable

A plan to *'foster growth and lock in the recovery'* has been published. Business secretary, Vince Cable, argues in his paper, ***A Strategy for Sustainable Growth***, that striking the right balance between making savings to public spending and promoting sustainable growth is crucial, but in bringing spending under control the Government is *'determined'* to create an environment that enables private sector led growth whereby businesses invest with confidence, thereby *'putting the recovery onto a sustainable footing and preparing the economy for the future'*. The paper argues for private sector led growth. The paper will be followed by a number of initiatives from BIS designed to foster and encourage growth and a cross Government White Paper will follow later in the year.

The new plan sets out the three key ways that the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills can contribute:

- promoting free and open markets;
- promoting business and innovation through entrepreneurialism and individual engagement in the economy; and
- smarter public and private investment in the economy including creating a highly-skilled workforce.

This paper comes ahead of a consultation document on skills to be published by skills minister, John Hayes this autumn, which will lay out the government principles for the skills system against the backdrop of reduced spending on skills and will seek views on a way forward. Later this year BIS will also publish a White Paper on a new approach to sub-national growth, which will detail the Government's strategy for supporting economic growth across the country.

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Vince Cable said *'We need to rebalance away from an economy built on debt to a one that is greener and more technologically advanced. Our economy also needs to be prepared for the long term challenges ahead – the switch to lower carbon technologies in particular. This should also build on the UK's historic strength in science and technology. It is also vital that we create opportunities that are spread more across the regions, and through those sectors where the UK is strong and can add real value'*.

July 19th – David Cameron's Big Society speech

In the first of a series of public events on the Big Society, prime minister David Cameron delivered a **speech** to an audience of local community groups, charities and community leaders, setting out how the Big Society will be *'the biggest, most dramatic redistribution of power'* from the state to *'the man and woman on the street'*.

Mr Cameron said that the Big Society is about culture change, where people *'don't always turn to officials, local authorities or central government for answers to the problems they face, but instead feel both free and powerful enough to help themselves and their own communities'*. The prime minister set out the three strands of the Big Society agenda:

- Decentralisation – *'push[ing] power away from central government to local government'* down to communities, neighbourhoods and individuals;
- Transparency – giving people information; and
- Finance – the prime minister announced that *'every penny'* of dormant bank and building society account money allocated to the Bank of England will fund the Big Society Bank.

Attending the event were representatives from the four *'vanguard communities'* which the government will help to establish a Big Society: Eden Valley in Cumbria, Windsor and Maidenhead, the London Borough of Sutton and Liverpool.

July 20th – NAO assesses progress with VFM savings and lessons for cost reduction programmes

The National Audit Office has **reported** on how much the Treasury's Value for Money savings programme has improved value for money across government. The programme aims to achieve government-wide annual savings of £35 billion from 2008-09 to 2010-11.

The report concludes that the Treasury's design addressed some weaknesses in earlier savings plans, and departments have made some progress in their management of their programmes compared with previous spending periods. Nevertheless, departments' plans did not contain sufficient contingency and it is unlikely that departments will achieve the government-wide target of £35 billion of annual savings, which fully meet the Comprehensive Spending Review criteria, in 2010-11.

To date the NAO has reviewed reported savings amounting to some £2.8 billion from five major departments which are to deliver around 40 per cent of the government-wide total. The NAO has concluded that 38 per cent fairly represented sustainable savings (green); 44 per cent may

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represent savings but with some uncertainty (amber); and 18 per cent do not represent, or significantly overstate, savings (red).

July 8th – Audit Commission publishes NEETs report

The Audit Commission has published **against the odds** a report which looks at the financial, personal and social cost of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). The study has found that a new approach can make scarce resources '*work harder for those at greatest risk*'.

The report summary document gives an overview of the main findings from the research, complete with a series of questions to help commissioners and members of 14-19 partnerships, children's trusts and local strategic partnerships explore the local context for young people who are NEET and how to work more effectively to help them.

The report includes a downloadable scrutiny guide for members of local authority scrutiny committees and the officers who support them it provides a framework for a scrutiny review of action taken to reduce the number of NEET teenagers; analysis which quantifies the relationship between the characteristics of young people and their risk of being NEET for six months or more; and graphs to benchmark a council's performance for young people most at risk of being NEET.

