

Notes

Operational Sub-group

Date 4 June 2010 **Venue** London Councils

Meeting Chair Mary Vine-Morris

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Attendees:

Chris Smith	GOL
Chris Wright	SFA
Colin Jones	LDA
Helen McNulty	Learning Trust
Helen Richardson	Barking & Dagenham
Jonathan Rallings	RPG
Mary Vine-Morris	RPG (Chair)
Mike Pettifer	YPLA
Nick Brenton	ALDCS
Trevor Sandford	DfE
Wendy Forrest	Tower Hamlets
Yolande Burgess	RPG
Anna-Maria Volpicelli	RPG (note-taker)

Apologies

Alan Parnum	YPLA
David Fowler	LSEB
Doug Norris	YPLA
Steve Cameron	Newham
Sue Snowdon	Redbridge

Item 1. Notes of last meeting, action points and matters arising

- 1.1 MVM introduced Helen Crumley (HC), newly appointed Promotions Officer for RPG and advised that Jonathan Rallings (JR) had successfully interviewed for the part-time position of RPG Policy and Project Officer. Both are shared roles with other London Councils services. The Chair also welcomed Chris Wright (CW), London Regional Director for the Skills Funding Agency to the meeting who will be speaking to item 3. of the Agenda.
- 1.2 Minutes of the last meeting were **AGREED** as an accurate record. Action point's updates were related to the group.
- 1.3 The revised TOR as per discussions and agreements at last meeting were discussed.
 - 1.31 It was agreed that "Direct and Oversee Work Strands" should be the principal component of the OSG's role and moved to the top of Section 3.
 - 1.32 LA membership has increased and it was proposed that 14-19 Leads should be notified to express an interest in joining the group. It is likely that additional local authority representation will be drawn from other sub-groups (e.g. LLDD)
 - 1.33 Chris Wright asked whether it would be appropriate for SFA to have permanent membership but MVM suggested that it would be more useful to invite SFA as and when their involvement would be best placed and most productive.
 - 1.34 It is proposed in the ToR that the role of Vice-Chair should be a LA representative, however it was suggested that the role of Chair could be taken by a LA and that of Vice-Chair by RPG if this was preferable. It was **AGREED** that MVM should continue in the role of Chair.

- 1.35 Item 10 in the RPG Principles (Appendix A) needs amending and could be repositioned to reflect the need for 'continuity' with pre-14 and post-19 services instead.

ACTION (37): Final revision of ToR and recirculation to members in time for presentation to RPG for sign off.

Item 2. ESF Co-commissioning

- 2.1 The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) have advised MVM that EMPU are undertaking a joint review with DWP of ESF procurement and that there is a 'pause' on further activity regarding ESF commissioning.
- 2.2 The LDA reported that development work is still being done in the background to keep to the September ITT as planned.
- 2.3 An impact of this 'pause' means that no specific events can be planned and there can be no key messages to providers. However the opportunity to raise awareness and advise 14-19 Leads of what is likely to be available to LAs and to further encourage regional co-ordination should be addressed at the next scheduled conference in July.
- 2.4 The first meeting of the ESF Working Group took place last week and went very well with a lot of information sharing and good feedback. It was very useful for pulling ideas together with strong support for consortium bidding and strong support for pan London working. It was suggested that the working group should continue to meet in order to provide a useful sounding board for specifications development.
- 2.5 The ESF 14-19 Steering Group will have a different role in that it will have oversight of the processes of integrated commissioning and ongoing management once programme is in place. Membership is not yet established but it is anticipated that it will be smaller and of a more formal nature.

Item 3. Performance Management Proposal

- 3.1 CW spoke to the paper which summarised emerging guidance on quality assurance of post 16 learning in relation to joint working between LA's, YPLA and SFA. This is in response to two key publications, a joint BIS/DCSF publication and REACT document entitled 'High Level Guide for Local Authorities'.
- 3.2 CW highlighted that FE providers failing an Ofsted inspection are currently issued with a 'Notice to Improve' (NTI) by the SFA.
- 3.3 Speaking to item 11 of the paper CW confirmed that there have been no NTI's issued to FE colleges for this academic year. 8 NTI's have been issued to LA providers however; the vast majority of delivery is to adults. Of the 4 other organisations in receipt of a NTI, the majority of learning rests with one provider and a data issue as opposed to a quality issue has been identified as the cause of low success rates.
- 3.4 The SFA is intending to run workshops for LA's but there are already support materials available on the Provider Gateway. CW confirmed that SFA would support LAs where there are particular quality issues with a provider. Communication via case conferences and including LA's in Ofsted Inspection Feedback meetings would ensure joint working.

- 3.5 WF noted that LA's wish to commission provision that exceeds current Minimum Levels of Performance (MLP), consequently a bi-annual review with the SFA about performance would be welcomed as LA's have on-going in-depth conversations with their providers. A review prior to major commissioning decisions would be particularly helpful. CW advised that undertaking reviews/meetings on an exceptional basis would make better use of limited SFA staff resource.
- 3.6 MVM noted that clarity on roles and responsibilities would continue to emerge during the first commissioning year. CW suggested that a consultation may be necessary to find out how it best to undertake joint working on quality matters.
- 3.7 It was noted that there are key differences between ex-LSC quality assurance, which operated under a national framework, and LA assurance, which is clearly local. There was a view that there should be a regional quality remit to ensure consistency.
- 3.8 MP felt that there would be opportunity for greater commissioning flexibility in the future e.g. a shift in the balance and mix of provision through commissioning as opposed to exclusively using MLP's as the trigger for de-commissioning.
- 3.9 NB asked how MLPs aid LA's with commissioning particularly when considering the data lag in reporting. There should be an early warning system, specifically with regard to 16-18.
- 3.10 It was **AGREED** that the dialogue needs to continue in order to reach and agree joint ways of working for London.

