

Young People's Education & Skills Board

Wolf Review - The Government's Response to The Wolf Report into Vocational Education in England **Item No: 5**

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Summary – This paper summarises the government's response to the Wolf Report and its implications for London.

Recommendations – The Board is asked to discuss this report and identify implications for strategic partners in London and the work of London Councils: Young People's Education & Skills

1 Background and Introduction

- 1.1 On 9th September 2010, Michael Gove commissioned Professor Alison Wolf of King's College London to carry out an independent review of vocational education. She was asked to consider how vocational education for 14-19 year-olds can be improved in order to promote successful progression into the labour market and into higher education and training routes. She was also asked to provide practical recommendations to help future policy direction, taking into account current financial constraints.
- 1.2 Professor Wolf's report was published on 3rd March 2011 and London Councils: Young People's Education and Skills Team (YPES) published a detailed commentary, which has been discussed in depth both by the Operational Sub-Group and at a 14-19 Leads Conference. This [paper is available on our website \(item 4.\)](#).
- 1.3 Underlying the recommendations in the Wolf Report are the following principles of reform:
- The system should not railroad young people into dead-end learning pathways – instead, it should offer as much scope as possible for young people to make "labour market and educational progress on a wide front"
 - Government must provide young people with accurate and useful information, so that young people can make decisions accordingly

- The system in England is complex and opaque when compared with other countries and must be simplified drastically.

1.4 The Secretary of State and Lord Hill stated the government's response to the Houses of Parliament on 12th May.

2 Overview of the response

2.1 On its publication, Michael Gove called the Wolf Report "brilliant and ground-breaking" and immediately accepted four of the detailed recommendations:

- To allow qualified further education lecturers to teach in school classrooms on the same basis as qualified school teachers
- To clarify the rules on allowing industry professionals to teach in schools
- To allow any vocational qualification offered by a regulated awarding body to be taken by 14-19 year-olds
- To allow established, high-quality vocational qualifications that have not been accredited to be offered in schools and colleges in September 2011.

2.2 In his May announcement, the Secretary of State has now demonstrated that the government accepts and will adopt the remaining recommendations. These include:

- Ensuring all young people study maths and English to age 18 until they get a good qualification in those subjects. Ideally this will be a C or better at GCSE but high quality alternatives will be identified following a consultation this summer.
- Reforming league tables and funding rules to remove the perverse incentives that have devalued vocational education. This will mean more young people take the high quality qualifications that lead to university and good jobs.
- Consulting with employers, schools, colleges, universities and Ofqual this summer to define the criteria that the best vocational qualifications must meet.
- Introducing a new measure to assess the performance of both higher- and lower attaining pupils. This will ensure schools and college do not focus only on students on the C/D grade borderline.
- Considering paying businesses that take young people on to high-quality apprenticeships. Apprenticeships will also be simplified and made easier to offer;
- Supporting 14- to 16-year-olds enrolling in colleges so they can benefit from the excellent vocational training available there;
- Offering training to maths teachers so they continue improving and learning once qualified. This will be in place by this autumn.

2.3 Although the principles and recommendations of the report have been accepted by the government, its response does not provide a detailed implementation plan or timetable.

3 Implications for London

3.1 YPES is in a strong position to influence thinking on how these reforms may be taken forward and will actively engage in shaping policy response and implementation. In terms of implications for London, we intend to prioritise the following:

- How English and maths GCSEs are taught in London (for example, a recent Ofsted study identified in London two case studies of excellent English teaching and learning); how they are becoming the 'currency' in employment and what arrangements may need to be made for those young people who do not achieve at least Grade C at GCSE to retake their examinations, or to achieve appropriate alternative and recognised qualifications at Level 2 by the age of 19.

- How the expansion of Apprenticeships may be taken forward in London consistent with the strategies of the London Enterprise Partnership and the government's approach to helping young people into work.¹
- How, and at what age, work experience should be provided for young people and how this should be coordinated to support businesses in London, especially small and medium-sized enterprises upon which there remain significant competitive pressures.
- Developing the capacity within London schools, academies and colleges to engage with businesses so that they can contribute effectively to the design (and where appropriate the delivery) of the curriculum and the assessment of vocational qualifications. Capturing the potential for direct links between educational institutions and business during a period of intense infrastructural development and key events such as the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games will be a key priority in the immediate future.
- The infrastructure in London necessary to support high quality vocational learning.

3.2 In addition YPES will continue to seek to influence important areas not covered by the Wolf Report or the government's response. In particular:

- Foundation learning
- Quality assurance and improvement
- Careers education, information, advice and guidance.

4. Recommendation

4.1 The Board is asked to discuss this report and identify implications for strategic partners in London and the work of London Councils: Young People's Education & Skills

¹ "Supporting Youth Employment" was also published on 12th May and refers to Michael Gove's announcement. Although the strategy is largely a package of existing measures, it also includes an increase in work placements, a new £10m – each year - Innovation Fund for voluntary groups to help NEETs back into work, a new Access to Apprenticeships Programme and new sector-based Academies providing work experience / training; the first, in hospitality / retail to open in August this year.