The report makes a number of recommendations, including that:

- councils and their local partners should use the local economic assessment to strengthen links between economic development, regeneration and Connexions services in increasing employment and apprenticeship opportunities for young people;
- maintained schools and academies should work closely with Connexions to reduce duplication and to support pupils' transitions to further education, employment or training at age 16; and
- government should review the three-way split in government responsibilities for 16-19 work and learning issues and review the performance measures linked to funding to ensure a focus on progression and outcomes appropriate for all learners.

July 14th – Ofsted report on outstanding providers of work-based learning

Ofsted has published **Twelve outstanding providers of work-based learning** which presents some of the common factors that have led to high performance in the work of 12 providers of work-based learning. It outlines the key challenges they faced on the journey to becoming outstanding and explains the ways in which they are seeking to sustain excellence. It includes profiles of the providers', leaders' and managers' views of the reasons for their success.

The characteristics of an outstanding provider identified in the report include:

- Matching learners to the right programmes;
- Knowing the market and aligning provision to the needs of employers; and
- Delivering a coherent programme of learning rooted in current working practice.

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May 10th – LSN publishes research calling for year out option at 14

LSN's (Learning and Skills Network) think tank, the Centre for Innovation in Learning, has published ***Changing the NEET mindset - achieving more effective transitions between education and work***. The report examines why young people become disengaged, looks at international policy comparisons, and examines what can be done to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). The report calls for a shift in policy from a focus on tackling existing NEETs, to measures which prevent young people from becoming NEET and argues that the implementation of Diplomas should not '*crowd out existing well-established and respected vocational qualifications*'.

July 19th – The Work Programme consultation

The Department for Work and Pensions has launched a **discussion forum** seeking views on a number of themes for reform of the welfare to work system and the implementation of The Work Programme. The first theme is inviting comments on capital raising and payment models and is available for comment until 30 July 2010. The second theme, inviting comments on efficiencies, customers and implementation will be available for comments from 2 August 2010 to the 13 August 2010.

The consultation asks:

- *Capital raising*: will delivering a programme with a heavily outcome based approach cause difficulties in raising working capital? Would this cause other challenges or finance risk for providers?
- *Payment models*: What challenges do the following cause and how can DWP support providers to overcome these?
 - payment exclusively or heavily based on delivering results – not just placing people in work, but keeping them there; and
 - payment made after results have been delivered.

July 12th – ALP responds to Minister's request for ideas

In response to skills minister, John Hayes', challenge to ALP to tell the department what should be done to '*maintain high quality performance within the FE system during times of financial restrictions*', ALP has sent the minister a **document** outlining six key points to be considered for '*driving up quality whilst reducing unnecessary costs in FE*'. The six points highlighted are as follows:

- a demand-led system, operating via a fully 'open market' provider infrastructure;
- a register of preferred suppliers from the public, private and third sector;
- higher rates of outcome payments and reduced on-programme payments;
- retain appropriate inspection;
- better use of e-learning and other 21st century IT solutions; and
- a single, professional procurement agency.

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July 15th – 157 group publishes strategic plan

The 157 group has published its first **strategic plan**. The plan includes five aims for 2010-12, these are to:

- ensure that 157 Group members exercise powerful influence and, as thought leaders, impact on critical policy priorities;
- raise the national reputation of further education colleges and respect for the work they do;
- lead self-improvement and capacity building in colleges and simplification of the whole sector, within a sector-led and sector-owned future;
- achieve significant additional efficiencies across the 157 Group and the sector, whilst retaining value for money and generating effective, high-quality provision for learners; and
- position the 157 Group and the FE and skills sector centre-stage in the strategy and delivery of raising employment and returning the British economy to strong and sustainable growth, through our ability to respond to businesses and get people into jobs.