Item 4. Changes due to new administration (originally item 5)

- 4.1 (*Note: this item was brought forward to aid members that were not able to stay until end of meeting*). MVM asked those in turn, what the implications of the new government changes and proposals means for them and how it is likely to effect the work of the RPG.
- **YPLA** (MP): YPLA (MP): as purdah is continuing, the YPLA is unable to publish any policy or operational information/guidance but work in this area is still taking place in preparation for the lifting of restrictions.
 - **GOL** (CS): DfE are working with Policy Leads at GOL on what the abolition of GOL means and to develop some initial options for what might happen to any GOL functions Ministers might wish to retain. It is the Government's intention to stop work or manage the transfer of functions and redeployment of staff starting in June 2010 with full closure of GOL by December 2010.'
 - **LDA** (CJ): Very much business as usual but with changes every day, it is a question of wait and see.
 - **DfE** (TS): for Dept. changes are both financial and philosophical, with financial cuts being immediate and well publicised; policy changes relating to 14-19 will take longer to come through.

Discussion points:

- 258 non-academy schools in London are currently in receipt of YPLA funding for their School Sixth Form; for 2010/11 36% (93) of these have a published Grade 1 Ofsted, allowing them to fast track to Academy status. In one LA, that could mean up to 70% schools sixth form provision could elect to go for Academy status.
- Suggestion that outstanding schools can be matched to those that require support.
- NB advised that discussions yet to happen on LGA policy lines.

- **London Councils** (MVM): London Councils now has a Labour majority and will agree its Chief Executive and Lead Members at the AGM on 8 June. As such, RPG waiting for announcement of new Chair as this post is filled by Lead Member for Children and Young People.

Item 5. RPG proposed papers for 21 June meeting (originally item 4.)

- 5.1 **Final 2010/11 Commissioning Plan** - YB confirmed that strategic work is on-going with the final commissioning plan for London nearing completion but numbers so far give an indication of L3 at 64% and L2 at 16% and FL 20%.

ACTION (39): YB to circulate final 16-18 Commissioning Plan (Apprenticeship numbers).

- 5.2 JR confirmed that he is working on a transitional year report based on the returns of the RPG evaluation forms from LAs to which members of RPG were also asked to contribute. It is planned to have this in time for the next scheduled RPG meeting of 21st June.
- 5.3 **Strategic Analysis** – two items tabled, a draft presentation entitled '14-19 London Strategic Analysis' and part of the RSoP for 'Commissioning Statements 2010/11'. The Strategic Analysis is available on the Provider Gateway but will not be finalised until September.
- 5.4 YB ran through the key findings which will inform both the forthcoming regional commissioning statement and the longer term Strategy to 2015. It is still important to focus on the latter but to take account of the political change. MP advised that although a lot of previous government terminology has been lost it is likely that even if the *duty* to raise the participation age is abandoned by the new government, the language around 'raising participation' will remain.
- 5.5 Comments were received as follows:
- Key findings should make more mention of NEETs (inc. 16-24 NEET figures as well as 16-18); have more around the economic context; ensure they refer to 'providers' not just 'schools'.
 - Do we need to undertake another major review of IAG? Should we not look at admissions policies of providers and Careers Advisors?
 - Link IAG and poor retention as part of the problem is funding and part measuring retention.
 - The language could be toned down in places to ensure it does not alarm providers. May be useful to frame more recommendations to reflect 'accountability – e.g. there should be more curriculum freedom but more accountability.
 - LLDD provision needs to be included and framed in such a way that this can be reworded further down the line.
 - It would be useful to reinforce the notion of LAs/RPG as the 'local solution'.
 - Language (eg. L3), need to try and avoid bureaucratic terminology.
- 5.6 MVM advised that we need to have a meaningful consultation between Sept. and Dec. on the Strategy, in the meantime it was necessary to review and refresh the RSoP and include standards setting in the commissioning statements.
- 5.7 **ESF** – RPG paper not tabled at this meeting but it is intended to be an update paper with specifications included as an annex if we are in a position to do this. If this is not possible OSG will be asked to sign off the specifications on RPG's behalf prior to September.

- 5.8 ***Disputes Resolution Paper*** – JR advised that the paper is fulfilling an original commitment made by RPG in the London Manual in 2008, and has since been informed by recommendations in an RPG guidance document in January as well as the published National Commissioning Framework. The paper sets out the role of the RPG in resolving disputes between local authorities and between local authorities and learning providers.
- 5.9 Members were agreed that where possible, disputes should be kept on an informal basis and dealt with using 'soft mechanisms'. However it was important to have a formal process in place. There has also been a suggestion that the YPLA will be producing more detailed guidance. HM McN suggested that the revenue implications (learner) of capital funding will need to be included in the scope..

ACTION (40): JR to amend wording in Disputes Resolution Paper.

Item 6. AOB

- 6.1 MP: *World Skills London 2011*. David Cragg (DC) National Director of Development, SFA would like to know if LAs would be interested in getting involved in the World Skills event being held in Docklands in October 2011. When questioned about funding, MP confirmed that DC had indicated there would be no expenditure expected to be made by the LAs and had suggested that there might be scope for ESF Funding. RPG are keeping tabs on World Skills through representation on an external stakeholders group. It was agreed that there would be some interest from LAs but that they would require more information before committing.

ACTION (41): Members to email MP with ideas.

Next meeting: Friday 2nd July, 10-12.30pm, meeting room 4, London Councils