

# LSIS Policy Update

30<sup>th</sup> July – 18<sup>th</sup> August 2010



## Further Education, Skills and the Economy

### August 10<sup>th</sup> – Developing a pre-Apprenticeship programme

At the recent ALP conference, minister for apprenticeships, John Hayes, announced the development of a pre-Apprenticeship 'programme' and asked for ALP's input in designing it. To begin the discussion, ALP chief executive, Graham Hoyle, has produced a **concept paper** for discussion within ALP and beyond.

The paper suggests that government support for vocational training should be limited only to the full range of Apprenticeship programmes at levels 2, 3 and higher, and pre-Apprenticeship offerings that directly contribute to a full Apprenticeship framework. Graham Hoyle also argues that *'too much vocational training, however well intentioned but not linked to Apprenticeship frameworks, have proved to be wasteful of government monies and demoralising to learners as they have not always proved acceptable to employers as they have not always proved acceptable to employers'*. The paper argues that all government funding should underpin the need for learners to progress onto a full employed Apprenticeship and that pre-Apprenticeships should not be a closely defined programme, but rather a flexible programme that enables *'all learners'* to develop the elements of a full Apprenticeship that do not need to be undertaken in or at work. ALP is inviting comments on this paper to formulate an agreed ALP position to be submitted to [enquiries@learningproviders.org](mailto:enquiries@learningproviders.org).

### August 11<sup>th</sup> – Consultation on the future of the right to request time to train policy

BIS has launched a **consultation** seeking views about the future of the 'right to request time to train' legislation and whether the right should be repealed or retained for large organisations, or whether it should be extended to small and medium sized organisations as planned.

The legal right to allow workers in businesses with more than 250 employees, to request time to take up relevant training came into effect from 6 April this year. The government has announced a review of all regulations in a bid to reduce burdens on business. This consultation aims to gather opinions on the right to request time to train and will feed in to the review.

This consultation will be shorter than the normal 12 weeks as the department previously consulted on the implementation of the right to request time to train in 2008. It will close on 15 September to allow all representations to be made before the 17 September deadline for submissions to the next meeting of the Reducing Regulation Committee.

### August 10<sup>th</sup> – LDA publishes employment projections across sectors and occupations in London

The London Development Agency has published **Destinations 2020**, a report which sets out the capital's employment and skills needs over the next ten years.

The report projects that London will create more than half a million new jobs over the next decade with more than one half of these jobs likely to require degree-level skills. The report also suggests

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that the period of a modest reduction in employment followed by a number of years of stagnant employment levels will be much shorter in London than for the UK as a whole. This is partly due to London's lesser dependence on the public sector, which means that public sector job cuts will have a smaller relative impact in the capital than in other regions, and private sector employment growth is more likely to be able to offset public sector job losses.

Key findings of the report include:

- despite a tough graduate jobs market, one half of London's new jobs over the next decade will need degree-level skills, some 110,000 graduates and postgraduates each year. London is forecast to return to its 2008 employment peak by 2013 – two years ahead of the UK as a whole;
- London's employment growth in the next decade will be dominated by expansion of the business service sector which is estimated to grow by 400,000 jobs - three quarters of London's overall employment growth;
- employment growth will be dominated by high skilled occupations, such as managerial and professional (260,000) and professional and technical jobs (100,000);
- London's labour market will continue to be 'hollowed' out, with growth in high and low skill occupations, but a reduction in intermediate occupations such as administrative and secretarial and skilled trades;
- even in sectors where employment is falling overall, there will be significant labour demand as people move jobs or retire and need to be replaced. This so-called 'replacement demand' will be four times as high as expansion demand as sectors grow; and
- intermediate qualifications will make up almost one quarter of the skills required with other qualifications (14%) and low or no qualifications (16%) making up the remaining requirement.

## August 9<sup>th</sup> – NIACE produces paper on employer training tax relief

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) has published **Tax Relief for Training** submitted for the Spending Review which states that policy on tax relief for training could be more equitable; is not yet delivering best value to government; and needs to be scrutinised closely as part of the Spending Review.