July 13th – Race online 2012 campaign launched

Prime minister David Cameron has given his support to the Race Online 2012 campaign as it published its annual report. The campaign, which has been set up by the Government's Digital Champion Martha Lane Fox, encourages public, private and charitable organisations to sign up to help some of the 10 million adults in the UK who have never used the internet to get online. Race online have published a '**Manifesto for a Networked Nation**'. The report recommends potential steps that both the Government and the commercial sector could make to get everyone in the UK online.

David Cameron said *'In the internet age, we need to make sure that people aren't being left behind as more and more services and businesses move online. But this issue isn't just about fairness - as Martha's work shows, promoting digital inclusion is essential for a dynamic modern economy and can help to make government more efficient and effective'*.

July 19th – Co-op offers 2,000 apprenticeships

The Co-op group has announced that it will take on **2,000 apprentices** in the next two years after consulting its members on campaigns and on which charities it should support. *'The plight of the young'* was highlighted as a challenge equal to world poverty and climate change.

The company will invest £9m in an Apprenticeship Academy as part of a £16m package of support for young people, aiming to *'reverse the negative image and treatment of those aged 25 and under and support their... ambitions'*. Apprenticeships will be offered across its businesses, ranging from food, financial services, pharmacies and funerals to travel, and offer nationally recognised qualifications.

This Inspiring Young People campaign is aimed at improving the image and self-worth of those under 25. The Co-op will also invest £1m to support the expansion of Co-operative Trust schools, a type of academy, bringing the total number to 200 nationally.

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July 19th – Business Secretary encourages a new generation of apprentices to join Aerospace Industry

Whilst attending the Sustainable Aerospace Conference, business secretary Vince Cable has **called** on young people to pursue a career in aerospace. In a speech delivered at the conference, the minister made a commitment to give the industry *‘the skills and research base they need to compete internationally’*. As part of this commitment Vince Cable has agreed to chair regular meetings with aerospace business leaders to focus on strategic issues facing the aerospace sector.

Business secretary Vince Cable said *‘The breadth of expertise in this sector is incredible, but for our industry to maintain its position in the global market, we will need a new generation of inspired workers with the skills and new ideas to push aerospace forwards’*.

July 16th - IfL reminds members to declare CPD by the end of August

The Institute for Learning (IfL) is reminding members of the need to make their annual continuing professional development (CPD) declaration by 31 August 2010. Last year, 98 per cent of IfL members who declared their CPD had exceeded the minimum 30 hours (pro-rata) required.

Members can declare their CPD hours using an online self-declaration form at www.ifl.ac.uk/declare or using the IfL online personal learning space **REfLECT**.

July 16th - David Willetts announces review of the Design Council

David Willetts, minister of state for universities and science and the Design Council chair, Lord Bichard have **announced** a review of the Design Council. Martin Temple, Chairman of the 600 group, will lead the review which will consider the future role and status of the Design Council as the national strategic design body. Martin Temple will present his recommendations to Ministers in September 2010.

Minister of state for universities and science David Willetts said *‘The UK is a world leader in design and the Design Council has played an important role in promoting the value of design to the economy. With the forthcoming Spending Review it is right that we take this opportunity to assess the role of the Design Council and consider options for the future’*.

Design Council chairman Lord Bichard said *‘I believe design will play a key role in driving renewal of economic growth and efficient, customer focussed public services. It is a rising force on political agendas around the world, in Europe, the US and most notably the Far East, where there is significant national investment in building support infrastructure and growing design capability. The economic importance of design in the UK is not in question, nor is there doubt about the existence of market failures and the need for support; it is a question of how this support is best delivered’*.

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14-19 and Schools

July 13th – Michael Gove invites the public to hold the DfE to account

Structural Reform Plans (SRP) are the coalition government's key tool for making departments accountable for the implementation of the reforms set out in the Coalition Agreement. The aim is that they '*hand power to the public*' with every department publishing a plan that sets '*clear priorities and measureable milestones*'.

The SRP will be just one of the plans published by all major departments across Whitehall. They are designed to turn government on its head, '*taking power away from Whitehall and putting it into the hands of people and communities*'. Once these reforms are in place, the public will have '*the power*' to improve our country and our public services, through the mechanisms of '*local democratic accountability, competition, choice and social action*'.

