

Working Title: Choice, Support, Success - priorities for young Londoners 2011/12

Introduction / Foreword: "Raising the Bar"

Since the publication of the last regional statement of priorities ("Taking A Lead, Making A Difference"), local authorities have resumed responsibility for 16-19 funding and a new Coalition Government has taken office following the general election. Guided by the principles of freedom, fairness and responsibility, the government has already signalled some fundamental changes in education policy, including:

- The promise of a far-reaching education and children's bill in autumn 2010
- Immediate expansion of the academy programme
- New free schools
- Pupil premium
- The promise of further progressive reform through a Public Bodies Bill

With such a radical shift in policy, we believed that it was not appropriate for the RPG to produce a five-year strategy as envisaged in last year's statement of priorities. Instead, we are refreshing the priorities based on the current legislative and policy architecture.

Clearly, all of us involved in 16-18 funding are very much alive to the need for flexibility in terms of timescale and approach, as the position is subject to quite fundamental change; possibly in very tight timescales. Nonetheless we are all determined to get the best deal for Londoners and to make the system work for the best.

The experience of London's councils during the transition year and since the handover of responsibility in April clearly demonstrates our adaptability and our unique ability to deliver excellent services in challenging times. This is a clear tribute to the staff, providers and stakeholders involved.

We are confident that the arrangements we have put in place will serve Londoners well in the future. Together, we are uniquely placed to ensure the continued success of our young people.

Taking a lead in a changing environment

The new coalition government has announced significant changes to education policy which will have a strong impact on 16-19 education and training. These include

- (a) widely expanding the **academies** programme, which has the potential to take many maintained schools out of local authority control leaving councils with a rather different strategic role in local education provision.
- (b) introducing '**free schools**', which will offer the opportunity for parents, community organizations, and potentially others to set up their own schools with state funding.
- (c) putting forward an **Education and Children's Bill** that will provide for a slimmer curriculum, introducing a 'pupil premium' for schools that take in the most disadvantaged children.
- (d) suggested reforms to various education-focussed **public bodies**.
- (e) removing the **entitlement** to follow a Diploma pathway that had previously been available to young people
- (f) reduced the burden of **bureaucracy** on schools, sixth form colleges and FE colleges
- (g) in line with the government's more general fiscal policy aimed at reducing the budget deficit, **reduced spending** on some educational programmes whilst preserving in overall terms 16-19 funding and announced a freeze on funding rates and public servants' salaries.

Transforming challenge into opportunity

- **Foster a system in which learners are able to make effective decisions about their learning journey, and ensure the provision available allows them to progress successfully in it:**
 - Continuously improve CEIAG services through strong local authority leadership and partnerships
 - Encourage providers to have effective initial assessment procedures in place
 - Provide a full curriculum offer via existing and new provision
 - Monitor success, retention and other VfM indicators to encourage effective places utilisation and challenge poor performance
- **Ensure that the needs of all learners are met:**
 - Avoid over-delivery of Level 3 qualifications and challenge poor quality Level 3 provision
 - Ensure there is sufficient and suitable FL and Level 2 provision to support YP to progress to Level 3
- **Gain a better understanding of post-16 participation:**
 - Encourage post-16 providers to track leaver destinations
 - Develop local authority level intelligence on 17 yr olds leaving learning to inform planning and CEIAG
- **Narrow the attainment gap of vulnerable learners:**
 - Continue to review and build the capacity of LLDD provision in London
 - Ensure that vulnerable learners receive the correct level of support throughout their learning
 - Pay specific attention to the quality of provision in deprived/disadvantaged areas of London to give the best possible chance for all young Londoners

Transition Year evaluation

- Overall sense of 'as good as it could have gone'
- Areas to improve:
 - Communications;
 - Definition of organisational roles;
 - Making sure system is robust for the future

Priorities and Commissioning Statements

1. All young people on the education & training programme of their choice

This is an issue for three main reasons:

- The reform of education is intended to give the learners' needs and choices paramount importance;
- Institutions have greater freedom to meet these needs and to be accountable locally; and
- Local authorities have more power to join up services for the benefit of their young residents.

Throughout London, the system has to produce sufficient opportunities, in the right locations, delivering a mixed curriculum suitable for students with diverse needs, at a high standard to enable young people to succeed. There are two main considerations here. First is the desire to have access to specialist provision to students throughout London; while at the same time to ensure cost-effective distribution of places throughout London – all the more imperative in the current funding climate.