The paper reports the estimate that the Treasury forgoes £3.7 billion of income each year by allowing Corporation Tax Relief and PAYE Tax Relief (for self-employed business people) on employer spending on training and states that no conditions are attached to the granting of tax relief and that employers do not have to account for how it is spent, on what and upon whom.

NIACE suggests that this needs to be reconsidered as tax relief is effectively a public contribution to private employer training expenditure and if £3.7 billion of revenue is foregone by the public purse, it would not be unreasonable for the onus should be on employers to demonstrate it is being spent to good effect and is not simply exploited as a loophole by accountants. The paper does not argue that money spent by employers is not well-spent, but rather that without transparent reporting, it is not possible to know whether it might be better spent and whether relief should not be contingent on some conditions. The remainder of the paper adapts material published as part of the 2009 Independent **Inquiry** into the Future of Lifelong Learning to evidence the case.

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## August 17<sup>th</sup> – LLUK statement on new learning and development qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Current NVQs in learning and development will not be available beyond March 2011. Lifelong Learning UK is working with partners across all sectors to propose new qualifications for the learning and development workforce. The proposed qualifications will be taken to **consultation** in England, Wales and Northern Ireland through an online questionnaire and self facilitated groups, which will open on Monday 23 August and close on Friday 10 September.

LLUK will then revise the proposal in light of the consultation feedback, and publish awarding organisation guidance in September 2010. Awarding organisations can then develop and accredit qualifications, it is hoped that any new qualifications developed will be available early in 2011.

## 14-19 and Schools

### August 4<sup>th</sup> – Further academies legislation

During the passage of the Academies Act, ministers made **commitments** to incorporate particular provisions within the funding agreement and Articles of Association and these have now been incorporated. They are:

- a requirement for at least two parent governors on the academy's governing body;
- a requirement to promote community cohesion;
- a requirement to have a designated teacher with responsibility for looked-after children; and
- a power for the Secretary of State to direct an academy to comply with any obligations contained within Annex C to the funding agreement, which covers SEN.

The revised funding agreement and Articles of Association are available to download from the **supporting documents page**, along with several other updated supporting documents.

### August 6<sup>th</sup> – BSF sample projects get go-ahead and further confirmation given to academies

Education secretary, Michael Gove, has **announced** the go-ahead for a series of new school projects. 33 local authority 'sample' school projects in 14 council regions will now proceed in Barking and Dagenham, Blackpool, Camden, Derby City, Ealing, Halton, Hartlepool, Hertfordshire, Lambeth, Oldham, Poole, Somerset, St Helens and Wandsworth.

Ministers have been working with academy sponsors with the intention that another 119 academies will receive the go-ahead for their capital projects. The 44 academies at the most advanced stage in their capital planning with Partnerships for Schools will receive capital now. Capital allocations for the remaining 75 will be decided in the Spending Review.

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To *'ensure best value for money'* in school projects, the government has begun working with major companies from the construction industry to help reduce building costs, which, alongside the independent capital review will provide a *'robust, efficient and fair'* system for future school building projects.

The government has indicated that the end of the Building Schools for the Future programme does not signal the end of new school buildings. BSF accounted for a third of funding on education capital investments and the government has stated a commitment to ensuring there is a *'fairer, more effective and more efficient'* system for allocating capital money to schools, to best meet the need of the schools system. Last month the government announced the creation of a capital review led by Sebastian James, group operations director of DSG International plc, to look at all areas of the department's capital spending.

## August 6<sup>th</sup> – Government welcomes the Premier League's comments on free schools

The chief executive of the Premier League, Richard Scudamore, has **said** that the Premier League is looking at Michael Gove's education reforms and could envisage the day when there is a Premier League school.

Mr Scudamore commented *'I can envisage the day when there is a Premier League school or perhaps a sports school in London where a number of sports get together and have a school for elite athletes, whether it be swimmers, runners, rugby players or footballers. We are working with our clubs and we are taking a look at Michael Gove's education reforms... If you have an elite athlete why not work on their education? We need coaching, schools and schooling to be very closely embedded for football'*.

