

Notes

London 14-19 Regional Planning Group

Date 14 February 2011 **Venue** London Councils
Meeting Chair Cllr Steve Reed
Contact Officer: Jonathan Rallings
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Attendance:

Members:

Cllr Steve Reed (SR)	– London Councils Lead Member for Children and Young People (<i>Chair</i>)
Frankie Sulke (FS)	– Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS) (<i>Vice-chair</i>)
Jack Morris (JM)	– London Skills and Employment Board (LSEB) (<i>Vice-chair</i>)
Dr Caroline Allen (CA)	– Association of Colleges (AoC)/ Association of National Specialist Colleges (NATSPEC)
Pam Chesters (PC)	– Greater London Authority (GLA)
Victor Farlie (VF)	– London Work Based Learning Alliance (LWBLA)
Cllr Liz Green (LG)	– London Councils Liberal Democrat Group Member (Kingston)
Vic Grimes (VG)	– National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)
Peter Lang (PL)	– Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)
Frank McLoughlin (FM)	– AoC (FE College Member)
Dr Jane Overbury (JO)	– AoC (Sixth Form College Member)
Mike Pettifer (MP)	– Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA)
Tim Shields (TS)	– Chief Executives' London Committee (CELC)
Cllr David Simmonds (DS)	– London Councils Conservative Group Member (Hillingdon)
Christopher Wright (CW)	– Skills Funding Agency

Officers:

Mary Vine-Morris (MVM)	– RPG Director
Jonathan Rallings	– London Councils (<i>Secretary</i>)

Guests and Observers:

Kate Anderson (KA)	– AoC
Nick Brenton (NB)	– ALDCS
Aidan Jones (AJ)	– WorldSkills London 2011
Philippa Langton (PLa)	– Skills Funding Agency
Gerard McAlea (GM)	– Department for Education (DfE)

Apologies

Sue Baldwin	– DfE
Brendan Loughran	– London Development Agency (LDA)
Nick Lester	– London Councils
Pat Reynolds	– ALDCS

1 Welcome and introductions

- 1.1 SR welcomed members to the meeting and apologised that he would need to leave the meeting early, indicating that Frankie Sulke (FS) as Vice Chair would then take the Chair.

2 Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 There were no new declarations of interest to be made at this meeting.

3 Minutes of the last meeting (20 September 2010)

- 3.1 MVM updated the group on the progress on action points agreed at the last meeting. FS mentioned it is odd that the Department for Education (DfE) has only agreed RPG's staff funding for 2011/12, whereas individual local authorities have received confirmation of the budget line for the next four years. She reminded the group that it was a decision by London's local government, to topslice local authority allocations in order to place staff centrally at London Councils to act as the RPG team. If the DfE were to withdraw the grant from London Councils it must be argued that this money should be repatriated to London Boroughs. SR proposed that there should be a formal approach to DfE on this basis.

Decision:	The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.
Action:	London Councils to lobby DfE on 4 year funding commitment for RPG

4 Policy Context - Education Bill

- 4.1 FS presented this item summarising the key points in the Education Bill indicating that the Bill reinforces the local authority's strategic/galvanising role in relation to education – but crucially it gives them little leverage in order to exercise this role. She added that in addition to measures covered in the paper, the duty for local authorities to be responsible for intervening in Sixth Form Colleges (SFC) had been removed and transferred to the Secretary of State. This will effectively give SFCs the same status as FE colleges; and Academies from now on.
- 4.2 FM commented that it was interesting that the decision to retain the Raising the Participation Age legislation did not seem to have been thought about much within the sector yet. SR suggested this subject should be added to a future RPG Agenda for full discussion. FS added that this was important as maintaining the downward trajectory for the number of young people not in education, employment or training is becoming increasingly critical in the present economic climate, as is addressing London's high drop out rate at age 17.

Decision:	RPG members noted the item
Action:	Raising The Participation Age to be added to the agenda of an RPG Meeting later in the year.

