

Notes

RPG - Operational Sub-group

Date 5 November 2010 **Venue** London Councils, Room 4

Meeting Chair Mary Vine-Morris

Contact Officer: Jonathan Rallings

Telephone: 020 7934 9524 **Email:** Jonathan.rallings@londoncouncils.gov.uk

Attendees

Mary Vine-Morris	RPG
Diana Choulerton	South West Cluster/Ealing
Rachel Dunford	LDA
Alison Moore	North West Cluster/Hillingdon
Eamonn Gilbert	SWLSEP/RB of Kingston
Helen McNulty	LLDD/Hackney
Jenny Holmes	GLA/LSEB
John Galligan	West Central Cluster/Brent
Jon Hegerty	Central Cluster/RBKC
Nick Brenton	ALDCS
Mike Pettifer	YPLA
Ruth Griffiths	London South Cluster/Lewisham
Trevor Cook	North East Cluster/Havering
Wendy Forrest	Achieving Excellence/Tower Hamlets
Jo Baty	ESF/Redbridge
Neil Larkin	North Cluster/Waltham Forest
Jonathan Rallings	RPG
Yolande Burgess	RPG
Anna-Maria Volpicelli	RPG

Apologies

Colin Jones LDA

1 Notes of the last meeting and action points, matters arising

1.1 MVM welcomed members to the meeting. The notes of the last meeting were **AGREED** as an accurate record.

1.2 Action Points:

- AP47 – OSG provider nominations: MVM confirmed that she had spoken to key stakeholders and will now write formally to take process forward. Ali Kaye (AK) has been proposed as WBLA representative to the group. MVM asked members to confirm if this nomination was acceptable. The nomination was **AGREED**.

Action (53): RPG to confirm AK's membership to OSG.

- AP49 – suggestion to YPLA to extend allocation confirmation date: MP said that this was unlikely as the YPLA is still waiting for confirmation of the final process, but he would pursue.
- AP50(b) – draft paper on RPG Review to LSEB Board meeting: JH confirmed that there had not been enough time to bring to the meeting. MVM advised it has been agreed to write to the board on the conclusion of the review.

- AP51 – Ealing Data Progression set: DC was anxious that sensitive information should not be distributed. It was agreed that *only* the format of the information would be shared, not the data.

Action (51) carried over: DC to send data to YB on the understanding that the data is removed prior to any sharing.

- 1.3 Under matters arising MP confirmed that strategic commissioning is still being discussed with the MAG. The YPLA is awaiting confirmation of the allocations process for 2011 and it expects to be advised of the budgets shortly following the Spending Review. YB asked MP if he could confirm if there would be a 'rate' or 'rates' in the funding methodology; MP said this was still to be decided.
- 1.4 With regard to the future of LSC TUPED staff, MP said that local authorities will still have responsibilities where the knowledge and experience of former LSC staff would be useful and beneficial. HMcN felt that the future of TUPED staff would be at each local authority's discretion.
- 1.5 As contract management is no longer going to be a function for local authorities will it be possible for staff transferred into this specific role to be TUPED back to YPLA? MP advised that the YPLA does not have a contract management function but will work alongside local authority colleagues to develop an approach to providers. As providers are now expected to work on an autonomous basis, the only involvement would come from a more hands on approach for providers deemed as 'failing'.
- 1.6 DCS dialogue is on-going regarding TUPED staff. MVM confirmed awareness of 15 cases nationally that are going to panel, none of which are in London, and all of which predominately relate to PFA functions.
- 1.7 NB confirmed that at the ALDCS Steering Group 19 November this issue will be high on the agenda. If any members feel that their local authority would have a good case for staff transfer back to central government, they should proceed according to LGA/LGE guidance. NB felt there was a moral case for TUPED staff and the issue of cost shunting from central to local government still remains.
- 1.8 JH felt there was a danger of overstating this case as LSC TUPED staff are a factor in the overarching exercise for all LA employees. JB noted that ex-LSC staff are relying heavily on the support of unions and clarity on what duties remain and what will still need to be done in terms of commissioning.
- 1.9 EG said that the confirmed commitment to RPA means there is likely to be 'growth' and JG agreed that there are still statutory duties which will need to be undertaken. There is a danger of losing staff that will be required to help local authorities fulfil their obligations, after all local authorities still have a strategic role and statutory responsibilities.
- 1.10 JG advised members that there has been an [Announcement](#) by Skills Minister John Hayes regarding an all age career service by 2012.
- 1.11 WF advised members that Kevin Street, Head of Funding Development at the YPLA, gave an informative presentation at the NTRL 14-19 Reform Conference earlier in the week, giving an overview of emerging 14-19 funding policy.