In response to Mr Scudamore's comments on the government's Free Schools policy a spokesperson for the Department for Education said *'we want every child to have a premier league education and would be very happy to talk to the Premier League about setting up schools in communities across the country, where there is a local need'*. Football clubs are already linked to a number of Academies across England. For example Watford Football Club is linked to the Harefield Academy. The sponsors are all former directors of Watford Football Club and the Academy is also home to the Watford Football Club academy for young players. Bristol City Football Club is linked to The City Academy, Bristol, which specialises in sport and is sponsored by John Laycock, former chairman of Bristol City Football Club. The City Academy, Bristol is also the home of Bristol City Football Club.

Reading Football Club is linked to The John Madejski Academy Reading. The lead sponsor is John Madejski, chairman of Reading Football Club.

## August 18<sup>th</sup> – CBI calls for action on state school science education

The CBI has **warned** that the shortage of science graduates must be addressed by the state education sector, where insufficient numbers are studying science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects. These subjects tend to lead to better job prospects and higher salaries, and *'are vital to the UK's economic prospects'*.

In order to help improve the uptake and teaching of science in schools the CBI's recommendations include:

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- An automatic opt-in to triple science GCSE for the 40% of young people who achieve Level 6 at age 14. These students are more than twice as likely to progress to an A-level science subject if they have taken triple science GCSE (45% compared to 19%, DCSF).
- The recruitment and retention of more specialist science teachers – almost one in four (23.5%) secondary schools in England does not have a specialist physics teacher (Centre for Education and Employment Research).
- High quality, impartial careers advice which signposts areas where there is growing employer demand – such as STEM. Research shows that 43% of 16 to 18-year-olds either receive poor advice or do not receive any advice at all from a careers service and the majority (55%) of graduates would have definitely or potentially have chosen a different course if they had received more or better careers advice (CBI/YouGov).

Susan Anderson, CBI director for education and skills, said *'Unless the numbers taking science and maths subjects at school and university rise, Britain faces a skills shortage which will weaken our economy'*.

## Higher Education

### 3<sup>rd</sup> August – HEFCE publishes research on meeting the information needs of users of public information about higher education

HEFCE has **published** two studies on how provision and use of information about higher education might be improved to enable potential students to make more informed choices about what and where to study.

*Understanding the information needs of users of public information about higher education* considers what information potential students want and need. The study also reviews the best ways of delivering the information, who should provide it, and how the information would support potential students in deciding where to study.

The research identifies the specific pieces of information that prospective and current students think are important: top among these are how satisfied other students have been with the course, what proportion of graduates from that course have progressed into employment, and course costs. It found that when students tried to find these facts they generally could, but that only a minority tried to do so. The report recommends that the way that potential students are made aware of information therefore needs to change, and the profile of the information should be raised, particularly at schools and colleges.

The second paper *Enhancing and Developing the National Student Survey* considers how the National Student Survey (NSS) can be enhanced, including additional purposes for which the NSS should be used. The researchers conclude that the NSS should continue to support the purposes of providing information to assist student choice and of contributing to quality assurance and enhancement. They make suggestions for using the survey more effectively but recommend that the core survey should not be lengthened.

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## August 18<sup>th</sup> – NSS 2010 shows continued high levels of satisfaction among higher education undergraduate students

The overall **satisfaction rate** for students studying at all types of higher education institution (HEI) and at further education colleges (FECs) in England remains high, with 82 per cent saying they are satisfied with their course in this year's National Student Survey (NSS)<sup>1</sup>. This year around 252,000 students responded to the survey which is 30,000 more than last year, and overall response rate of 63.1 per cent. A total of 152 HEIs and 113 FECs from across the UK took part in the survey

The data is available on the **Unistats web-site** which also gives data on all students in the survey and covers higher education students in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and 12 Scottish universities, and students on higher education courses at FECs. Responses from some students on initial teacher training courses and NHS-funded courses are also available.

## Devolved Administrations

### August 13<sup>th</sup> – The Scottish Survey of Adult Literacies 2009 published

**The Scottish Survey of Adult Literacies (SSAL) 2009** has shown that the majority, 73.3 per cent of Scots have an internationally recognised level of skill needed in a contemporary society while 3.6 per cent have 'very poor' literacy skills.

The results will inform the Scottish government's Literacy Action Plan, due for publication in the autumn, which will outline the next steps to further raise standards of literacy from early years through to adult learning.

