

Date	20 April 2011
Subject	Advisory Forum
Location	Coventry
Time	11:00-14:30

Attendees:

David Hughes	Skills Funding Agency (Chair)
Miranda Floy	Skills Funding Agency (minutes)
Jane Cowell	YPLA
Julian Gravatt	Association of Colleges
Sue Rimmer	Association of Colleges
Marion Plant	Association of Colleges
Paul Warner	Association of Learning Providers
Stewart Segal	Association of Learning Providers
Jim Chambers	Association of Learning Providers
David Igoe	Sixth Form Colleges Forum
Malcolm Trobe	Association of School & College Leaders
Andrew Jones	SFCF
David Kendall	NatSpec
Bob Powell	HOLEX
Donald Rae	Local Government Association
Alan Tuckett	NIACE
David Lawrence	Landex
Nigel Robins	Tertiary Colleges Group
Juliette Sargeant	Universities UK

Apologies:

Sue Samson	YPLA
Sue Baldwin	YPLA
Paul Williamson	YPLA
Geoff Daniels	YPLA
Julie Nugent	Skills Funding Agency
David Way	National Apprenticeship Service
Jo Thomas	Department for Education
Susan Pember	Department of Business, Innovation & Skills
Ruth Curry	Department of Business, Innovation & Skills

Graham Hoyle	Association of Learning Providers
Tim Ward	Third Sector National Learning Alliance
Angela O'Donohue	157 Group
Alastair Moon	Independent Academies Association
Philip Mind	Local Government Association
Ian Keating	Local Government Association
David Grigg	Association of School & College Leaders
Jonathan Fawcett	Association of School & College Leaders

Item 1. Welcome and introductions

- 1.1 David Hughes welcomed the group and said that this would be his last Advisory Forum meeting with the Skills Funding Agency.

Item 2. Minutes of last meeting

- 2.1 David went through the minutes of the previous meeting and the action points.
- 2.2 Donald Rae updated the group on his interactions with the DfE and planned meetings around transport issues; and he confirmed that the action should be carried over.

Action: Transport issues – DR to organise a meeting with SB / JG / DL

- 2.4 The group discussed issues of concern around funding. It was agreed to bring a joint paper to the next meeting on the impact of funding allocations, though this would not be able to include the impact of the new fee remission rules, which only come into play from August. A further review of the impact of the new fee remission and eligibility rules will be needed in late autumn.

Action: MF to add to June agenda a paper on the impact of funding allocations for both agencies

- 2.5 The group discussed the impact on lone parents and access courses and discussed the difficulties of capturing information about what colleges and providers are planning. It was suggested that this discussion on how best to capture the impact should be taken outside and a meeting/telekit arranged between the two agencies, AoC, ALP, NIACE, Hoxex.

Action: MF to arrange meeting/telekit

- 2.7 The discussion covered a very wide agenda, with many concerns being raised; these included:

- Are schools pushing Apprenticeships?
- What is on the agenda for the future in terms of curriculum, entitlements, funding?
- What mechanisms will be in place for young people and adults coming back into learning? – what are the longitudinal patterns of reengagement?
- A good conversation to be had would be 'What do we mean by Apprenticeships?'
- The group discussed Careers Services, there is concern over the removal of statutory careers advice and what the impact may be
- There was concern expressed over the impact of changing everything all at once
- David mentioned that there may be some announcements on 16-18 and 19-25 NEET issues which could be brought to the next meeting, and agreed that the issues around career service needed unpicking.

Action: MF to put 16-18 and 19-25 NEET announcements and careers service on agenda for future meetings, as well as curriculum and design, and loans/fees

Decision: It was agreed that in future members should suggest agenda items and bring papers to meetings as there was a danger that Advisory Forum meetings could become too driven by the agendas of the Agencies alone.

2.8 The group discussed the many changes that are happening at the moment and how it is difficult to find a forum for discussing the whole set of changes in one place. Without this holistic look, it is often difficult to assess impact and there are often perverse outcomes.

Decision: It was agreed that a day-long meeting should be organised for the group to discuss these issues.

Item 3. YPLA funding update

3.1 Jane Cowell went through her slides, highlighting the differences in funding outcomes between each provider type.

3.2 Juliette Sargeant requested the figures for HEIs and Jane agreed to send them across.

Action: JC to arrange for the slides to be sent to Juliette

3.3 Jane confirmed that the slides showed everything except for high cost ALS.

3.4 Questions/issues raised were:

- We are moving towards restricted funding for the high-achieving academic learners who may not be able to compete for the best universities who can provide more learning.
- It needs to be fed back to the department that we are reducing the number of programmes for more able students. It is essential to be able to show the evidence for this.
- The entitlement tariff came out of the A-level tariff – there is a disproportionate hit on core funding.
- Institutions don't want to present the full impact of the cuts, as they don't want that to affect recruitment.
- There is also an issue of taking on more challenging students – and need to be acutely aware of outcomes.
- The Wolf Review and the direction of travel the report indicates hits everyone; what is a full time student?

3.5 Jane updated the group on where the Agency are with simplification and the pupil premium. She said the YPLA had some ideas about how they might fund programmes and informed the group that a consultation would possibly be out at the end of June, as they want to get an idea of pre as well as post 16 funding system changes.

3.6 Jane confirmed that the dates for the sessions were:

AoC – 9 May

ASCL – 10 May

ALP – 11 May

These sessions present an opportunity for members to attend and discuss and for the agency to gauge impact.

Landex requested a separate session for their members.

Action: Jane to look at arranging a session for Landex

Item 4. YPLA Update

SEN Green Paper & LLDD

4.1 Jane presented the paper on LLDD and said that work on SEN was going well with good engagement at department level. She gave some figures on

high cost provision and post 19, and confirmed that the agency had been able to support all the business cases for high cost learners.

