

## London LSC response to EBL review

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### Context

1.1 This is a hugely important time for employer engagement in London. The new London Skills and Employment Board (LESB) recently had its inaugural meeting. The LESB is chaired by the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, and has an impressive array of business leaders and other key stakeholders.

1.2 The Leitch review has just reported while the LSC's Agenda for Change moves forward, responding to the challenges of the FE White Paper and the 14-19 Implementation Plan. Alongside these, the implementation of Youth Matters and Every Child Matters gathers pace.

1.3 Work related learning (WRL) and employer links feature in all these agendas. WRL is also a key element of the London Learner Offer and is at the heart of the 14-19 entitlement. The publication of Strengthening the Links and recent clarification of the remit of the DfES led review of 14-19 WRL adds extra impetus to our regional work.

### Our priorities in London

2.1 The London LSC and partners share a common goal. We want all of London's young people to develop the skills and attributes they need to succeed, and to become life-long learners and good, active citizens.

2.2 Linking young people's learning explicitly to London's world class economy in new and innovative ways is a key ingredient to achieving this. Engaging with London employers - small, medium and large - will be crucial to that success.

2.3 Our recent London consultation and ongoing dialogue with partners have been informative and encouraging. The London LSC is grateful to all who participated.

2.4 We believe there is significant consensus on what needs to be done, less so on how to achieve it - but a real desire across the capital to build on our strengths and move forward collectively. We look forward to that challenge and to playing our part.

2.5 We feel strongly that we need to work much more closely with the sector. We also need that relationship to develop in new and inventive ways if we are to achieve our aims. That process should build on much existing excellence and innovation.

2.6 There is a number of key areas where swift progress can be made: better alignment between the efforts of regional partners; much more joined up working at local level; greater operational consistency, eg: documentation, quality standards etc; and funding streams working harder for London's learners.

2.7 In response, we describe here a range of next steps. Their implementation will ensure we continue to innovate and improve across London.

## **Moving forward**

3.1 In 2006-07, we will invest well over £4 million in EBL related activity, substantially more than our core budget allows. This signals the importance we attach to employer links and work related learning.

3.2 In September, we issued a paper that launched the first stage of reviewing London LSC EBL funding. In that paper we raised a series of questions pertaining to LSC resources for EBL and the changing context in which that funding operates.

3.3 Our dynamic environment demands new ways forward. We need a robust strategic approach overall matched by greater flexibility, prioritisation and collaboration at the local level. Delivering a sustainable entitlement for young people will require the careful calibration of employer time and all available funding.

3.4 A range of resources - financial and in kind, public and private - will play their part in this important area of work. The funding base is large and increasingly diverse. We now need to harness it more effectively, and consistently.

3.5 We do not underestimate the scale of the delivery challenge. The 14-19 reform agenda alone requires ambitious levels of employer engagement. The 14-19 Re-engagement Programme, Foundation Learning Tier, Young Apprenticeships, the new Diplomas and the Extended Project all require specific focus.

## **Moving forward in a changing environment**

4.1 Key reforms are presently working their way through the system. They include: changes to school funding, flexible 14-19 funding lines, and the DfES led review of

14-19 WRL. The latter will report in March 2007; therefore we will honour existing contractual arrangements until the report's recommendations are clarified.

4.2 It will be the 2008/09 academic year before the full effects of these changes are known and how they impact on our work.

4.3 We cannot however wait for the perfect planning circumstances. We need to move forward where we can and adapt to further potential changes as they arise.

4.4 It is our view that the nuances of the funding supply chain (eg: who funds; who delivers) are less important than the outcomes we collectively seek to achieve. We want to sustain a debate that starts with young people's needs and works backwards – shaping local and regional approaches accordingly.

### **LSC vision for employer links and WRL**

5.1 Our planning horizon stretches to 2011. We want our work over coming months and years to build towards a coherent WRL strategy, grounded in a shared vision and complementary contributions.

5.2 Working on this five year trajectory will maximise synergy with World Skills 2011 and London 2012, while planning in line with key policy imperatives: i.e. the full 14-19 entitlement being in place by 2013 and the wider skills agenda. There is much to be done.

5.3 We identify a particular synergy between this work and our work with partners on planning for the run up to World Skills 2011, the event itself and its legacy.

5.4 Regionally we must work with key partners and funders to establish common cause, quality and excellence across the capital; locally, we need to support locally based responses, grounded in local needs and driven by local priorities.