The **Department for Education SRP** for the schools system sets out the departmental priorities for an overall approach to reform which are greater autonomy for schools; improved parental choice; more support for the poorest; and whole school improvement. This includes:

- '*Driving change with a new generation of independently-run state schools*' by:
 - Allowing all schools to apply for Academy status;
 - Enabling the takeover by an experienced education provider of underperforming schools; and
 - Making it easier for new providers to open new Schools.
- '*Introducing a new pupil premium for disadvantaged pupils with significant funding from outside schools' budgets to tackle disadvantage and raise standards* by
 - Designing a pupil premium allocation mechanism
- '*Ensuring all schools are freed of bureaucracy so that they can focus on raising standards* through:
 - establishing an action plan and priority areas
 - an implementation phase
 - setting out ongoing arrangements

July 8th – DfE announces next steps on special educational needs and disabilities

Children's minister, Sarah Teather, has **announced** that a Green Paper on children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and disabilities will be launched in the autumn to ensure that '*the most vulnerable children get the best quality of support and care*'. Stating that '*the system needs to be far more transparent*' the minister said that parents need more choice and to be involved in the decision-making process. The Green Paper will also look at how to manage the transition beyond school so that young people over 16 can get the support they need. Sarah Teather also said that she will be looking at the results of the Ofsted review of SEN expected later this summer, in

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addition to the many reviews of SEN policy in recent years, and listening to the views of parents, teachers and organisations with an interest in this area.

Speaking at an Every Disabled Child Matters event Sarah Teather, children's minister, said *'We want to make sure that the most vulnerable children get the best quality of support and care. Children with special educational needs and disabilities should have the same opportunities as their peers. The system needs to be more family friendly so that parents don't feel they have to battle to get the support their child needs'*.

July 7th – Teachers given more power to 'maintain good behaviour'

Nick Gibb, minister for schools, has **announced** that as a means of *'putting headteachers and teachers back in control of the classroom by stripping away bureaucracy'* the government will:

- end the rule requiring schools to give 24 hours written notice for detentions;
- allow heads and school staff to search pupils for mobile phones, pornography and cigarettes;
- strengthen guidance and legislation if necessary surrounding use of force in the classroom; and
- give anonymity to teachers accused by pupils and take other measures to protect against false accusations.

Nick Gibb said *'All pupils should show respect and courtesy towards teachers, towards other staff and towards each other. Headteachers help to create that culture of respect by supporting their staff's authority to discipline pupils. The role of the government is to give schools the freedom and support they need to provide a safe and structured environment in which teachers can teach and children can learn'*.

July 13th – Michael Gove moves to cap headteachers' pay

Michael Gove has **written** to the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) saying that he would like to limit leadership group remuneration so that discretions that exist to pay above the maximum of the leadership range 'should be contained within an over-riding limit that would not exceed the prime minister's salary. The minister is consulting with the STRB on the basis that this would apply to salary decisions made on or after 1 September 2010.

Higher Education

July 15th – Vince Cable speaks on higher education

Vince Cable, secretary of state for BIS, has given a **speech** which set out his views on the university and wider HE sector and his aspirations for higher education.

The secretary of state said that one of the biggest policy challenges for the higher education system is information and making sure that students have *'easily accessible and intelligible data on*

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the performance of the different university departments'. The minister's speech outlined the following ideas:

- *Student financing of HE* – it will be necessary to develop a model of funding in HE that combines less public support and more private investment from those who benefit most from it. He also signalled an examination of the feasibility of changing the system of financing student tuition so that the repayment mechanism is variable graduate contributions tied to earnings.
- *Marketisation of provision* – Through more and better choice for students and better value for money through new and potentially lower cost approaches to teaching. This could include two year intensive HE courses, more part-time courses and courses delivered in the work-place, modular programmes, more distance learning, greater employer-input into HE courses and an expansion of providers with less protection for *'inefficient institutions'*.
- *Fairer funding across HE and FE* – *'For many... there may be more to be gained from vocational education in FE... Apprenticeships rather than degree courses?'*... *'At the very least government should remove any bias in funding against these activities. At present there is a heavy bias towards traditional, full time, three year degrees, for 18 year olds, rather than part time or adult or FE learning'*. The minister went on to say that by breaking down the value distinction between the social and economic missions of research and teaching institutions *'we can also finally ditch the anachronistic distinctions of status and value between further and higher education'*.
- *50 per cent HE participation target* – This input measure does not provide information about quality and relevance of achievement or impact. Vince Cable stated that the government *'should not be setting targets, or ceilings'*.
- *Fairness* – A desire for universities to forge closer links with schools in deprived areas and academies *'to enlighten young people from disadvantaged backgrounds... We in government must respect universities independence and they, in turn must acknowledge the barriers to accesses.*