Action (54): AMV to scan and circulate notes taken at the conference to members.

- 1.12 The YPLA release of success rates data for school sixth forms came as a surprise. YB advised that this was as a result of a Freedom of Information request and that the YPLA was instructed by the DfE Star Chamber to publish *provisional* success rates for all schools. The YPLA is offering support to schools through briefing sessions. EG noted the current school census is not fit for purpose and requires a more simplified system.
- 1.13 It was noted that some schools are receiving very specific support from the YPLA and it was asked if this could be rolled out further.

Action (55): YPLA Commissioning Support Advisers to feed back to individual local authorities on any direct dialogue with schools regarding success rates.

2 RPG Board – draft agenda

2.1 MVM tabled the draft agenda for next meeting of RPG on 22 November, which will precede the ALDCS meeting (29 November).

- JR will be working on a short paper on the **spending review** outlining what we know and possible implications.
- **Review of RPG role** – we have had 28 local authority responses so far. A couple of local authority responses are awaiting sign off by their DCS but if responses are in for the early part of next week there will still be time to inform the final report. Provider questionnaire – links have gone to WBLA and ASCL based on the AoC version (being shorter and appropriately questioned). John Freeman (JF) is acting on an impartial consultancy basis for RPG and will be interviewing a selection of key stakeholders, either by telephone or in person, early next week. DCS's were invited to give personal feedback if they so wished and Councillors were alerted to review and invited to participate through the London Councils member's website. JF will have his final report to MVM by Monday 15 November for circulation with RPG papers.
- **RPG Budget Proposal** – even though there is some uncertainty, the RPG needs to agree a budget for 2011/12. Assumptions can be drawn from the letter from Eric Pickles to local authorities (20 October 2010) which indicates that money for the LSC Transfer will be rolled into Formula Grant, with a 33% decrease across the spending review period. If this money is retained it will cover staff costs. The rest of the budget will be broken down into two main areas, operational and regional activity. The proposed figure for the operational budget minimum would be £1,500 per LA (as in 2010/11). Regional activity will be more difficult to determine – for example, as the YPLA undertake data collation and dissemination, will boroughs wish to also pay for Learning Plus UK data? It was noted that without regional comparators information becomes far less useful and that there will be a lot of pressure on the YPLA to collate data that will adequately support local authorities. WF commented there will be an increasing need to pull out data to help achieve the objectives of RPA. Professional advice will be sought from ALDCS but MVM reminded the group that ultimately Leaders will make the decision to accept or decline proposals.
- **LLDD** – will be covered under item 5 of today's agenda.

2.2 It was suggested an update on ESF should be provided at the RPG meeting which was **AGREED**.

3 Choice and CAP evaluation

3.1 YB advised members that a full evaluation of these products had been commissioned by the RPG. The OSG paper gave a précis of the sixty page report produced by LSN.

3.2 The findings from the evaluation supported a fit-for-purpose, leaner version of an area wide prospectus for London. It was more difficult to draw firm conclusions for the CAP as the early pilot activity had mixed results, although the findings demonstrated an appetite for some form of application process within the area wide prospectus. As a consequence, a holding solution for the CAP was recommended.

3.3 A significant recommendation with regard to Choice is the need for a much reduced contribution from local authorities with the ultimate aim of making Choice self sustaining beyond 2011/12.

