

Further Education, Skills and the Economy

19th August – Review of offender learning: call for evidence

The review of offender learning announced by John Hayes, minister of state for further education, skills and lifelong learning, will assess progress against the policy framework set out in the Next Steps¹ document and make recommendations *‘to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the arrangements’*. The review is taking account of the earlier strategic review of employment services for offenders, and will inform the Ministry of Justice’s Autumn Green Paper setting out the proposed approach to sentencing and rehabilitation reform. The government has published a **call for evidence** which includes questions covering both the strategic and operational aspects of offender education. Examples of the questions asked include:

- How well do offender learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?
- What is the role of the careers information and advice service in respect of offenders and how effective is it?
- How can we improve progression in the continuation of learning or in to employment post release?
- What further actions should be taken to target resources in order to have the greatest impact on reducing re-offending by equipping offenders with the skills and qualifications they need to secure and sustain employment?
- How should we go about ensuring localism and the Big Society agenda is taken in to account in the arrangements for determining the offender learning offer, especially for offenders in the community who will largely access mainstream learning services?
- How well have partnerships between learning providers, prison staff and other agencies evolved to the benefit of offender learners? Where partnerships are proven to be ineffective, how can that be addressed?
- To what extent is the delivery of apprenticeships in prisons possible? What barriers need to be considered and how can the support of employers be secured?

Responses should be submitted to offenderlearningreview@bis.gsi.gov.uk by 24th September 2010. The review will produce a report and final recommendations for ministers in October.

¹ In December 2006, **Reducing Re-offending Through Skills and Employment: Next Steps** (Next Steps) set out a plan of actions to *‘improve the effectiveness of the cross-government arrangements for delivering skills and providing the employment services, within the context of the criminal justice system, that lead to reduced re-offending’*.

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3rd September – NIACE report on co-locating colleges and public libraries

NIACE has published ***Co-locating Colleges and Public Libraries*** a follow-up paper to *Learning Through Life* – the report of the Inquiry into the Future of Lifelong learning – which explores the rationale for co-locating colleges and public libraries.

The report presents four case studies of existing co-located colleges and public libraries: Worcester Library and History Centre; East City Library and Manchester College; Lichfield Joint-Use Library; and Castle Vale Community and College Library to inform recommendations on the key features needed to establish effective co-locations. These include:

- explicitly addressing how to integrate organisational visions, aims and business planning;
- integrating training and development opportunities to broaden staff skills and provide a more flexible staffing model; and
- ensuring there is effective signposting so that an adult learner can be directed to the full range of formal, informal or self-directed learning opportunities across the whole site.

14-19 and Schools

6th September – Michael Gove speaks on education reform

Michael Gove, secretary of state for education has given a **speech** detailing his vision for education and indicating some areas of focus for the forthcoming education white paper. The minister said that the white paper will lay out a programme of reform that will lead to a more *'autonomous school system led by professionals'* and

- increase the number of *'great teachers and leaders'* in our schools by;
 - expanding the Teach First programme
 - making it easier for teachers to acquire new skills and additional qualifications
 - *'stripping out unnecessary obligations placed on hard-pressed teachers and overworked governors'*, simplifying the Ofsted inspection regime and tackling health and safety rules which *'inhibit out of classroom learning and have undermined competitive team sports'*
- give teachers the power to tackle poor discipline;
 - including the clarification and simplification of use of force guidance
 - plans to *'radically'* improve the environment in which disruptive and excluded pupils are educated
- create a fairer funding system so that extra funds follow the poorest pupils who need the most support;
 - extra money attached to young people from deprived backgrounds – *'which will be clearly identified to their parents'*

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- to help ensure money is *'spent wisely'* at the beginning of schooling to improve pupils' reading - *'make sure that teacher training is improved so every new primary teacher... is secure in their grasp of phonics teaching'*.
- introduce a simpler, more focused, national curriculum through;
 - a curriculum review *'beyond the sterile debate that sees academic knowledge as mutually exclusive to the skills required for employment; and rigour as incompatible with the enjoyment of learning'*.
- restore faith in the qualifications system by
 - legislating to strengthen Ofqual and give *'a new regulator'* the powers they need to enforce rigorous standards;
 - publishing all the exam data held by the government so that parents, schools and third parties can use web-based applications to create new and bespoke tables; and
 - changing how schools are measured and graded to reward those who have pupils who succeed in a *'balanced range of rigorous qualifications... It also would not preclude the study of other GCSEs outside of this core or any vocational qualifications that would be of genuine benefit for student's progression to post-16 education and employment'*. The minister spoke in favour of a wider take-up of the international baccalaureate.