5.5 Better integration of this work into local 14-19 strategy and the delivery of Every Child Matters is a must. It is an area requiring significant development. Our Partnership Teams will play an increasing role with partners, effecting better delivery on the ground.

5.6 We also want more focus on linking this whole area firmly to wider workforce reform. Much of this agenda will need embedding in the daily work of London teachers, lecturers and trainers. Institutions will need to plan to work collaboratively to provide a larger volume of work related learning of higher and more consistent quality.

5.7 We need better coherence in London between WRL, enterprise education and broader entrepreneurship.

5.8 There are many exciting opportunities emerging across the capital; we must be ready to exploit each and every one.

## **Next steps**

6.1 In progressing this agenda, we will balance urgency and stability. We will also engage a wider range of partners than those consulted in this initial review.

Our next steps will therefore be guided by:

- what we can achieve in the remainder of this academic year and the 2007/8 academic year;
- how we incorporate recommendations from the DfES WRL review; and
- the building of a longer term strategy that will complement national policies and key London agendas.

6.2 The actions that follow are not an exhaustive list, rather the beginning of a process of change. Some will require detailed work that we need to resource, others a widening of scope, but all of them will need real partner engagement, borough by borough.

## **Our immediate strategic focus:**

- visible consensus on a defined WRL entitlement as a key strand of the wider 14-19 London Learner Offer;
- transparent funding, aligned to underpin that entitlement, reducing duplication and promoting more diverse solutions;
- clarity on how London employers can contribute to the entitlement – a simple menu of engagement opportunities;
- a strategic regional approach to recruiting employers, possibly incorporating a London “Investors in Young People” award/logo for employers who engage fully, backed by high level political endorsement.

## **Regional actions January to April 2007**

- Establish the parameters of a London WRL entitlement as a key strand of the wider 14-19 London Learner Offer.
- Establish a model for aligning regional funding with regional partners to help realise the entitlement.
- Articulate a simple, attractive menu of employer engagement opportunities capable of underpinning the entitlement.

- Describe what might constitute a London “Investors in Young People” award/logo for London employers who engage in delivering the entitlement.
- Establish the above as an integral part of wider regional plans, including World Skills 2011 and LEST 2012.<sup>1</sup>
- Link more closely to national initiatives such as the Schools’ Enterprise Education Network (S'EEN).

6.3 The WRL entitlement will be particularly important. It will need to reflect different models of WRL, sectoral issues, workforce reform and better linkages to enterprise and entrepreneurship.

### **Regional actions May to August 2007**

- Seek agreement and endorsement of the London WRL entitlement as a key strand of the wider 14-19 London Learner Offer.
- Seek agreement of regional partners for aligned regional funding.
- Employer engagement menu and Investors in Young People award presented to the London Skills and Employment Board (LESB).
- Ministerial support secured for the London approach.

### **Local actions to take this forward**

- LSC Partnership Teams help secure local borough endorsement of the London WRL entitlement as a key strand of local 14-19 entitlements.
- Each local area integrates the WRL entitlement into its 14-19 entitlement plan and where appropriate Children and Young People’s plan.
- Each local 14-19 partner agrees a specific contribution to implementing the local WRL entitlement as part of the local 14-19 strategy.
- Local 14-19 partnerships agree collaborative funding to underpin their WRL entitlement.
- Local 14-19 partnerships seek local authority commitment to resource activity targeted at pre-14 learners, reflecting the Achieving Economic Wellbeing stand of Every Child Matters.

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<sup>1</sup> London Employment and Skills Taskforce for 2012

6.4 In addition there is a series of cross-cutting actions we need to implement. The majority of these relate to the specific questions posed in our consultation under five broad themes:

1. Implementing the London 14 -19 reform & improvement agenda.
2. Commissioning quality provision across London.
3. Value for money in London.
4. Standardised procedures across London.
5. Coherence of programme offer across London.

## **January to April 2007**

### **Commissioning appropriate provision**

6.4 From April 2007: London LSC will shift the contracting period to the academic rather than financial year; and

6.5 London EBLOCs will ensure all organisations have the opportunity to bid for the delivery of programmes. All decisions will be transparent.

6.6 Similarly, any regional LSC funding will be subject to competition.

6.7 This process will be underpinned by a new regional specification to set the standard for all London LSC allocations, directly related to the WRL entitlement.

6.8 The specification will not impose generic models that stifle local innovation. It will set the benchmark and framework through which innovators can respond to local need. The specification will build from our four current priorities:

- Work-experience placements.
- Professional Teacher Placements.
- Work-related learning including enterprise.
- Employer engagement.