3.4 YB confirmed that the overall recommendation is to continue with the product. Comments from members as follows:

- Watershed moment; needs to have sign-up from all the local authorities to be a 'pan London' prospectus or not at all.
- Needs a far better search engine.
- Would the refreshed product allow for links to boroughs directly adjacent to London ones? YB confirmed yes (subject to adjacent areas having an on-line prospectus).
- This would be a good support mechanism for Next Steps and Connexions transition.
- There would be an element of risk in signing up to something that may not be able to be 'self sustaining', predicated 80% advertising revenue may not be achievable and there would need to be strong censorship in place to ensure against inappropriate advertising.
- Issues of impartiality and providers that can afford advertising. How would this help to support local authorities fulfil their statutory duty to provide impartial IAG? How is RPG proposing to ensure that information will be impartial?
- A worthwhile exercise would be to look at the landscape without Choice and what the implications might be.
- Young people get their information from a wide range of sources/areas and have always done so.
- There was some agreement for a one-year option and suggestion that we might want to consider other software developers to ensure a good system is in place.

3.5 MVM advised that final agreement for funding would rest with ALDCS and Leaders.

Action: (56a): YB to redraft recommendations for Choice incorporating OSG members comments.

Action: (56b): MVM and NB to discuss arrangements for final agreement.

4 RPG Work Plan

4.1 The work plan shows RPG team planned activities to end of March 2011. MVM welcomed any comments about content/layout (offering traffic light system if preferred).

- JH asked for a copy of the letter that was sent to DMAG and offered support to address the matter.
- LPUK are undertaking pilot testing with specific boroughs on 'Travel to Success' but this will eventually be pan London.

5 RPG work plan monitoring

- **Data: NB/YB** – the next meeting is arranged for 12/11 and has a very full agenda. DAG will be receiving an update on Marconi v2 – work to deploy MI directly to local authority desktops. Considerable progress has been made but firewall issues remain a serious hurdle. Pilot boroughs have been incredibly supportive in helping to resolve problems. The YPLA National Data Group is also considering this project.
- **Improving choice for young people (ICYP): WF/YB** – it was noted that there was a low local authority turnout to the meeting and OSG members were asked to consider what would be good representation for the group. JH said this is a shared

agenda and would be happy to be involved. There was some concern that there might be duplication of work with other non-RPG groups.

- **ESF: JB/MVM** – JB advised that the NE Cluster is in dialogue as to how to undertake information sharing with providers whilst avoiding conflicts of interest. They have an event scheduled for 3 December. MVM advised that we have commissioned GLE to try support partnership working and voluntary and community sector involvement. A couple of ESF Cluster groups still need to trigger debate. Dialogue needs to occur but local authorities need to be exceptionally careful not to be seen to prefer some bidding preparations in order to avoid conflicts of interest. There is some confusion within West Central Cluster to which JB offered support if they wish to contact her directly. It was asked if it was possible to discover who had successfully completed PQQ's for Skills Funding Agency NEET activity as this would prove useful. MP said he would pursue this with Skills Funding Agency. It was agreed that communications need to be clear, direct and on a regular basis. It was noted that the ESF cluster groups which differ from the existing commissioning clusters are not always conducive to good ways of working.

Action: (57): MP to see if successful PQQ provider list can be shared.

- **LLDD:** HMc confirmed that there had been a very good response to the call for expert volunteers to form a working group to develop regional proposals. As well as developing a set of pan London protocols, the group is also working on developing local provision. YB will be presenting the proposals to LLDD networks across London to gather feedback from a broad range of stakeholders and gain strategic buy in.

Action (58): RPG to circulate LLDD work plan.

6 AOB

- 6.1 YB advised members that the London Councils website is undergoing a refresh over the next couple of weeks which might lead to some disruption to the service.
- 6.2 WF asked whether a future meeting should address clusters working at a regional/sub-regional level and how the positioning of regional against sub-regional might work; in the first instance local authorities need to have clarification on commissioning tasks that need to be undertaken.
- 6.3 MP was asked whether success rates and benchmarking material would be available in the near future. MP agreed to look into this.
- 6.4 MVM **tabled** a summary of LA responses so far to the RPG review noting that the results show a strong indication for keeping RPG going forward.

Next meeting: Friday 3rd December, 10-12noon, meeting room 4, London Councils

Apologies received in advance of the next meeting:

*John Hegerty
Jo Baty
Trevor Cook*