2nd September – 142 schools to convert to academy status

Michael Gove, education secretary has **announced** that 142 schools have accepted the offer to become an academy since the Academies Act became law just over a month ago. This is the first wave of schools to convert in a rolling process that allows schools to convert at any stage. The running total of schools that will become academies this academic year is 216 so far. The current breakdown is as follows:

- 142 schools converting to become academies: 32 opened for the start of term and a further 110 schools have had Academy Orders signed which means they are on track to convert to academies over the coming months;
- Of the 142, there are 7 primary schools which become the first ever primary academies to open. The Government has said that special schools will also be allowed to become academies from next year; and
- 64 new academies replace failing schools this September plus a further 10 opening by April 2011.

6th September – Government publishes statement on new Free School proposals

Michael Gove MP, secretary of state for education, has laid a **Written Ministerial Statement** informing Parliament that the first 16 Free School proposals² are ready to progress to the next stage

² Bedford and Kempston Free School, Bedford Borough; The Childcare Company, Slough; Discovery New School, West Sussex; The Free School Norwich, Norfolk; Haringey Jewish Primary School, Haringey; I-Foundation Primary School, Leicester; King's Science Academy, Bradford; Mill Hill Jewish Primary School, Barnet; Nishkam Education Trust, Birmingham, North Westminster Free School (ARK), Westminster; Priors

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of the process and develop a full business case and plan. The statement outlines the next steps in the process for the proposers and lists the proposals approved to go forward to business case and plan stage in full.

24th August – Ministers congratulate students on their GCSE, Diploma and A Level results

Ministers have **congratulated** students on their GCSE, Diploma and A-Level results, and praised the hard work of pupils and teachers in schools this year.

Nick Gibb said *'While celebrating individual success and welcoming the fact that there has been an enormous take-up of GCSEs in the individual sciences, we believe that more needs to be done to close the attainment gap between those from the poorest and wealthiest backgrounds'*.

On Foundation and Higher Diplomas the minister said *'there will be a place for the Diploma as long as there is demand for it. We want to strengthen vocational education so we will look carefully at how these qualifications are viewed by employers and universities'*.

On A Levels, the minister said *'A-Levels are an important milestone in life and open up great opportunities for academic study in higher education and for future careers'*.

Universities and Science Minister David Willetts said *'I congratulate everyone on their hard work and hope they got the results they need to fulfil their aspirations.'*

'There are more university places than ever before and already 380,000 applicants have got confirmed places at university ... Of course, university is not the only route into well-paid and fulfilling work. That is why we are also investing so much in Further Education and 50,000 extra high-quality apprenticeships'.

18th August – IPPR report increased risk of A-Level students becoming NEET

The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) has published an **article** on its analysis of the Labour Force Survey. Key statistics include:

- Young people with degrees have seen a sharp increase in their risk of becoming NEET since the recession began. Their risk has increased by 50 per cent since the onset of recession;
- However, the total proportion of people with degrees that become NEET remains one of the lowest of any group with 11.4 per cent being 'NEET' in the first quarter of 2010;
- In contrast, the proportion of young people with no qualifications that become NEET is 36.1 per cent; and
- The proportion of young people with low level (level 2) qualifications is 16.1 per cent.

The report however highlights that young people with no qualifications remain far more vulnerable than their more highly qualified counterparts; 36.1 per cent of young people who've left school with no

Marston and Priors Hardwick School, Warwickshire, Rivendale Free School, Hammersmith and Fulham, St. Luke's School, Camden; Stour Valley Community School, Suffolk; West London Free School, Ealing or Hammersmith and Fulham; Wormholt North Hammersmith Free School (ARK), Hammersmith and Fulham (to be known as Burlington Primary Academy)

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qualifications are NEET. This is far higher than those with degrees and those with Level 3 qualifications (9.1%). The report states that the percentage of young people with no qualifications who are NEET has barely changed since the recession started, suggesting a long-term problem whose causes are not connected to the recent economic upheaval.