July 9th – Four years of the National Student Survey show increasing satisfaction

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has **reported** on the findings and trends of the annual National Student Survey (NSS), from 2006 to 2009.

Over the four years analysed, results for both full-time and part-time students show an increase in levels of satisfaction for each of the seven areas covered by the survey.

The report gives the following overall findings for 2009:

- respondents studying at further education colleges or on part-time courses showed significantly different levels of satisfaction to other students. Chiefly, they were more satisfied with assessment and feedback, and less satisfied with learning resources;
- men were more satisfied than women in the areas of academic support and learning resources; but women were more satisfied than men about the teaching and learning they received;

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- respondents aged under 21 were more satisfied than their older counterparts in many areas of the survey – academic support, organisation and management, learning resources and overall satisfaction with the course quality;
- on the whole, disabled respondents were less satisfied than non-disabled respondents; and
- NHS-funded students were less satisfied than others with organisation and management, but more satisfied with their personal development.

Heather Fry, HEFCE's Director of Education and Participation, said '*Despite the higher demands and expectations placed on institutions by students paying variable fees, these results show that over this period graduating students were generally satisfied with their experiences in higher education*'

July 8th – Hefce announces information as a key element in quality assurance overhaul

The quality of **information** about higher education is to be improved in changes being made to strengthen the method for assuring the quality and standards of higher education in England and Northern Ireland.

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is developing a detailed description of how the revised audit method will operate. Changes compared with the current method include:

- greater flexibility so it can respond to issues and concerns as they arise;
- clearer assurance to the public that threshold standards are being maintained;
- clearer, less technical terms to describe judgements; and
- a greater concern for addressing public understanding of quality and standards.

QAA will consult in autumn 2010 on the detail of the institutional audit method to operate from 2011-12 for higher education institutions in England and Northern Ireland. A separate consultation will be launched by HEFCE, Universities UK and GuildHE on the types of information that institutions will be required to provide for prospective students – the aim is that this will be subject to a published judgement in due course.

The moves have been designed to ensure that students in higher education '*continue to receive a high quality learning and teaching experience*' and follow consultation by the four sponsoring bodies: HEFCE, Northern Ireland's Department for Employment and Learning, UniversitiesUK and GuildHE.

Devolved administrations

July 13th – Scottish plans for reducing crime through learning and skills

Plans to reduce crime by improving help for offenders, and those at risk of offending, to meet their learning and skills needs have been included in the ***Scottish Government's response to the Options for Improvement report into Offender Learning***

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The Scottish Prison Service (SPS) will be taking a new approach in the way it addresses the learning and employability needs of 16 and 17-year-olds in custody. HM Young Offenders Institute Polmont now has a dedicated residential hall which has been working to provide all-round, individualised care via a range of integrated services.

The SPS aims to address learning needs in a way that is relevant and interesting to a group that has failed to thrive in a traditional school setting. The aim is to create a learning environment based on the Curriculum for Excellence and Getting It Right for Every Child, which will give the young offenders *'the skills they need to take advantage of future opportunities in life, leisure and work'*.

Skills minister, Keith Brown **said** *'We know that many people going through our courts and in to our prisons have disengaged from society and that this tends to start with disengagement from learning... Intervening at an early stage to address patterns of offending behaviour is a key aim for this government. We must work together to stop young people disengaging from learning and engaging in offender behaviour. We must also work with those already in the justice system to encourage and support them to develop their learning and skills'*.

July 7th – Tender for delivery of work-based learning in Wales launched

The Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) has **launched** a tender process to establish its new network of training providers for three years. This network will deliver work-based learning training provision on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government from August 2011.