The Scottish government has allocated £3.35 million to improve skills for the adult literacies and Community Learning and Development (CLD) workforce between 2009-11

Cabinet secretary for education and lifelong learning Michael Russell said *'as encouraging as the findings are, we will not be complacent on this issue. There are a small number of people facing serious challenges with literacy in their daily lives and the Scottish government is working to address the issue of social and economic exclusion faced by adults with low literacy skills through the upcoming Literacy Action Plan'*.

### August 6<sup>th</sup> – New methodology for monitoring achievement in Scottish schools

As part of a package to *'cut down on bureaucracy'*, a new **survey** designed to monitor pupil achievement in primary and early secondary school will replace the Scottish Survey of Achievement. It will assess pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy in alternate years to give a *'comprehensive overview'* of achievements in these two key areas of the Curriculum for Excellence.

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<sup>1</sup> 90% of students are fairly, very or extremely satisfied with quality of teaching in Colleges  
[http://www.aoc.co.uk/en/about\\_colleges/facts\\_and\\_figures/](http://www.aoc.co.uk/en/about_colleges/facts_and_figures/)

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In addition, whilst the Scottish government will continue to participate in the OECD's PISA (Programme for International School Assessment) international education survey, Scotland will come into line with the other devolved administrations by ceasing to participate in the PIRLS (*Progress in International Reading Literacy Study*) and TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) surveys.

The Scottish government will also consult later this year on further proposals to focus on a more concentrated and coherent range of key publications and topics in school statistics.

## August 5<sup>th</sup> – New record pass rate for Scottish Higher students

A new record pass rate for Highers, at 74.6 per cent, has been **achieved** by Scottish students this year whilst the record of achievement in Standard Grades has been maintained.

More than 160,000 young people who sat Standard Grades, Highers and other qualifications this school year received their results in the post on August 5. Around 35,000 students also signed up for the MySQA service and received their results via text message or e-mail a day earlier.

## August 13<sup>th</sup> – Consultation begins on changes to Welsh school reorganisation regulations

Welsh ministers have published a **consultation** detailing proposals to reduce the time taken on the legal process for school reorganisations. Currently, objections to school plans can be submitted to local authorities over a two month period. Authorities then have one month to submit these objections to Welsh Ministers to determine whether proposals are approved or rejected. The consultation seeks views on reducing these time frames to one calendar month and two weeks respectively.

Education minister, Leighton Andrews, said *'The current system adds to uncertainty for parents and pupils. Parents and Local Authorities tell me that they want more certainty, at an earlier stage, in order to plan for the future of pupils... This consultation will ensure that all those with an interest, including Local Authorities and parents, will have an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes. I would hope that revised regulations will be in force by early 2011'*.

The closing date for the consultation is 5<sup>th</sup> November 2010.

## August 4<sup>th</sup> – Safety of Northern Ireland's vulnerable students paramount says Empey

The Employment and Learning minister for Northern Ireland, Sir Reg Empey, has welcomed the publication of a report aimed at protecting the vulnerable in Northern Ireland's Further Education colleges. The report, ***The Protection and Welfare of Children and Vulnerable Adults in N.I. Further Education*** was prepared following the introduction of new vetting and barring legislation affecting College staff, support workers and volunteers. This legislation also potentially affects the involvement of colleges in a large number of government initiatives impacting on the pastoral care of students in areas such as mental health, suicide prevention and support for children from a care background.

The recommendations include a requirement for the publication of further education specific guidance on the application of the child protection legislation and related measures and a need for a central

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resource providing updated briefings and guidance on child protection issues. The study also recommends the dissemination of good practice relating to pastoral care issues throughout the further education sector.

Sir Reg said *'My department will liaise closely with colleges to build upon existing good practice and support the implementation of the recommendations across the further education sector, ensuring that all students can enjoy an environment which is both safe and secure'*.

## Local Government and Public Sector

### August 18<sup>th</sup> – Deputy prime minister to champion Social Mobility

Deputy prime minister Nick Clegg has **announced** that he will lead government efforts to improve social mobility.