5 2011/12 Indicative Learner Volumes In London

(nb – this item was moved from its original position of item 9 on the agenda in order to ensure the chair and a departing member would be present to discuss)

- 5.1 MP presented this item detailing the present projections of learner volumes for the forthcoming academic year. The overall budget for London will be increasing by 1.5%, although a participation increase and other funding pressures means the unit rate paid to providers will decrease.
- 5.2 VF commented on the large year-on-year decrease in students opting to access Independent Private Providers (IPP). MP agreed the data currently suggests learners are moving towards schools/academies this year, but the reasons why are unknown and probably material for a research project.

- 5.3 PL stated that head teachers are very concerned about the settlement for Post-16 education. Although lagged numbers will have to play to out in the current year, schools believe they have the data to facilitate in-year reconciliation which would help. MP responded that the new system was a specific policy decision of the Coalition Government, but YPLA are doing their best to make it as transparent as possible. FM believed that the lagged funding system risked 'locking up' places with underperforming providers for too long whilst better quality provision wouldn't be able to bring more students in. Quality needed to be factored into the system.
- 5.4 FM also commented that colleges were pleased they would be put on an equal funding footing with schools, although it was disappointing that this would be achieved by reducing the amount schools receive rather than increasing the amount to colleges. FS felt RPG should be concerned whether the transitional period of three years towards convergence is sufficient to prevent instability. Although there is a 3% buffer in place this year, this may be changed in the future and is likely to severely hit School 6th Forms. RPG needs to understand the impact this may have, and to engage with the DfE if there is a particular issue from a London perspective.
- 5.5 PC challenged why providers are being guaranteed three years' funding protection if they are not heading where the market's going? Whilst welcoming the overall shake-up she wondered if the new system would really allow the market to move flexibly to better meet the needs of young people. She felt it was important to not just aim for a level playing field on funding, but also on an appropriate mix of provision and qualifications. This would allow more young people to opt for the correct choices, and help to get them to the right destinations.
- 5.6 MP said the government sees students as the customer and the YPLA was gradually collating data to better reflect this – although more was needed about student destinations. CW pointed out Apprenticeships were missing from the current report being considered.
- 5.7 FS posed the question of whether London has sufficient skills education – more information is needed to help agencies commission the right provision that leads to employment. It is also important that RPG takes the initiative to ensure IAG in the capital is independent and delivered outside schools as well as within.

Decision:	RPG members noted the report
Action:	Next RPG meeting to consider the implications of funding plans

(nb. Chair SR had to leave at this point. FS, as deputy, took over chairing the meeting)

6 Future Role and Remit of RPG *(originally due to be item 5. of agenda)*

New Role and Membership

- 6.1 FS and MVM introduced this item setting out how RPG might respond to the review of its role, the findings of which were presented to the last RPG meeting (22 November 2010).
- 6.2 DS felt that a further change needed to be made to the wording in the constitution given not all Boroughs have a specific "Director of Children's Services" and para 9.1 should add "or equivalent". JM informed the group that as the LSEB was in the process of bidding to become the London Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and suggested the constitution might also revise the reference to LSEB in para 1.2.3. Additionally MVM reported she had spoken with Sue Baldwin of the DfE, who had suggested that they would no longer need representation on the group but would welcome a continued involvement as appropriate.
- 6.3 LG added that it was important that the terms of reference for the Operational Sub-Group (OSG) needed to be consistent with changes to RPG. MVM confirmed that work was already underway to ensure this - OSG has and will always work directly to the remit of the RPG board.
- 6.4 PC wondered if the membership needed to be revised to include the voice of young people within RPG. FS supported this idea but wondered whether this meant inviting them to meetings, or establishing a specific sub-group? LG felt that a young person may have difficulty understanding all of the intricacies of RPG meetings. On that basis maybe a specific group would be better? FMc disagreed feeling that this would not be the case provided the right young person were recruited – perhaps from a governing body?

- 6.5 FS felt if there was to be representation to fully reflect geography and different types of provision this would need to be done in a group, but there was no reason why this sub-group might not then nominate a representative onto the RPG itself? PC felt maybe two young people should be co-opted onto the RPG for a year and their involvement then assessed at the end of this period. CA remarked that for her group of learners to be adequately represented they would need support.

