



Young People's
Learning Agency

Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT

0845 337 2000
www.ypla.gov.uk

Graham Hoyle OBE
Chief Executive
The Association of Learning Providers
Colenso House
46 Bath Hill
Keynsham
Bristol
BS31 1HG

2 June 2011

PL/Jun/01/ks

Dear Graham

Foundation Learning

We met on 30 March 2011 to discuss your thoughts and ideas around Foundation Learning and the value of employer placements for young people. We agreed it would be helpful if I wrote an open letter to your members to help clarify the current situation and how I see developments for 2011/12.

Firstly, let me thank you, the association more generally and your members for the significant contribution you have made to the successful transition from E2E to Foundation Learning. This was not an easy step for providers to make but it has benefited thousands of young people already. I have high hopes that ALP members will now be able to take this onto the next step and achieve significant increases in progression rates into further learning, apprenticeships and other jobs with training.

It might help if I set the scene by looking at developments first in 2010/11 and then move on to 2011/12.

Early last year we introduced a range of flexibilities into the funding mechanism for Foundation Learning so that providers could continue to deliver some non-accredited learning. In particular this meant young people could be offered an immediate start and that employer placements would still be funded. When we met you explained that your members felt these were offered "begrudgingly" and that providers have been reluctant to use them to the full for fear of "breaking the rules" around them.

With hindsight I can see why your members and other providers would feel this way but I think we are now in a very different position, so let me state clearly how the flexibilities that we have introduced are designed to support effective, high quality opportunities.

Foundation Learning is designed as a flexible individually planned programme and I would like to encourage providers to use these flexibilities, to ensure that every young person that needs Foundation Learning does get a truly individual programme, as appropriate to their individual needs. How this is done is for providers to determine as they judge necessary to meet the needs of each young person they recruit. For 2010/11 I confirm the following flexibilities are in place:

- Weekly funding – this is available to ensure young people can start Foundation Learning without the need to commence qualifications immediately – there is no longer a 10% limit to weekly funding.
- Non-externally Accredited Learning – this is available so that bespoke packages of learning can be funded for learners whose needs can not be met by accredited qualifications, this includes the resources required to set up, maintain and monitor employer placements and other activity such as external activities.
- I also acknowledge that providers have been concerned over the role of local authorities in agreeing programmes and the related evidence requirements. I confirm that although local authorities will continue to have an interest in how Foundation Learning is shaped in their area – there is no need for providers to gain their approval in how they operate either of these flexibilities. Providers will not be asked to provide evidence of approvals from any outside organisation for the use of these flexibilities.

Moving into 2011/12, I think we could further help young people and providers by formalising and simplifying the way we fund employer placements. To do this we plan to introduce a simple, single payment for organising an employer placement. This will remove the need to count the Guided Learning Hours associated with placements. As we agreed at the meeting Paul Warner and Kevin Street will work together to ensure this new learning aim is introduced in as helpful a manner as possible. I hope you find this a reasonable and helpful response to your suggestions.

We discussed Professor Wolf's report on Vocational Education. Since we met the Government has published its response to the review. While I acknowledge the issues you raised around Functional Skills, I would draw your member's attention to Professor Wolf's findings on the value of Mathematics and English, and the Government's commitment to Functional Skills within Apprenticeships. I would therefore urge your members to continue wherever possible to support young people to achieve functional skills, in these subjects, at one or other of the five levels – whichever is appropriate to each young person. I would also like to confirm that young people can do more than one level of Functional Skills and that each level will be funded.

Also in 2011/12 I would like to suggest we again work together to deliver further training sessions to support your members as they extend their offer to young people and as they work towards full participation from 2013. The majority of your members have received an increase in their allocation for 2011/12 and it is in both our interests to see that this investment results in an increase in participation, progression and achievement.

In closing I would again like to thank you for raising these issues in such a positive manner and I would be grateful if you could distribute this letter to your members so they can be confident in their delivery for the rest of 2010/11 and into 2011/12.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Lauener', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Peter Lauener

Chief Executive

Tel: 02476 823293

e-mail: peter.lauener@ypla.gov.uk