Local planning of provision will also enable 14-19 partnerships and Children's Trusts to look at the local provider infrastructure and develop more innovative and locally-relevant ways to address gaps in provision, in which respect the role of Academies, Free Schools and other potential providers, including Third Sector Organisations, could be an important consideration. However, only through aggregation of local authority commissioning plans will the overall supply of places, and access to the full curriculum, become clear. The RPG will be able to identify unmet need and overprovision across London as a whole.

Addressing the issue: Commissioning Statements for 2011/12

1. Local authorities' commissioning plans will be based on a review of existing provision and proposals for new sixth form provision with a view to providing a full curriculum offer suitable to the wide range of learner needs, building on the current high levels of participation. They will take account of any learner displacement resulting from infrastructure developments.

2. The needs of young people and their success are paramount – commissioning provision that is located out of the Borough will be more appropriate in many cases and it is essential to ensure the effectiveness of inter-Borough dialogue. The RPG or the Regional Allocations Group (RAG) may want to set out the precise conditions when regional commissioning may be most appropriate.

3. There will need to be sufficient volume of local provision below Level 3 for local school leavers not achieving 5 A*-C at KS4 and commissioning will have to take account of well-established patterns of travel to effective provision in neighbouring boroughs, which have been confirmed through interborough dialogue.

4. Places at foundation level and for study towards general qualifications, diplomas and apprenticeships at levels 2 and 3 will need to be available to ensure that all learners' choices and needs can be met in full.

5. In the light of early experiences in formulating commissioning plans, the usefulness of the data intelligence packs will need to be evaluated and a clear specification provided to the YPLA for the submission of data to inform local authorities' commissioning cycles. More emphasis will need to be placed on progression and destinations data, including that which will be used in Framework for Excellence, during commissioning dialogues with providers.

6. A range of opportunities to enable young offenders to resettle, reintegrate with civic society and enter employment, education or training will need to be provided across London and special attention needs to be paid to the progression of young people leaving care so that they can move into further education opportunities or employment.

2. All vulnerable young people will benefit from the changes we are making

This is an issue because meeting the needs of our most vulnerable young people, particularly those learners with learning difficulties and disabilities (14-25), is critical to our strategy. As we move to full participation, we will increasingly need to address the needs of more vulnerable young people, many of whom do not currently take advantage of the learning opportunities open to them. Making full use of Foundation Learning progression pathways to increase the opportunities so that they can fulfil their potential as envisaged in the strategy 'Learning for Living at Working in London' will also be a clear focus for local authorities. Major challenges exist in addressing drop-out at 17 and making a suitable offer to particularly vulnerable young people and those with special needs.

Addressing the issue: Commissioning Statements for 2011/12

1. Foundation Learning needs to be available in sufficient volumes and easily accessible by those young people who may be hardest to engage.

2. Robust regional commissioning needs to secure provision to address highly specialist (foundation) learning needs.

3. All young people to have great opportunities for work and moving on

This is an issue because two learning pathways are under-developed in London and these are the two most associated with learners entering the labour market. Potentially, both Apprenticeships and Diplomas are pivotal to raising the profile of vocational and applied learning, preparing young people for entry into the labour market and ensuring that those who enter jobs between the ages of 16-18 participate in learning. As major employers in their own right, local government is best placed to take a lead in increasing learning at work, including the provision of Apprenticeships. Boroughs can also build on education-business links to secure employer engagement in the

design and delivery of Apprenticeships and Diplomas through close alignment with inward investment, enterprise and place-shaping activities. However, the take-up of Apprenticeships in London has never been high and falls well short of the Government's aspiration of 20% of the cohort entering an Apprenticeship.

The London Apprenticeship Task Force has identified the following sectors as offering the best potential for growing the number of Apprenticeship opportunities:

- Business and Information Technology (particularly IT professionals)
- Sport and Active Leisure
- Logistics
- Passenger Transport
- Retail
- Public Sector
- Health
- Cultural and Creative industries
- Hospitality
- Financial services
- Business services

Addressing the issue: Commissioning statements for 2011/12

1. Diplomas are instrumental in building the reputation of vocational learning and providing an alternative and attractive pathway for learners.

2. There is a commitment to work with the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) to implement the London Borough Apprenticeship Plan 2009 – 2012, especially with regard to each council's own recruitment practices, their influence over suppliers, developers & partners (including the GLA and NHS London) and major infrastructure projects such as Crossrail and the London 2012 Games and their legacy.