The deputy prime minister identified some of the key barriers to social mobility, including differences in pre-school years; educational inequalities; levels of parental involvement; the gap between Further and Higher Education; and the difficulty for children from disadvantaged backgrounds entering the professions. Mr Clegg said that the Coalition is already committed to *'progressive tax changes and reforms'* to the education system, but stated that more action is needed if the government is to address the long-term challenge of improving social mobility – especially in difficult economic times. The deputy prime minister will champion social mobility within government and chair a Ministerial Group to *'drive forward action across Whitehall'*.

Nick Clegg said that although budget cuts are needed, the government is committed to investing in a fairer future:

*'This government is committed to the long-term – to making decisions today that will promote a better future: a more prosperous economy, and a fairer society. Our determination to fix the deficit is matched by our determination to create a more socially mobile society.'*

*'Promoting social mobility is a long-term business. And it is precisely for that reason that it is vital to establish now, at the beginning of our time in office, that promoting social mobility is at the top of our social agenda... My particular focus is on inter-generational social mobility'*.

Nick Clegg also confirmed the appointment of former Labour MP Alan Milburn to undertake independent, annual reviews of progress towards a more socially mobile society. He will review the effectiveness of the government's approach to increasing social mobility, and the contribution of actions undertaken by civil society, employers, community groups and other non-government organisations. He is expected to build on his previous work as Chair of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions<sup>2</sup>, but also to take a much wider view of social mobility, particularly for the most disadvantaged in society.

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<sup>2</sup> The panel's published ***Unleashing Aspiration: the final report of the panel on fair access to the professions***. We produced a brief guide to this report which can be found [here](#) and also produced a brief guide to the government response to this, available [here](#).

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## 30<sup>th</sup> July – Further Structural Reform Plans announced

Structural Reform Plans (SRPs) are now the key tool of the coalition government for ensuring that departments are accountable for the implementation of the reforms set out in the Coalition Agreement. They replace the '*old, top-down systems of targets and central micromanagement*'. They set out priorities and give the public the opportunity to check departments meet their commitments. A **list** of SRPs published so far is now available.

The first of the series of monthly reports detailing government implementation of its SRP commitments have also been published and are now available for **July** these have been designed to promote openness and transparency across government by allowing the public to check that departments are meeting their commitments.

DWP has published its SRP which includes:

- *Work Programme*
  - Establish a range of Service Academies to help people find employment in key sectors, working with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
  - Develop options to establish a network of locally led 'Work Clubs' in community settings where people can meet, exchange skills, share experiences and receive support in finding local job opportunities
  - Develop options to offer work experience placements to jobseekers
  - Develop options for 'Work Together', a programme to connect people with volunteering opportunities in their area
- Welfare reform
  - Set out the government's vision for welfare reform for this Parliament
- Tackle poverty
  - Support more lone parents into work
  - Contribute to the cross-government work tackling child poverty
- Get Britain Saving
  - Review the State Pension
- Achieving disability equality
  - Explore options for improving the work opportunities of disabled people with the greatest barriers to employment
- Make the department an exemplar of effective customer service
  - Improve the quality and reduce the cost of customer service delivery

Cabinet Office has also published its SRP<sup>3</sup>. Priorities for this department include:

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<sup>3</sup> Correction: in the last policy update we referred to Cabinet Office SRP – it was in fact the coalition government's SRP for political reform.

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- *Civil Service Reform*
  - Reform the civil service compensation scheme, change the model of departmental boards and oversee the Efficiency and Reform Group
- *Quango Reduction*
  - Abolish/bring into departments the majority of quangos and enforce new standards for the remaining
- *Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Strategy*
  - Reduce the cost structure of ICT in central government, while supporting technologies which increase citizen involvement, and our agendas of transparency and localisation
- *Driving efficiency in government Operations*
  - Improve the efficiency of government operations by driving central management of core functions, including property, communications, procurement and project management
- *Transparency*
  - Drive the agenda towards transparency in government. Facilitate the immediate release of current data sets and introduce blanket use of open data standards
- *Support the building of the Big Society*
  - Encourage more Social Action and strengthen the voluntary sector through a programme to make it easier to run a voluntary sector organisation, get more resources into the sector and make it easier for the sector to work with the State

## August 3<sup>rd</sup> – PM and Deputy PM open letter to Cabinet

In a letter to colleagues prime minister David Cameron and deputy prime minister Nick Clegg have thanked Cabinet ministers for their commitment to the coalition during its first 12 weeks. The prime minister and deputy prime minister said that as departments made ‘vital negotiations’ with the Treasury about the Spending Review, every spending decision should ensure more power was handed to local people.

