

PAPER

Proposals for oversight of Quality Assurance in London

Date of issue	20/05/2010
Audience	Operations Sub Group (OSG) of the Regional Planning Group
Produced by	Skills Funding Agency (London) / London Councils and Young Peoples' Learning Agency
Publication intent	External

Purpose

- 1 To summarise the themes emerging in guidance on Quality Assurance of Post 16 Learning in relation to joint working between local authorities, YPLA and the Skills Funding Agency
- 2 To highlight the particular issues and challenges that these signify for London
- 3 To outline a suggested joint approach for consideration by RPG
- 4 To secure recommendation from RPG Operational Sub Group on next steps.

Scope

- 5 This paper relates to the need for an agreed approach on communication with local authorities to share a proposed approach for London in response to the emerging national framework and clarifying how we propose to work with them in London.
- 6 It should be noted that national discussions on ways of working and interagency collaboration are ongoing so this paper and its recommendations would need to be viewed alongside the outcomes of that work.

Guidance on the approach to quality assurance

- 7 The key publications to date which outline issues for attention relating to joint working are the documents:
 - a. Joint BIS/DCSF publication: The Quality Assurance System for post-16 education and training provision - Overarching Framework. This document sets out the role of sponsoring bodies who will hold providers to account for the quality of their provision. In the case of FE colleges, this role is played by the Skills Funding Agency. For

schools and sixth form colleges, it is the role of the home local authority and for academies it is the YPLA.

- b. REACT document: High Level Guide for Local Authorities-Supplement 1. This document states there will be a relationship with local authorities to enable information to be shared about the quality of provision.
- 8 These documents are not statutory and do not preclude further guidance being developed.
- 9 The documents make clear an expectation that local authorities, YPLA and the Skills Funding Agency work together on issues relating to commissioning and contracting provision and on issues relating to Quality Assuring that provision. They also make specific comment on issues such as the frequency of meetings between Local Authorities and the Skills Funding Agency and the involvement of other partners such as the YPLA.

Notices to Improve in London

- 10 Notices to Improve have already been issued by the Skills Funding Agency for providers below Minimum Levels of performance for 2008/09 academic year. Support arrangements have been agreed with LSIS for the providers involved.
- 11 Details of the 16-18 provision affected by Notices to Improve (NTI) are set out in the table below. No FE colleges in London have received a NTI this year.

	NTIs	SLN 16-18	£ 16-18
FE Colleges	0		
Local Authorities	8	94	£420K
Others	4	509	£2.6m

- 12 Of the 12 NTIs issued in London, just 3 providers had 16-18 SLNs greater than 20 as the majority were adult providers. Of these, only one provider accounted for £2.3m of 16-18 provision. However it has been found that data issues have affected the success rates of this provider and it is expected that the success rates will be recalculated to show that the minimum level of performance has been achieved.

London – Proposed approach to working with the RPG

- 13 London has developed strong regional commissioning arrangements through the RPG. The arrangements take account of the complex travel to study

patterns in the capital and the need for a cross authority planning dialogue to ensure a coherent offer.

- 14 It is not proposed that there are any variations from the emerging national approach to quality assurance. However it would be helpful to build on the RPG arrangements by ensuring that the approach to quality assurance utilises the role of the RPG to avoid bureaucracy/duplication and to enable an overview of the regional position to be developed.
- 15 The proposed approach would be as follows:
 - Local authorities would be invited to attend a joint event for London where the nature of the data and the quality assurance mechanisms are shared and explained. Local authorities have access to provider quality information and the event would be an opportunity to review the processes and data sources.
 - Local authorities would be invited to have follow-up discussions, if requested, with Heads of Accounts within the Skills Funding Agency and YPLA Senior Commissioning Advisers. This would only need to take place where a local authority wished to have a further discussion.
 - The Skills Funding Agency would work with RPG Operational Sub Group to identify the key points in an annual business cycle when information would be exchanged. This would provide a clear timetable detailing how information would be made available through the year to support commissioning decisions and planning dialogue.
 - The Skills Funding Agency would invite colleagues from Local Authorities and YPLA to attend meetings with the Learning Skills Improvement Service and providers to agree actions to secure improvement in those instances where a significant cohort of 16-18 learners were studying provision below Minimum Level of Performance and where a Notice to Improve has been issued.
 - Where a provider is selected for inspection and is jointly funded by the Local Authority and by the Skills Funding Agency, it is recommended that there is joint attendance at Planning and Feedback Meetings.
 - The Skills Funding Agency would apply the national arrangements and invite the local authority and the YPLA to a case conference with the provider where there are significant concerns about quality assurance or finance.
- 16 Final protocols for joint working are still being developed nationally. Local authorities are raising queries with the Skills Funding Agency and the YPLA about arrangements for joint working. It is recommended that a communication is made to local authorities summarising the key points outlined above. This would be helpful to bring consistency and clarity to the approach in London.

Decision

- 17 The Operational Sub Group (OSG) of the Regional Planning Group is asked to:
- a. NOTE and COMMENT on the proposed ways of working for London outlined in this paper.
 - b. AGREE a joint communication be developed based upon these proposals to be shared with Local Authorities.

Recommendation: to agree these proposals are to be taken forward

Paper creator Steve Bagley

Date created 20/05/2010

Document ref. Quality Assurance/London/SFA Paper for OSGRPG