Education minister Leighton Andrews has stressed the importance of work based learning in Wales and said *'To strengthen our economy, we must provide the best possible education and training for our post 16 learners, be that in further education or through work-based learning... Across Wales I've seen the benefits of work based learning. Young people who have embraced vocational learning and have succeeded. From modern apprenticeships in engineering for major companies through to hairdressing and customer care vocational qualifications all have been rewarded through work based learning'*.

July 15th – £144.8m investment in school buildings in Wales

Education minister, Leighton Andrews, has **announced** a third funding package of £144.8million in new capital projects for schools across Wales. This package is in addition to a £289.6million programme of investment that been announced over the last 18 months. The capital investment will seek to develop flagship projects for the new 21st Century Schools Programme with innovation in areas such as sustainability, design and investment in ICT.

July 20th - Transforming public services in Wales

Jane Hutt, minister for business and budget, has **announced** the go-ahead for three projects *'to improve the way public services are delivered in Wales'*.

These projects are:

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- an £11million investment to *'transform'* public sector procurement in Wales. The 5 year project *'Transforming Procurement through Home-Grown Talent'* will *'raise procurement skills across the public sector'* for the £4.3 billion spent by the public sector each year. The project has secured the backing of £5.7million from the EU's Convergence European Social Fund;
- the National Health roll-out the xchangewales e-Trading procurement function across the service in Wales, this is expected to generate *'significant'* savings for the NHS; and
- the opening of the next phase of our Invest-to-Save Fund – with a new focus to ensure alignment with the strategic work of the Efficiency and Innovation Board.' An example of such a project is the provision of a mobile ICT working solution for nurses and therapists working in the community designed to bring about improvements in productivity, efficiency, quality and safety of care.

July 15th – Northern Ireland Education and Training Inspectorate says Inspections can be a catalyst for improvement

Chief inspector of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), Stanley Goudie, has noted the potential for inspection *'to lead to improvement in the performance of organisations'* inspected.

The ETI has published a **report** on follow-up inspections carried out during the 2009/10 year. Mr Goudie said *'External evaluation and challenge can highlight issues requiring attention, and when properly addressed, real improvements can be made. During the past year the ETI carried out 99 follow up inspections of organisations in the education, youth and training sectors. We recorded improvements in 82% of instances when compared with the original inspection. No organisations declined in their level of performance'*.

July 7th – Northern Ireland minister hails graduate employment initiative

Employment and learning minister, Sir Reg Empey has **praised** a work placement programme for unemployed graduates. The Department for Employment and Learning's Graduate Internship Programme aims to *'enhance the employability of unemployed graduates'* by providing temporary paid employment. The programme, which is delivered by six local organisations in Belfast and Londonderry, offered interns the opportunity to work in *'challenging and interesting'* jobs within the voluntary and community sectors across Belfast and Londonderry providing 60 unemployed graduates from the 2008/09 cohort with the opportunity to access temporary paid employment, for up to 26 weeks. The Department will commence an evaluation of the programme over the coming weeks.

Sir Reg recognised the work being carried out in local communities through the pilot programme, saying *'The graduates involved have made a valuable contribution to developing projects in local communities through their work placements, whilst at the same time gaining the skills and experience that will be of immeasurable help to them as they seek to move into permanent employment'*.

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Local Government and Public Sector

July 8th – CLG publishes structural reform plan

A new action plan for the *'radical shift of power'* from Whitehall to local councils and communities that will make the Big Society *'part of everyday life'* has been published by communities secretary Eric Pickles.

The **Communities and Local Government's Structural Reform Plan** sets out the department's five priority actions for making localism and the Big Society part of everyday life by:

- decentralising power as far as possible;
- meeting people's housing aspirations;
- putting communities in charge of planning;
- increasing accountability; and
- letting people see how their money is being spent.

July 15th – Institute for Government report on Arms Length Bodies

An independent review of 'arm's length bodies' (ALBs) has found that quangos are operating in a confusing environment that neither government, the public nor ALBs completely understand.