Decision:	RPG members agreed the refocused role of the RPG
Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RPG Constitution to be amended to reflect changes discussed. • Proposals for the representation of the Learner Voice to be presented to the next RPG meeting

New Name

- 6.6 RPG members considered some options for new names for the group. There was general consensus that it was important for London Councils to be included as part of the title of the group as well as 'Education and Skills'. This narrowed choices down to:
- *London Councils: 14-19 Education and Skills*
 - *London Councils: Young People's Education and Skills*
- 6.7 There was debate over whether the term '14-19' or 'Young People' should be used. DS and LG felt '14-19' was explicit to the age group of the RPG's remit and provided some continuity with the previous title, *London 14-19 Regional Planning Group*, whereas 'young people' was somewhat less specific. The opposing view led by JM was that '14-19' is language which education professionals understand, but is not widely known outside of these circles (particularly as it does not even say '14-19' *year-olds*). Young people could be seen as a more accessible term and also better encompasses the older age group of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities for whom the group has responsibility up to age 25.
- 6.8 A majority agreed with the suggestion of FS that the final decision on the name should be passed to the absent chair, SR, along with the detail of this discussion. DS registered his dissent to this decision.

Decision:	RPG members agreed that, subject to Chair's final decision, one of the following names would be adopted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>London Councils: 14-19 Education and Skills</i> • <i>London Councils: Young People's Education and Skills</i>
Action:	SR to be presented with detail of discussion and his final decision communicated to RPG members in advance of the 2011/12 financial year commencing.

7 WorldSkills London 2011 (originally due to be item 6. of agenda)

- 7.1 FS welcomed Aidan Jones (AJ) and Philippa Langton (PLa) who presented this item informing RPG about the forthcoming WorldSkills London 2011 event in October. Aidan Jones acknowledged the contribution of London Councils YPES and in particular the idea of Junior WorldSkills 2011.
- 7.2 JM asked how can the RPG best promote WorldSkills? AJ said schools and colleges were being contacted at present and the Board could help raise their awareness and promote involvement.
- 7.3 LG asked if there were plans to get information to London councillors as they would be very interested in the event. PC added that schools would be more likely to pay attention to information from trusted sources, which is why engaging key people in local authorities to promote WorldSkills 2011 was vital.
- 7.4 FS stated that ALDCS would ensure that Directors of Children's Services get on board, and consider how best to get primary schools involved. FS thanked AJ and PLa for their informative presentation and asked that the Board continues to be kept informed.

Decision:	RPG members noted the report
Action:	Members to be kept informed on progress of Worldskills London 2011

8 Apprenticeships (originally due to be item 7. of agenda)

- 8.1 VG presented an update on Apprenticeships in London, noting significant improvements in take-up and achievement.
- 8.2 LG suggested that the breakdowns of apprenticeship take-up by borough, could better reflect the population size to make them more comparable.
- 8.3 JM noted that SMEs are an issue in terms of engagement with apprenticeship programmes. DS agreed and said that there are some mistaken perceptions about apprenticeships which are putting employers off and better information would help. VG confirmed that clear and concise information for learners and employers was a NAS priority.

Decision:	RPG members noted the report
Action:	A further, in-depth analysis on progress was requested for a future meeting

9 Local Authority Strategic Commissioning Role (originally due to be item 8. of agenda)

- 9.1 The report on the Local Authority Strategic Commissioning role, as outlined in the YPLA Statutory Guidance issued in December 2010, was noted – the implications had been considered under the item on the Education Bill. A summary of the YPLA 16-19 Funding Statement, also issued in December 2010, was tabled.

Decision:	RPG members noted the report
Action:	

10 All Age Careers Service

- 10.1 FS introduced Gerard McAlea (GM) from DfE to present this item outlining the Government's progress to date in introducing a new all-age careers service.
- 10.2 DS asked when more information would be made available and what is the timetable for implementation? GM said more details should be available shortly.
- 10.3 FS pointed out the capacity for schools to deliver IAG is a big issue. PC agreed highlighting that young people need accurate and comprehensive information.
- 10.4 JM felt that the design and quality of the service would be very important and asked were parents/students involved in advising the DfE. GM said that they weren't as yet.

Decision:	RPG members noted the report
Action:	All Age Careers Service to be discussed more fully at next RPG meeting when further information should be available.

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 24 May, 2pm - 4pm