

London 14-19 Regional Planning Group – Operational Sub-Group

RPG Review – Proposed Terms Of Reference

Item No: 4

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Summary This paper proposes a review of the role and responsibilities of the London 14-19 Regional Planning Group in light of local authorities' continuing statutory responsibilities for strategic commissioning within a changing 14-19 policy framework.

Recommendation RPG on 20/9/10 approved the review being undertaken within the scope set out in this paper. OSG members are asked to discuss and make recommendations on the processes for undertaking this review with a view to reporting back to RPG at the November meeting

1 Background

- 1.1 The London 14-19 Regional Planning Group (RPG) has been established to support local authorities in their new duties for commissioning of 16-19 education and training assumed from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). A shadow RPG was established in July 2008 to help oversee the transition process, and the group was formalised by London Councils Leaders' Committee in December 2009.
- 1.2 The London model - a regional rather than sub-regional approach to commissioning - was developed to maximise effective regional collaboration arrangements and to provide strong strategic leadership across the capital. The RPG's present functions are principally to support London's local authorities in commissioning 16-19 education and training; provide strategic leadership and direction for future commissioning; and conduct a small amount of commissioning at regional level where it is more cost effective to do so.
- 1.3 Whilst changes have been made to some aspects of 16-19 commissioning since ministerial announcements in July 2010, the core element of commissioning - the statutory obligation to secure enough suitable education and training for 16-19 year olds¹ - remains the responsibility of local authorities. The Secretary of State, in his letter to the Chair of the Local Government Association's Children & Young People's Board indicated:

"...local authorities would be able to fulfil their strategic commissioning and influencing roles by maintaining the strategic overview of provision and needs in their area – identifying gaps, enabling new provision and developing the market..."

¹ This duty also includes young people subject to a learning difficulty assessment up to the age of 25

In consequence, the role of the RPG remains significant for London.

- 1.4 It is important to highlight that considerable work is currently taking place on the detail of the changes that were announced in July² and local government representatives are actively engaged in discussions to ensure that changes do not in any way hinder authorities' ability to discharge their commissioning duties effectively. The key issues under discussion are:
- from September 2010 the funding process for the 2011/12 will be simplified to reflect 'lagged learner numbers' i.e. providers will be allocated funding based on learner numbers in the previous academic year;
 - in keeping with the government's drive to devolve responsibility to frontline professionals, it will be for institutions to decide on their curriculum offer and mix of provision in response to the needs of individuals and employers.
- 1.5 The impact of these changes form part of current discussions and greater clarification will emerge during autumn 2010.

2 Rationale

- 2.1 14-19 commissioning arrangements in London are different to take account of the capital's distinct regional characteristics and its unique geography. Complex travel-to-learn patterns link all local authorities together more closely than any other region of the country, which was recognised in the planning process for the transfer of LSC functions.
- 2.2 It is recognised that the future prosperity of the capital is inextricably linked to the success and achievement of its young people and in order to better meet the needs of employers and young Londoners a strategic leadership role was envisaged, not dissimilar to that undertaken by the London Skills and Employment Board (LSEB) in relation to the capital's adult skills strategy.
- 2.3 Strong strategic leadership combined with some form of regional consolidation of local commissioning priorities will continue to bring benefits to young Londoners. However, changes in education policy will clearly have an impact on local authorities, which in turn will impact on the function of the RPG in the future. It is therefore proposed that a review is conducted to establish what changes there should be to the role and responsibilities of the RPG to ensure that effective leadership and support continues to be provided within the new policy framework.

3 RPG Review

- 3.1 It is proposed the review should operate within the scope set out as follows:

3.2 Terms of Reference

- The review will be led by the London 14-19 Regional Planning Group (RPG) and chaired by the RPG chair
- The review is to be conducted to establish how the RPG can better support local authorities in undertaking their continuing statutory commissioning duties, paying reference to new and emerging policy
- The review will consider the respective roles of local authorities, providers and key stakeholders on a pan-London basis in relation to 14-19 education and training commissioning
- The review will take into account reasonable projections of the impact of a demand-led, more market-driven system of commissioning
- The review will reflect the need to secure best value in relation to the present economic climate

² *Government cuts more red to simplify college funding* - Department for Education press notice 20 July 2010

- The review will consider whether any amendment to governance arrangements is appropriate
- In so far as is possible the review should seek a view on future funding arrangements
- The review will be responsive to changes in national policy which may be swift and alter the scope of the review
- The findings of the review will be considered by the RPG Board in November 2010, with the recommendations presented to London Councils Leaders Committee for approval, in line with the RPG constitution.

3.3 Consultation with Stakeholders

The following stakeholders will be consulted as part of the review:

- All 32 London local authorities and the City of London
- London providers via key provider bodies, including the Association of Colleges London Region (AoC); London Work-based Learning Alliance (LWBLA); Association of School & College Leaders (ASCL); Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT)
- London Skills and Employment Board (LSEB)
- Greater London Authority (GLA)
- Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA)
- National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)
- Skills Funding Agency (SFA)
- Employers via key employer bodies (e.g. London First; London Chamber of Commerce; Confederation of British Industry (CBI))

3.4 Key issues to be considered by the review

- How should the functions of the RPG change to ensure continued strategic leadership for the planning of 14-19 provision in London?
- How does the RPG navigate the current proposals for lagged funding which are likely to significantly reduce scope for commissioning decisions and reduce strategic planning opportunities across the capital?
- How should the RPG support local authorities to maintain and strengthen their relationships with providers to ensure commissioning decisions continue to be made in the interests of young people?
- How can the RPG best work with providers to ensure that gaps in the market regionally are addressed and an appropriate mix of provision is available to young people?
- How does the RPG's strong relationship with the LSEB continue in the light of these developments and given proposed changes to the LDA and GLA
- How can the RPG play a role in identifying gaps and helping new providers to enter the 'market'?
- What should the RPG's role be in supporting local authorities to act as arbiters of quality in 14-19 provision in London?
- To what extent should the RPG continue to commission regional activity?

4 **Recommendation**

- 4.1 OSG members are asked to discuss and make recommendations on the processes for undertaking this review with a view to reporting back to RPG at the November meeting.