The Institute for Government report **Read Before Burning: Arm's length government for a new administration**, finds that while cuts and efficiencies in ALBs are certain and may well be justified, making decisions about how and if they should operate in future must be taken alongside fundamental reform or risk more confusion about their role and value in the future.

Lack of clarity about what they do, how and to whom they are accountable leads to *'duplication, policy coordination problems and difficulties achieving the right balance between freedom and control of ALB's'*, the report says. This affects the quality of the relationships between government departments and their quangos - the report found examples of both *'micro-management and institutional neglect'*.

The report suggests a complete reorganisation of the way ALBs are classified to bring at least eleven confusing categories down to four. It recommends regular set reviews and more transparency to ensure that their value and purpose are clear so that decisions about their future are based on accurate information.

Executive director of the Institute Lord Bichard said *'We need a sensible, balanced conversation about arm's length bodies and the pros and cons of their distance and independence from executive control.'*

'It is in all our interests to be clear about what their roles and responsibilities are, since ALBs will remain a vital part of the state. The current discourse has been characterised by more heat than light, this report aims to change that and help ensure that the right decisions are made about their future.'

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July 9th – Local government minister announces greater freedoms for councils

Laws passed in 2007 mean that all councils have to choose whether to have a locally elected mayor or a council leader, but are required to consult their residents before any changes can be made. Local government minister, Grant Shapps has **pledged** to scrap *‘the need for councils to change how they are run’* so they will no longer have to go through this process.

Until then, the Minister has written to all district councils - the only authorities left to make this decision - making it clear they have the freedom to take a light touch approach to the consultations, at minimal cost to council taxpayers. Councils could, for example, use a newspaper article, press release or their websites, to get local views.

Grant Shapps said *‘Of course it is important that local people have a say over how their council is run. But as council taxpayers they will not expect their councils to spend a fortune trying to ask for their opinions... That’s why I want little public money spent on this, when it can be better used on improving the local services residents rely on - especially when we’re all working to get the country out of this financial mess’*.

July 7th – Health Secretary sets out future of public health

The Department of Health has published a White Paper ***Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS*** the paper details *‘how power will be devolved from Whitehall to patients and professionals’*:

- *Professionals will be free to focus on improving health outcomes so that these are amongst the best in the world. Improving the quality of care will become the main purpose of the NHS;*
- *Patients will get more choice and control, backed by an information revolution, so that services are more responsive to patients and designed around them, rather than patients having to fit around services. The principle will be ‘no decisions about me without me’;*
- *Groups of GPs will be given freedom and responsibility for commissioning care for their local communities. Providers of services will have new freedoms and they will be more accountable; and*
- *There will be greater competition in the NHS and greater cooperation. Services will be more joined up, supported by a new role for Local Authorities to support integration across health and social care.*

It is anticipated that these changes will result in the NHS becoming streamlined *‘with fewer layers of bureaucracy’*. Strategic Health Authorities and Primary Care Trusts will be phased out. Management costs will be reduced so that *‘as much resource as possible supports frontline services’*.

In his first **speech** on Public Health, health secretary Andrew Lansley set out his vision for a new Public Health Service that will *‘release all of society to work together to get healthy and live longer’*. The health secretary announced a **framework** for a new public health service:

- *establishing a national strategy to ‘secure a professional, unified and efficient approach to achieve measurable improvements in public health and effective protection from public health threats’* this includes the establishment of a Cabinet Sub-Committee on Public Health and a new ring-fenced public health budget;

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- renewed local leadership to *‘empower local communities to identify their own needs and provide rigorous solutions that work for their specific circumstances’* and a new Health Premium; and
- individual engagement and responsibility *‘to create the right environment, to incentivise healthy options and build social momentum behind behaviour change’*.

In his speech, the health secretary said:

‘We want to free the system up – to create a framework which empowers people to make the changes that will really make a difference to the nation’s lives. Working with communities and schools to develop young people’s confidence and self-esteem. Empowering them to take better decisions when young, so that they enjoy greater health and well-being through life.

