

## Parliament and public affairs update for week commencing 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2011

This week the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills announced that the Adult Learner Grant will close. DfE released its quarterly statistics on NEETs and the think tank Demos released a report on young people who are NEET. HM Inspectorate of Prisons has released his report on looked after children in custody, addressing quality of the provision of care. Education questions in the House of Commons included a number on the 16-19 bursary.

### Adult Learner Grant

The ALG scheme is changing. From August 2011, decisions about the use of adult learner support funding will be fully devolved to Further Education colleges and training providers, in line with the Government's proposals in Skills for Sustainable Growth.

The Adult Learning Grant (ALG) budget will be combined with discretionary learner support, and allocated directly to colleges and training providers for them to distribute to those learners most in need. No current learners receiving ALG, and whose courses are continuing will lose out, as they will continue to receive payments during 2011/12. The total adult learner support budget will rise through the Spending Review period. More information has been posted on the [YPLA](#) website.

### Demos Report

Demos have released a report on young people who are NEET – not in employment, education or training.

The report, *Experience required*, argues that government has failed so far to address NEETs because it has misunderstood the problem. Previous attempts have often regarded NEETs as a 'stubborn underclass' who are socially excluded. In fact, the vast majority, they argue, are simply young people moving in and out of education and employment, who would benefit from stable, long-term capability building programmes.

You can download the report here:

[http://www.demos.co.uk/files/Experienced\\_required\\_-\\_web.pdf?1306250313](http://www.demos.co.uk/files/Experienced_required_-_web.pdf?1306250313)

### HMI of Prisons Report on Looked After Children in Custody

Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, has published a short thematic review, The care of looked after children in custody. This review, commissioned by the Youth Justice Board, reports on the care of looked after children aged 15 to 18 in young offender institutions (YOIs).

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/inspectors/hmi-prisons/>

### Consultations and Reports

#### DfE Statistical Release on NEETs

## Parliament and Public Affairs Update Wk Commencing 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2011

This brief sets out the latest statistics available on young people who are NEET (not in education, employment or training) in England from the DfE 16 - 18 Participation SFR, the Labour Force Survey, and regional NEET figures.

Please see the links below to view additional information:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STR/d001004/osr10-2011-16.xls>

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STR/d001004/osr10-2011-18.xls>

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STR/d001004/osr10-2011-19.xls>

## Questions, Early Day Motions and Back Bench Debates

Below is a cross section of questions tabled and answered from Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> May. Parliament is now in recess until Monday 6<sup>th</sup> June.

### Free school meals

Damian Hinds: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimate he has made of the proportion of children who take up their entitlement to free school meals in each (a) ethnic and (b) religious group. [56508]

Mr Gibb: The information available on the number and percentage of pupils eligible for and claiming free school meals in each ethnic group is shown in the following [table](#). The answer includes full and part-time pupils aged five to 15. Information is not available on the proportion of pupils who meet the eligibility criteria but do not make a claim.

Information on pupils' religious group is not collected by this Department.

### Sixth form funding

T10. [56607] Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab): Head teachers of eight secondary schools serving children in my constituency have taken what they describe as the unprecedented step of writing to the parents and carers of years 11 and 12 students about the impact of Government cuts on sixth-form funding. They are considering cutting the range of courses, increasing class sizes, ending the teaching of some subjects, and reducing guidance and enrichment sessions. They say in their letter: "we have never been subject to cuts of this magnitude,"

Michael Gove: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for drawing my attention to that letter; I hope that he will send me a copy. I know that he is a new Member, and that he is passionate about raising standards in his constituency, but the reductions in public spending are a direct consequence of the mistakes that were made by the Government who preceded us. I am afraid that the reply that he should give to that letter should graciously acknowledge that fact.

### EMA and 16-19 bursary

## Parliament and Public Affairs Update Wk Commencing 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2011

T3. [56600] Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): Following the abolition of education maintenance allowance, further education colleges are finding it difficult to plan ahead for pupils on low incomes, those who may have been on free schools and those from low-income households. How on earth will colleges be able to plan ahead if they are not receiving information about the people trying to enrol? Can the Minister say what he is going to do about that?

The Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning (Mr John Hayes): That is a perfectly fair question. It is important that colleges have information as soon as possible to make the kind of provision that the hon. Gentleman suggests. I will ensure that further discussions take place between my officials and colleges to guarantee that they have that information.

Nic Dakin (Scunthorpe) (Lab): How much funding will be available through the 16-to-19 bursary fund in the 2011-12 academic year for students starting their courses in September 2011 after allocation of the amount guaranteed for vulnerable groups. [56590]  
[56590]

The Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning (Mr John Hayes)

We expect the cost of providing a £1,200 bursary to the most vulnerable young people to be just under £15 million in 2011-12. In addition, just over £101 million in 2011-12 will be allocated to schools, colleges and training providers for them to make discretionary awards to students. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we are also putting in place transitional funding.

Nic Dakin: In evidence to the Select Committee on Education last week, the chief executive of the Association of Colleges made it clear that to support young people properly, schools and colleges ought to have known six months ago how much money they would get. They still do not know how much money they will get. When will they know?

Mr Hayes: What colleges do know is that the Government are providing just over £194 million in 2011-12 in the transitional support that I have described. Of course, the change that we are describing is a change towards greater discretion. I was with the gentleman to whom the hon. Gentleman refers, and I know how much he welcomes that additional discretion, so that the system can become more responsive, dynamic and suited to need.

Angela Smith (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Lab): Barnsley college is an outstanding college, as judged by Ofsted, and it would like to support young people from low-income families by giving them free school meals, free transport and help with books and equipment. Will the Government guarantee that they will give Barnsley the funding to deliver that to its young people, to enable them to fulfil their potential?

Mr Hayes: I will tell the hon. Lady what I will guarantee. I will guarantee that colleges can make those kind of discretionary decisions. She is right: different colleges in different areas, serving different cohorts, need funds to support different kinds of activities to deal with different challenges. That is exactly the kind of flexibility that we intend to help her college and her learners.

## **Parliament and Public Affairs Update Wk Commencing 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2011**

Kate Green: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the effects of the withdrawal of education maintenance allowance on participation in further education by young people from low-income families whose distance from college entails high travel costs; and if he will make a statement. [56515]

Mr Gibb: The equality impact assessment for the ending of education maintenance allowance and the introduction of the 16-19 bursary funding is available on the [Department for Education website](#)

The 16-19 bursary funding will enable schools, colleges and training providers to support students facing the greatest financial barriers to participation, including the cost of transport.