### **Key features of the specification**

- Standard unit costs for LSC contributions where appropriate.
- Clearer definitions eg: of what constitutes a quality professional teacher placement in the context of workforce reform.

- More emphasis on matching identified local priorities and the development of personalised approaches to young people's needs.
- Specific services identified for boroughs delivering the first specialised Diplomas, Foundation Learning Tier (FLT) trials, KS4 Schools Engagement Programme and Young Apprenticeships.
- Favour excellent providers with a proven track record for quality, innovation and value for money.
- Favour excellent providers with clear links to local 14-19 partnerships/entitlement strategy.
- Require all providers to have robust systems to safeguard children and ensure health and safety.
- Prioritise providers in robust financial health and not dependent on LSC funding.
- Prioritise approaches that build sustainable capacity in schools, colleges and training providers.
- Prioritise cost-effective approaches that reduce administrative costs and deliver value for money without compromising quality.

## **Establishing consistent pan-London quality standards by April 2007**

7.1 We believe there is excellent practice occurring across London, but it is not consistent. Young people's experiences vary dramatically. Perceptions of EBL activity, its quality and fitness for purpose differ greatly.

7.2 We want to work with partners to end that, spread good practice/innovation and raise the profile and reputation of this important work. In addition the London LSC seeks to promote consistent, common pan-London quality standards and an effective monitoring framework for EBL activity, to be adopted by all partners.

7.3 Building on best practice, and in consultation with key partners, we will develop a quality framework for London by **April 2007** that will:

- form a key part of our funding specification;
- address issues of standardised documentation, service level agreements & MI where action can add value and reduce bureaucracy;
- be adopted by other local and regional partners, establishing a consistent and ambitious standard for London; and

- be capable of linking to national developments.

7.4 Getting common standards agreed, defined and adopted is vital. They need to be applied regardless of the funder, funding or initiative and must become a feature of the future London 14-19 landscape.

### **Introduce simplified and less bureaucratic reporting**

8.1 We will, through the new specification and quality framework, reduce reporting and administration where we can. The establishment of a closer relationship between local activity, LSC Partnership Teams and 14-19 partnerships will also reduce bureaucracy.

8.2 The reduction in administration should enable cost savings to be redirected to front line services. This should be reflected in future contracts.

### **A new role for LSC Partnership Teams**

9.1 Our local borough based teams have a range of priorities: working with providers, supporting local authorities to deliver the 14-19 entitlement and key aspects of Every Child Matters. This work overlaps with their role in regeneration, adult skills and other areas.

9.2 We want our Partnership Directors and their teams to have a much closer engagement with the work related learning agenda. There is a number of objectives our teams will work with local partners to achieve through the year ahead:

- Building the WRL entitlement into the local 14-19 strategy and other local plans.
- Challenging partners to ensure that all young people can access the WRL entitlement.
- Supporting partners to engage local employers in shaping local area curriculum planning and design.
- Working with providers to embed employability and 'soft' skills into their 14-19 learning offer.
- Developing collaborative solutions that secure local delivery of the WRL entitlement.
- Assuring the quality of what LSC funding is delivering locally.

- Building synergy between local EBL work and other key areas: college employer engagement, Train to Gain, Apprenticeship, E2E, Foundation Degrees and adult skills.

## **Phase 2**

### **September 2007- April 2008 (or earlier where possible)**

10.1 By summer 2007, we will be in a position to assess how far we have travelled and review progress. We should also have greater clarity on a number of key issues:

- DfES WRL review will be completed.
- Discretionary 14-19 funding pots and other funding changes.
- LSC Partnership Teams will be fully embedded locally.
- Wider policy changes will have been clarified.
- The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) will have reported.

10.2 Remaining issues pertinent to delivering our ambitious agenda can then be addressed:

- EBL funding and 14-19 budgets.
- Introducing longer term contracts.
- The role of Education Business Links Consortia.
- The establishment of a regional leading edge partner to lead on the London WRL agenda.
- Technology and data issues.
- The link between work experience systems and the emerging London 14-19 e-prospectus.
- The desirability of further standard documentation, service level agreements & MI beyond those recommended by the funding specification and quality framework.

### **Key outcomes**

Every local 14-19 entitlement in London to incorporate a clear WRL aspect as envisaged by the London Learner Offer.

Improved capacity of providers and their workforce to better link 14-19 learning to the London economy.

All young people in London can access an employer experience personalised to their chosen pathway.

Real clarity and choice offered to London employers as to why, how, when and where they can play their part.