Higher Education

7th September – OECD publishes Education at a Glance 2010

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has published its annual publication **Education at a Glance 2010: OECD Indicators**. The publication provides comparable indicators on the performance of education systems and their implications in policy discussions. The indicators look at who participates in education, what is spent on it, how education systems operate and what results are achieved, the data includes data to show that:

- Unemployment rates among people with a tertiary level of education have stayed at or below 4% on average across OECD countries during the recession. For people who failed to complete upper secondary education, by contrast, unemployment rates have repeatedly exceeded 9%;
- Methods of financing tertiary education vary considerably between countries, with more than 60% of costs covered from private sources in Chile, Japan, Korea, the UK and the US, compared with less than 10% in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Norway;
- New players are emerging in an increasingly competitive market for international education. The Russian Federation expanded its market share by two percentage points over the past decade and Australia, Korea and New Zealand each by one percentage point. Over the same period, the share of the US dropped from 26% to 19%, and Germany, the United Kingdom and Belgium also lost ground;
- On average in OECD countries, a woman aged between 35 and 44 with upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education can expect to earn 76% of male earnings. This ratio falls to 74% for those who have not completed an upper secondary education and to 71% for those who have completed a tertiary education; and
- Adults with higher educational attainment are more likely to participate in formal and/or non-formal education than adults with lower attainment. On average for the OECD, individuals with tertiary education have an advantage in the involvement in educational activities – they are almost three times more likely to be involved in educational activities than those with low levels of education.

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Devolved Administrations

30th August – Go ahead for merger of three Scottish colleges

On September 1, Glasgow's Nautical, Central and Metropolitan Colleges will become the City of Glasgow College, described as the first-ever **merger** of three colleges since they were removed from local authority control in 1993. The Scottish Funding Council will formally oversee the merger.

Minister for skills and lifelong learning Keith Brown said *'we agree with the Scottish Funding Council ... that the merger will deliver substantial benefits to students in Glasgow. That's why we have given the go-ahead to this historic move.... There should be greater engagement with the unions to resolve issues around harmonisation, as well as a positive approach to future partnerships with other colleges... The City of Glasgow College will be a significant economic boost to the city and will provide an outstanding learning experience for both students and staff'*.

20th August 2010 – Empey 'steps up' funding for Northern Ireland's higher education programme

The employment and learning minister for Northern Ireland Reg Empey has **announced** additional funding of over £340,000 for the Step-Up initiative, which aims to improve the aspirations, expectations and academic performance of students who otherwise may not have considered going to university.

Step-Up is a science-based programme of academic and vocational activities, jointly delivered by schools, the University of Ulster, industry and government. To date almost 700 students from secondary schools in the north-west and Belfast areas have successfully completed the programme and progressed to higher education institutions across the UK.

Sir Reg said *'The Step-Up programme has been hugely successful in raising the motivation, aspirations and performance of students in a wide range of key science-based subjects. The programme has opened doors to a wide range of degrees and career pathways for past pupils in fields such as Biomedical Science, Pharmacy and Marine Biology'*.

Local Government and Public Sector

3rd September – Institute for Government report on the effectiveness and accountability of quangos

The Institute for Government has published its report on arm's length bodies (ALBs also known as quangos). ***Read Before Burning: Arm's length government for a new administration*** makes recommendations to increase the effectiveness and accountability of ALBs.

The report recommends:

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- that it should be harder to set up ALBs – Parliament should be given a new role when bodies are set up to ensure that they are subject to regular scrutiny, both inside Whitehall and by the NAO;
- better management of ALBs in Whitehall – with more attention given to training both ALB appointees and their departmental sponsors; and
- increasing public confidence in ALBs – by promoting greater transparency, which would give the public more confidence in the impartiality of appointments.

7th September – Local enterprise partnership and Regional Growth Fund proposals submitted

Following the closing day for submitting local enterprise partnership proposals the government confirmed that it has received 56 proposals from across the country.

Over the coming weeks ministers will consider the proposals, looking at how they will support economic growth, before providing feedback to partnerships ahead of the publication of the white paper on sub-national economic growth and the introduction of the Localism Bill.

Vince Cable **said** *‘Trade and investment promotion, sector leadership, innovation, business support and access to finance will in future be led nationally, though with devolved local management in many cases. This still leaves huge scope for local initiatives to promote enterprise. The outcome will vary just as local economic priorities differ across the country. In some areas, there might be a focus on skills. In others, local enterprise partnerships may help set priorities for planning and infrastructure decisions. The key is that these partnerships are built from the bottom-up and will have the flexibility to determine their own agenda, rather than have it handed down to them by Whitehall.’*

6th September was also the closing date for the consultation on the Regional Growth Fund. Announced in the Budget, the £1bn fund will provide support for projects that offer *‘significant potential for sustainable economic growth and can create new private sector jobs’*. Around 350 responses to the consultation were received, from organisations including trade associations, business groups, local authorities, universities and, environmental bodies. The government’s response to those views and further criteria for funding proposals will be set out in the forthcoming White Paper.