The letter states that deficit reduction and continuing to ensure economic recovery is the most urgent issue facing Britain and that in delivering this the government’s purpose is to make two key shifts in political and national life:

- **a radical distribution of power from the government to communities and people** *‘The importance of this approach cannot be overstated. It underpins our attitude to public service reform. It animates our plans for genuine localism. It explains our focus on government transparency. If we are true to this purpose then the people of this country will feel a new sense of power and responsibility in their daily lives’*; and
- **that government will govern for the long term** *‘This approach... underpins our commitment to safeguarding our environment for future generations and to restoring transparency and accountability to our politics’*.

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The letter then goes on to state that when assessing options in relation to the spending review, departments must ask two questions: will it put more power in people's hands? And will it equip Britain for long-term success?

## August 16<sup>th</sup> – Eric Pickles to disband Audit Commission in new era of town hall transparency

Communities and Local Government secretary Eric Pickles has announced plans to disband the Audit Commission. It is anticipated that this step will *'pass power down to people, replace bureaucratic accountability with democratic accountability and save the taxpayer £50 million a year'*.

Under this move, the Audit Commission's responsibilities for overseeing and delivering local audit and inspections will cease; the Commission's research activities will end; audit functions will be moved to the private sector; councils will now appoint independent external auditors; and there will be a new audit framework for local health bodies. Ministers believe that the work of the Commission has increasingly become less focused on accountability to citizens and more on reporting upwards to government, judging services largely against top down government imposed targets. As a result of the changes, the Audit Commission's in-house audit practice, which is the fifth largest audit practice in the country, will be transferred out of public ownership.

Eric Pickles stated that a new decentralised audit regime will be established, replacing the Audit Commission and providing support for *'local democratic accountability'*. This new approach will be applicable to local government, police, and local health bodies and has been designed to:

- **Shift power from Westminster to people:** *Local people, not Whitehall, will now be the audience for the assurances audit gives on local spending decisions.*
- **Strengthen citizens' rights:** *The powers of the separate local government ombudsman will be strengthened, to give residents greater rights when local services go wrong.*
- **Save the taxpayer over £50 million a year:** *This will include saving the central and corporate costs of the Audit Commission, currently paid for by the Commission's fees including a surcharge on audits, including those by private firms.*
- **Maintain auditing standards:** *Protections will be developed to ensure independence, competence and quality, including audit quality regulated within a statutory framework, overseen by the National Audit Office and profession.*
- **Protecting children and the vulnerable:** *Inspection and intervention will remain for the most vulnerable to protect public welfare, including children's services and adult social care.*

Michael O'Higgins, the Commission's chairman, said *'while we obviously regret the decision, we can reflect upon the very significant successes that the Commission has had... It is critically important that during the coming period of uncertainty, and the transition period, that we ensure local accountability, and the accurate audit of public spending, is carried out effectively. The Commission will continue to carry out this work effectively, and will ensure a smooth transition to the new arrangements'*.

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## August 12<sup>th</sup> – Francis Maude launches Pathfinder mutuals

As part of the government's commitment to support the innovation and entrepreneurialism of front line staff, minister for the Cabinet Office, Francis Maude has **announced** twelve fledgling public service spin-offs have been chosen to be Pathfinders for the mutuals initiative. These pathfinders will be 'trailblazers' for the rest of the public sector. The aim is that by learning from the front line, government will be able to establish what type of support and structures will best enable the development of employee-led mutuals on an ongoing basis.

The pathfinders will be supported by expert mentors from some of the country's most successful businesses and leaders in employee ownership models. All the mentors have offered their support for free and will work with staff in the Pathfinder projects to help them develop a range of sustainable, efficient and pioneering employee-led services.