3. Alongside place-shaping strategies, enterprise and inward investment initiatives that build on the Government's economic recovery strategy may be supported by Apprenticeships, particularly those arising from Group Training Agencies and the work of the NAS' National Employers Service. In particular, work in boroughs that engage businesses active in the sectors prioritised by the NAS are likely to be most readily supported by the NAS.

4. The reduction of NEET is an ongoing priority for London. Local authorities now have the ability to align initiatives to prevent NEET, re-engage NEET and prepare young people for work with the boroughs' local area agreements, place shaping priorities and new employment opportunities, especially in the key industries identified by the LSEB so that appropriate places can be offered and confirmed as part of the September and January Guarantees, or equivalents that emerge from the autumn 2010 roll-out of The Work Programme.

5. Councils' planning role enables them to link local infrastructure projects with job and training opportunities – this is even more significant when

regional and national projects are taken into account. For example, the five host boroughs for the 2012 London Games are implementing the Strategic Regeneration Framework to achieve the Olympic legacy vision.

6. Place shaping strategies, particularly those in particularly deprived and disadvantaged areas of London, will need to address the quality of education and training provision for young people.

4. All young people to get the best support and guidance.

This is an issue because young people will not make the most of the 14-19 reforms unless excellent and impartial careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) is available to them, especially at key transition points during the 16-18 phase of their education and learning. CEIAG influences young people's and parents' / carers' choices and decisions.

The national standards for CEIAG have been published and we are committed to apply these standards throughout London. We have Choice in place as the Pan London 14-19 e-prospectus Common Application Process pilot projects to learn from throughout London.

The Achieving Excellence project has developed products that can support improvements in CEIAG delivery consistent with the National Statutory Guidance Framework. The project's four themes are:

- Commissioning (applying the national standards consistently in London)
- Quality (introducing a system that measures and reports on the attainment of the national standards)
- Workforce (developing consistency and high standards of delivery)
- Resources (achieving an appropriate level of local flexibility)

Addressing the issue: Commissioning Statements for 2011/12

1. Implement pan-London CEIAG offer to support 16-18 commissioning
2. Achieving Excellence Advisory Group to promote CEIAG products
3. Establish the desired progression route for each individual at the outset of their learning journey and design and deliver a curriculum personalised to their needs.

5. All young people to reach their full potential.

This is an issue because to meet the entitlement all provision commissioned in London will have to be of high quality. Whilst the NCF identifies some minimum standards for publicly-funded provision, we should consider carefully how to define high quality provision and how best to achieve the balance between genuinely improving provision and taking steps to de-commission provision that has fallen below pre-set standards. Local control improves the flow of funding to areas of greatest need and accelerates the rate at which the gaps between highest and lowest achievers can be closed. Ensuring equity of standards across learning routes is essential for increasing the esteem of foundation and vocational learning and providing varied means to improve

both Level 3 provision and attainment. Building high quality by design into Foundation Learning options will also be vital. Learning Plus UK (LPUK) has provided value-added data and key performance comparisons during the transition period through the 'data dashboards'. LPUK is able to assist local authorities and providers to develop the link between performance, data, funding and improvement. There is a risk that the foreseen pressure on public funds will have a detrimental effect on the quantity of high quality opportunities available in London.

Addressing the issue: Commissioning statements for 2011/12

1. The NCF identifies minimum standards that have to be met. These include the Framework for Excellence, Ofsted Inspection grades and Minimum Levels of Performance relating to learners' success or achievements. It is unlikely that there will be discretion for continued use of public funding in any organisation that does not meet, sustain and improve on these minimum standards.

2. Local authorities and the Learning and Skills Improvement Service have a role in monitoring and supporting improving standards and performance in 16-18 provision. Quality improvement that examines how each institution meets the specific, personal needs of its learners is needed to secure long-term improvement against the standards identified in the NCF.

3. Ultimately, the NCF provides for the withdrawal of funding from areas of provision or whole providers under certain circumstances. We are minded to state that in 2011/12, courses with less than 50% success rates (2008/09) or greater than 30% fail rates (2009 LAT) will not be commissioned and those with less than 65% success rates or greater than 20% fail rates at the end of the year will be decommissioned. In the course of our consultation, local authorities should consider the effect such a standard would have on local provision and whether other local or regional standards may be appropriate.