‘This is why we need genuinely local strategies, based in neighbourhoods and schools. This is why we need to throw off the old ways and start seeing people and families as a whole, using local voluntary and charitable organisations more, cutting across boundaries, encouraging innovation, utilising the power of technology, joining up professions and budgets and putting the people – not the system – at the heart of the strategy. Making us all accountable for results, not for processes... We will not be dictating the ‘how’ when it comes to achieving better public health outcomes. But we will be very clear about the ‘what’ – what we want to measure and achieve’

July 9th – New therapy brings results for troubled young people

Re-offending in *‘troubled and aggressive’* young people can be *‘significantly cut’* using a new mental health approach known as Multisystemic Therapy according to initial **findings** of the first UK evaluation pilot.

Multisystemic Therapy revolves around improving parenting capacity, increasing young people’s engagement with education and training, reducing their offending behaviour, and tackling underlying health or mental health problems, including substance misuse. It is used with children and young people aged 11-17 years and their families, where young people are at risk of out of home placement in either care or custody, due to *‘delinquent and aggressive behaviour, and anti-social attitudes’*.

Researchers found in families with multiple problems that the use of Multisystemic Therapy reduced the risk of re-offending, particularly among boys. The research team found that lower re-offending behaviour was evident two years down the line compared to existing service approaches, and can be cost effective, because young people are kept out of custody or local authority care, and parents are encouraged to use the voluntary sector and local supports instead.

The approach, approved by NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence) has been trialled across 10 sites in England, having been successful in the USA and is supported jointly by the Department for Education, the Youth Justice Board and Department of Health.

Care Services Minister Paul Burstow said *‘The research shows the key role mental health staff and the voluntary sector can play in work with young people and their families’*.

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July 7th – CLG invites the public to help ‘cut the red tape’

Communities secretary Eric Pickles has *unveiled ‘a radical plan to banish nonsense red tape and repeal unnecessary laws’*. Eric Pickles has invited council workers and sector experts to suggest what Department for Communities and Local Government sponsored statutory guidance, secondary legislation and regulation should be removed. Any ideas can be sent to: cutredtape@communities.gsi.gov.uk.

Eric Pickles said *‘Too much power has been sucked out of communities into Westminster eroding trust in politics, and sapping responsibility and initiative with stifling bureaucracy’*.

July 15th – Government launches a consultation on removing the requirement to annuitise by age 75

Financial secretary to the Treasury, Mark Hoban MP, has announced the start of an eight-week **consultation** on removing the effective requirement to annuitise by age 75, following the announcement in the June Budget that these rules will end from April 2011. It is anticipated that the reforms will give individuals greater flexibility when choosing their retirement options, with more choice over how they can provide a retirement income for themselves. The consultation closes on the 10 September 2010. Draft legislation for the reforms will be published in the autumn, with the final measures to apply from April 2011.

Mark Hoban said *‘This government is committed to fostering a new culture of saving and responsibility in the UK. To encourage people to take greater responsibility for their financial future, including in retirement, we need to give people greater flexibility over how they use the savings they have accumulated. This consultation puts forward reforms that will replace outdated and overly complex pensions tax rules with a new system that gives individuals greater freedom and choice.’*

Equality and Diversity

July 19th – New guide to UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities

A new **guide** to the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons (UNCPRD) has been published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

The Commission's guide is designed to help disabled people to *‘know what their rights are and how to use them’*. The Convention, which was signed by the UK government last year, sets out disabled peoples basic rights in one place. It covers health, education, employment, access to justice, personal security, independent living and access to information.

The UN convention also describes what the government has agreed to do to make these rights real. It has until next July to report back to the UN on its progress on this agreement. The Commission's guide also sets out how organisations can report to the UN.

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Mike Smith, chair of the Commission's Disability Committee, said *'The Convention is not just a paper "declaration" without any teeth. It requires government to take action to remove barriers and give disabled people real freedom, dignity and equality. We can use it in lots of different ways to make sure our rights are respected and to get a better deal.'*

'Our role is to ensure Britain makes rapid progress towards making the Convention rights a reality for disabled people. You and your organisation can get involved in telling people about these rights. The more people who know what the Convention says, the more likely it is that disabled people will be treated fairly.'

Contact the LSIS policy team

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