4.2 Donald Rae discussed the single plan, (health, care and education) and issues around it, saying it would take a long time to tease through; how do we develop better local provision? How can colleges get access to budgets etc?

4.3 Questions and issues raised included:

- Once the mechanism is in place, will it work for 25+? Are the two departments engaging on this together?
- It is in the Local Authorities interests to get this right as it will save money in later life.
- It's hard to measure success; there are a different set of outcomes when you're not dealing with qualifications, how can you possibly demonstrate outcomes?
- It all comes back to funding, so how can you get funding if you're not dealing with qualifications for LLDD?
- How do we align pre and post 16? If we're trying to resolve this quickly over the next few weeks the danger is that it could be made too simple
- What about age-related disabilities? This never gets onto the agenda. This is a result of the loss of the advisory groups to the LSC, which means that things now get missed. This could mean missing out on huge savings on care in an aging society.
- The two departments need to discuss with each other – this is their review – they need them to come together and let the sector know the outcome.
- The Department for Education is restructuring, but hasn't brought SEN together with LLDD, it has put LLDD with Wolf.
- The question needs to be asked of the two departments, where are you going across the whole age range?

Item 5. Wolf Review (moved to item 7)

Item 6. Skills Funding Agency update

6.1 David Hughes introduced the update paper and talked the group through it.

- 6.2 The issue of MCLs was discussed and David confirmed that there have been only a few cases and that it has been a national process of agreeing the final decision in all cases. He outlined the timescales and discussions around MCL's for the next spending review and said there was a desire for some certainty. He suggested a three year fix might be a good idea, but said the Agency wanted to see the impact first before making any recommendations to ministers. The group discussed the types of cases that have come forward and the deadlines involved, as well as the issues around sub-contractors. Further questions raised included:
- Why not make a decision in 2012, once the full impact is clearer?
 - The momentum created by the Skills Funding Agency was destroyed by the two departments failing to agree.
 - Would it not be a good idea to leave it at this level for two years and say that the point was to reduce the number of subcontractors?
 - Some of the reasons for exemptions – ie: loss of capacity in small specialist colleges etc seem spurious.
- 6.3 David outlined some of the positive work and outcomes – such as consortiums – and some examples of high management fees for subcontracting etc that are negative. He said that the reasons for exemptions had been debated long and hard and acknowledged that the delays and uncertainty had caused problems. He suggested it would be a good idea for the group to have another conversation early in the autumn.
- 6.4 The issue of electronic records was discussed. David confirmed that there had been some mention of it in Guidance Note 7, but that it was not adequate. Concerns raised were:
- A feeling that either someone internally from the Information Authority or someone externally needs to give some assurances to the sector.
 - Providers will not believe that that the Skills Funding Agency really won't be checking.
- 6.5 David talked about the 40,000 new apprenticeship places for NEET and 10,000 Higher Level, saying these are tough targets but that the sector has shown that it can respond well to targets. He suggested that the Agency might be able to fund more additional learner support for the NEET cohort and also exclude them from the over all success rate of an organisation.
- 6.6 Concern was raised about the new rates for apprenticeships under the SASE frameworks and the need to minimise the changes.

- 6.7 David confirmed that the debate on Outcome Incentive Payments was ongoing, and that the sector may receive something from the Skills Funding Agency on it soon, but there was unlikely to be significant impact until 2012/13 or 2013/14. Comments included a request that any reworking needs to involve the sector and needs to happen soon.

Item 7. Wolf Review

- 7.1 Bob Powell tabled two papers on Wolf and updated the group on discussions at the Skills Funding Agency and YPLA Qualifications and Curriculum Group. He outlined the issues around Wolf and the key points contained within the report, stressing that the sector DfEs not yet have a formal response and needs to decide how to approach this.

- 7.2 Questions and concerns were raised, including:

- The devil is in the detail; schools and colleges have different interpretations of the opportunities.
- Entry at 14 is exciting, the sooner we see some defined interpretations the better.
- There is a danger of reviewing only one part of the system – the Review does not deal with people with SEN, so there are worries that it ignores whole swathes of people who don't fit and that it isn't at all compatible with policies on the adult side.
- What's going on in the real labour market? There was too much of that in Leitch and not enough in Wolf.
- Vocational strategies need to compliment what the Review is saying about young people.
- BIS does not seem to be engaging with DfE on this.
- There are concerns over Gove's Baccaalaureate – things are changing in schools already to respond to that rather than to learner needs
- The Review is full of partial truisms. If you include Maths and English in success rates, rates plummet. There are some opportunities in there, but personal journeys and subtleties are lost
- Awarding organisations get an easy ride in this and are refusing to engage
- National occupational standards need to be borne in mind
- It talks about flexibility but it's really very narrow and specific.
- The 20% vocational rule is extremely restrictive.

Decision: The Forum agreed to invite the two departments to talk about the implementation issues around Wolf.

Action: MF to ensure that two departmental reps are available at the next meeting

Item 8. Any other business

8.1 Alan Tuckett made a request for adult learning to be on the autumn agenda.

Action: MF to include Adult Learning on autumn agenda

8.2 The Forum thanked David Hughes for his contribution to the meetings and wished him well for the future.

8.3 It was confirmed that Sue Baldwin will be the YPLA representative in future. Both Verity Bullough and Kim Thorneywork will attend from the Skills Funding Agency.

Item 9. Date of next meeting

9.1 The next meeting will take place on **22 June, 11:00-14:30** in The BIS Conference Centre at 1 Victoria Street, London.

Meeting chair David Hughes

Minutes creator Miranda Floy

Date created 26 April 2011