Minister for the Cabinet Office, Francis Maude said *'this is a Big Society approach, decentralising power so people can deal with the issues that concern them. We must not be afraid to do things differently if we are to provide better services for less money.'*

*'The Pathfinders show that this vision is possible but it won't happen without real commitment and support. We are incredibly grateful for the offers of support we have received from a wide range of experts in business and employee ownership; the involvement of these successful employee owned businesses further demonstrates the viability of public sector mutuals and I am excited about what this initiative has the potential to achieve.'*

Examples of the different Pathfinder models include:

- The London Partnership are working to create a 'Reducing Multiple Disadvantage' Community Interest Company from a group of Department of Health, local authority, Primary Care Trust and NHS staff;
- Teaching and administrative staff planning to set up a Trust to run Newton Rigg Agricultural College in Cumbria;
- The 157 Group working to set up a qualification awarding body; and
- NHS employees forming a social enterprise to provide joined up services for homeless people in Leicester.

In response to the selection of the 157 group, Lynne Sedgmore CBE, executive director of the 157 Group, **said**, *'setting up an awarding body as a mutual will allow us more flexibility and control over the way in which qualifications are developed and awarded so that the needs of learners, colleges and employers can be served better... We also believe that adopting an employee-led mutual approach to awarding qualifications will enable significant financial efficiencies, through shared services and by keeping public sector funds within the FE sector, rather than feeding surpluses into private stakeholder profits.'*

## August 2<sup>nd</sup> – Commissioning process for National Citizen Service pilot grants open

Following the prime minister's recent announcement of plans for National Citizen Service pilots, a competitive commissioning process is being **launched**.

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The National Citizen Service will give young people the chance to learn new skills that will *'help them to make a positive contribution to their community'*. Government-backed pilots for the scheme will take place in summer 2011 and provide around 10,000 places for 16 year old school-leavers, subject to the outcome of the cross-government spending review which concludes in October 2010.

Activities are expected to include an outdoor challenge, structured tasks to develop personal skills whilst visiting and helping groups in the local neighbourhood and designing a social action project in consultation with local communities. The experience will end with a graduation ceremony for those who successfully complete it. In the longer-term, graduates will be encouraged to take-up training sessions, reunion events and further community involvement, *'to build on the enthusiasm and relationships generated'* by NCS.

The Office for Civil Society is planning to award a small number of grant funding agreements to organisations/groups of organisations that can deliver the programme in a range of locations across England during the pilot period.

Interested organisations should email [mailbox.nationalcitizenservice@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:mailbox.nationalcitizenservice@education.gsi.gov.uk) to obtain a copy of the specification and an expression of interest form. The deadline for completed forms is 12.00pm on 25 August 2010. Organisations successful at this stage will be notified and invited to submit a full application in September 2010.

## August 11<sup>th</sup> – John Collington to head a government drive to cut cost of procurement

Minister for the Cabinet Office, Francis Maude, has **announced** that John Collington, the Home Office's group commercial director, will become the new head of procurement in the Efficiency and Reform Group (ERG) a group which has been set up to *'mobilise expertise'* from across government to drive fundamental reform and improve efficiency across Whitehall. John Collington will lead a new cross-government approach to procurement, with the aim of ensuring that the government uses its scale to ensure it always gets the best value for money. The ERG is co-chaired by Francis Maude.

## August 13<sup>th</sup> – Sir Philip Green to lead Government Efficiency Review

Sir Philip Green, who runs the UK's largest privately family owned clothing retailer Arcadia Group, has been asked by the prime minister to **lead** an external Efficiency Review into government spending.

Sir Philip, who will report to the minister for the Cabinet Office, Francis Maude, and chief secretary to the Treasury, Danny Alexander, will be supported by a team of officials from the Cabinet Office and the Treasury. The remit is to scrutinise government spending in the last three years to identify inefficiencies and potential savings, and to look at where lessons can be learned for the future. He will then report back before the end of the Spending Review.

The remit of Sir Philip's review will include:

- reviewing the progress with the recommendations of the Operational Efficiency Programme (OEP); and
- assessing whether government leases and contracts entered into since 2007 offer value for money.