Communities secretary Eric Pickles and business secretary Vince Cable have written an **article** on local economic growth. The article states that *‘The secret to success is natural local economies - not artificial political regions - that better reflect the natural economic geography of the areas they serve’*.

The article argues that in many places, the natural economic unit may be the city region, however the role of universities and business leadership for example will be *critical’*. The final message to councils and businesses is *‘be radical and be ambitious. We believe the promotion of enterprise requires local solutions. Now local partnerships must prove it’*.

7th September – CRC publishes Agenda for Change

Following Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) led discussions with rural entrepreneurs, communities and their representatives over the course of the last year, the CRC has polished **Agenda for Change**, a document which sets out *‘the actions that need to be taken across government and elsewhere to release the economic potential of England’s rural areas’*. *Agenda for Change* highlights the need for:

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- more attention to be paid to ensuring economic policies and delivery address the needs of rural communities;
- local authorities and other public bodies to demonstrate a commitment to responding positively to community-led plans (locally-developed plans which embody the ambitions in the Government's Big Society agenda);
- the planning system to be used *'to support rather than frustrate'* sustainable economic growth in rural area; and
- improvements in communications infrastructure (broadband and mobile) in rural England.

Equality and Diversity

19th August – Consultation on the public sector Equality Duty: promoting equality through transparency

The Equality Act 2010 which received Royal Assent in April 2010 included a public sector Equality Duty, which has a key role in *'ensuring that fairness is at the heart of public bodies' work and that public services meet the needs of different groups'*. The Act also gives ministers the power to impose specific duties, which are legal requirements designed to help public bodies meet their obligations under the public sector Equality Duty.

The **consultation** seeks views on the proposals for draft regulations for the specific duties and the list of public bodies that will be subject to the general and specific duties, including:

- Requiring public bodies with 150 or more employees to publish data on equality in their workforces include data on the gender pay gap, the proportion of staff from ethnic minority communities and the distribution of disabled employees throughout an organisation's structure. Public bodies will be required to publish this data at least annually; and
- requiring public bodies, as part of their normal business planning process, to set equality outcome objectives, informed by the evidence and data they publish.

The consultation will run until 10 November 2010 with the aim of bringing the general and specific duties into force in April 2011.

Third Sector

17th August – New group established to cut regulations and make it easier to run social enterprises

Business minister Mark Prisk and civil society minister Nick Hurd have **announced** The Big Society De-regulation Taskforce established to *'make it easier to run charities, voluntary groups and social*

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enterprises'. The taskforce will be led by Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbots. It is anticipated that the efforts of the taskforce will free up more time and resources for these organisations to make a difference in their communities and help mobilise the Big Society.

Minister for business and enterprise, Mark Prisk, said *'This taskforce will build on previous research into burdens on small business to look at how we can encourage more people to work together to improve their communities and help one another. Lord Hodgson has assembled a very strong team and I look forward to their recommendations'*.

The taskforce is still to decide which specific areas to focus on, which may include:

- responsibilities of trustees and directors;
- employment law; and
- contractual arrangements when civil society organisations provide public services.

New Faces and Awards

1st September – Institute for Learning Advisory Council elects president

The Institute for Learning (IfL) has **announced** the election of John Chorley as the first president of its Advisory Council. John Chorley has taught in community schools in Walsall, run adult education classes and worked as a voluntary youth leader, he has been part of the post-compulsory education teacher training team at the University of Wolverhampton since 1989. He has been an active trade unionist throughout his teaching career, and branch secretary of the University and College Union (UCU) since 1988. He will take up his post immediately.

Mr Chorley said, *'I see the central role of IfL to continue to raise the profile of teachers who want to make a difference, giving them an apolitical voice, enabling their contribution to society to be more widely valued and appreciated... My chosen theme for the year is supporting new teachers and their identity in the post-compulsory sector'*.

1st September – Lord Adonis announced as new Institute for Government director

The Institute for Government has **welcomed** Lord Adonis as its new director; he takes over from Lord Bichard who has become a senior fellow. Former head of research Dr David Halpern has also been appointed deputy director of the Institute for Government. Both appointments began as of 1st September 2010.

Lord Adonis said *'I relish this exciting new challenge to make a decisive difference to the quality of decision-making and leadership in Whitehall and Westminster... David has been an outstanding Research Director at the Institute over the past two years. He devised the original plan for the Institute together with Lord Sainsbury, he has long experience of strategic policy-making in government, and of public and social policy analysis in his previous academic work at the University of Cambridge. His experience is invaluable to the Institute'*.

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Contact the LSIS policy team

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