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## August 6<sup>th</sup> – Grant Shapps: New era of open government will drive innovation in public services

Local government minister Grant Shapps has **announced** details of the Public Sector Mapping Agreement (PSMA) an agreement that will give councils and public bodies free access to national mapping data from April 2011. It is anticipated that when combined with digital technology this move will pave the way for an increase in new apps and websites that can improve public services and *'unleash a wave of fresh thinking and innovation in public services'*.

The agreement has been designed to facilitate more collaborative work between councils, private sector contractors and charities. The data could be used, for example, to support a range of services from the digital television switch over to reducing ambulance response times and improving school bus routes.

Local government minister Grant Shapps said *'this is just the start. We want ordinary people to come up with their own solutions to local problems that suit their needs...'*

## August 12<sup>th</sup> – CLG increases department transparency

The secretary of state has **published** details of how Department for Communities and Local Government spent its £314 million funding last year. Each item of departmental spending on goods and services over £500 in 2009/10 has been put online, allowing the public to see what was purchased, for how much and from whom. The secretary of state has asked the main departmental Arms Length Bodies to open their books also. As part of the new government's commitment to transparency, accountability and openness, all central government departments are required to publish spending over £25,000 online from November 2010.

Eric Pickles has called for all town hall spending on goods and services above £500 to be put online by January. Twenty eight local authorities have already done so and details are available at: [www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/transparency/localgovernmentexpenditure/](http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/transparency/localgovernmentexpenditure/).

## August 6<sup>th</sup> – CRC launches call for evidence on the contribution and needs of rural communities in the Big Society

The Commission for Rural Communities has **launched** a call for evidence which seeks views from rural communities and organisations that have *'embraced the Big Society approach'* to identify and tackle their local needs. Responses collected will inform a report about the effect of the economic climate and current and planned changes in public spending on civic society organisations working with rural communities. The deadline for feedback is 13 September 2010.

## August 17<sup>th</sup> – First ten areas to join Future Libraries programme announced

Culture minister, Ed Vaizey has **announced** the initial phase one areas to participate in the Future Libraries Programme. The programme formed by a partnership between national and local government, and driven by councils themselves, aims to help the library service during the current challenging financial situation, with an ambition to ensure libraries play *'a central role for communities in the Big Society'*.

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The ten phase one areas are:

- Northumberland with Durham;
- Bolton, with Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, Wigan;
- Bradford;
- Lincolnshire, with Rutland, Cambridgeshire, North East Lincs, Peterborough;
- Suffolk;
- Oxfordshire with Kent;
- Herefordshire with Shropshire;
- Cornwall with Devon, Plymouth, Torbay;
- Lewisham with Bexley, Bromley, Croydon, Greenwich, Lambeth and Southwark; and
- Kensington & Chelsea with Hammersmith & Fulham.

The programme aims to build momentum on the ideas that have been generated and spread learning between library authorities to achieve cost savings, new partnerships and governance models, and to take advantage of digital opportunities. Central to the programme is the vision for library services to have greater connection with other local services and an ambition for services to be designed around the needs of the public, rather than based on organisational boundaries.

The MLA (Museums, Libraries and Archives council) and the LGA Group (Local Government Association Group) will begin work immediately with packages of support and advice for each of the projects. As work gets underway with the initial ten projects, planning for the second phase of the Programme will press ahead to ensure the successes and experiences of each project can be collected and shared with library authorities across England so that the results of the programme can benefit people throughout the country.

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## Contact the LSIS policy team

This policy update has been prepared by Angela Nartey, policy research officer, LSIS. Your comments are welcome – please contact Angela by email on [angela.nartey@LSIS.org.uk](mailto:angela.nartey@LSIS.org.uk).

### **Caroline Mager, Executive Director, Policy, Research and Strategic Intelligence**

[Caroline.Mager@LSIS.org.uk](mailto:Caroline.Mager@LSIS.org.uk)

Telephone: 020 7929 8733

### **Jenny Williams, Head of Policy**

[Jenny.Williams@LSIS.org.uk](mailto:Jenny.Williams@LSIS.org.uk)

Telephone: 020 7929 8713

### **Angela Nartey, Policy Research Officer**

[Angela.Nartey@LSIS.org.uk](mailto:Angela.Nartey@LSIS.org.uk)

Telephone: 020 7929 8734

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