

**LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS NATIONAL ADVISORY GROUP  
MINUTES OF MEETING 8th FEBRUARY 2002**

**Present**

Pauline Bailey, Gloucestershire LSC  
Mike Barrett, GO East Midlands  
Greg Cejer, LSC National Office  
Alan Doherty, London Learning Partnership  
Sue Dutton, Association of Colleges  
Jane Dyer, DfES Learning Partnerships (**Secretary**)  
Ray Flude, Leicestershire and Leicester City Learning Partnership  
Ian Goodwin, DfES, Team Leader, Learning Partnerships  
Jacqui Henderson, London Central Learning and Skills Council  
Michael Howard Chair, Tyneside Learning Partnership  
Kate Keefe, Catholic Education Service  
Elaine Kennedy, DfES School Admissions, Organisation and Governance Division  
Peter Mucklow, DfES, Division Manager, Further Education and Partnerships (**Chair**)  
Mike Platten, Cambridgeshire Learning Partnership  
Sue Taylor, Learning and Skills Development Agency  
Jeanette Trafford, Durham Learning Partnership  
Janet Waghorn, Kent Learning Partnership  
Barrie Whittamore, Government Office East Midlands  
John Wise, London Learning Partnerships  
Jim Lewis, Learning Communities Network  
Eileen Manley, Hon. Sec. Careers Services National Association  
Graham Morris, Plymouth Learning and Work Partnership  
Roy Porritt, GO Y&H  
Anthea Turner, Churches National Adviser in Further Education, Church of England and Methodist Church  
Matthew White, DfES, 14-19 Unit  
Suzanne Irwin, UACE/NIACE  
Mary Heslop, DfES, Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit  
Rob Pilling, DfES School Admissions, Organisation & Governance Division

**Apologies**

Katie Attwood, Ufi  
Mike McCann, Chief Executive, National EBP Network  
Maggie Mooney, Secondary Heads Association  
Cllr Roy Pinney, Birmingham Learning Partnership  
Jill Valentine, Ufi  
Bill Wood, Chief Executive, National Training Federation

**Chairman's Welcome and Introduction**

1. Peter Mucklow welcomed members to the meeting where the focus of the agenda was to gather initial feedback to the current review.

2. The Group agreed minutes of the last meeting.

### Learning Partnership Review and Feedback from Members

3. Peter reminded the Group that the closing date for review responses was 15<sup>th</sup> February and suggested we use the meeting to share emerging findings from our different organisations and perspectives as a contribution to the review.

4. Ian Goodwin reported that we had received around 25 responses to date and that the vast majority would come in next week. There had been meetings in every region to discuss responses. Ian also reported on the meeting of Learning Partnership chairs in Leeds on 24<sup>th</sup> January and that a delegation of chairs met Margaret Hodge on 5<sup>th</sup> February. He stated that analysis of responses was underway and his team would i) produce a neutral report on the review which would be published to co-incide with the announcement of future arrangements; and ii) put a submission to Margaret Hodge in early March with recommendations and options. A decision and announcement about arrangements from April 2003 was expected by April 2002.

5. Peter invited members to share emerging views and the following summarises the discussion:

- Sue Dutton, **AoC**, had consulted colleges on the review and around 100 had responded to the review questions. Around 33% of responses rated the work of learning partnerships on promoting collaboration as very good. Ratings on articulating the voice of the learner (10% very good) and in identifying employer needs (15%) were less favourable. Barriers to further development included a lack of clarity from central Government about the roles of the LSC, LPs and the emerging LSPs. The overwhelming view from colleges was that funding should come via the LSC.
- Eileen Manley, **CSNA** reported on examples of good work done locally by LPs and recognised that it was often difficult for the LP to claim credit (e.g. LPs often kick-started a process which others completed); mentioned the importance of the calibre of the LP manager (and contrasted the level with recent advertised salary levels for LSP managers); supported clarifying the relationship with the LSC and LSP; the reason there is less argument around LPs at the moment is that they have largely concentrated on operational issues (as shown by the recent impact study) rather than strategic ones hence local partners feel less threatened by them.
- **LCN** members had reported on the variability of LPs, some effective, some less so. They commented on their 'odd' status as voluntary bodies, required to deliver strands of Government policy and overloaded with the range of roles expected of them. Calibre of managers, closer links to LSPs raised and support for a 'neutral' funding route, e.g. GO or RDA.
- Jacqui Henderson, **LSC**, feedback on the views of around 10 local LSC replies she had seen. The majority felt that Learning Partnerships should remain because they provide a complementary service to the LSC but greater clarity of the core role is needed. Most would prefer funding to be channelled via the LLSCs and reported that this would not stifle independence – the funding route had not prevented FE colleges from exercising a challenge role. Most

supported LPs as a sounding board and in providing a useful learner/provider perspective. Short-term funding had not helped but funding was less critical than clarity over role - LPs need a re-defined core remit, focusing on a smaller number of key areas. Greg Cejer re-iterated Martin Lamb's comments made at the York conference that the LSC was committed to partnership working and was not in the business of dismantling effective partnerships. **Update:** Around 20 responses from local LSCs and one from the National Office have since been received.

- Anthea Turner, **Churches National Adviser in Further Education**, valued the local knowledge shown by LPs and the joined-up thinking on widening participation and social inclusion that was encouraged. Relationships of trust take time - short-termism is inappropriate. There was concern over how community groups might access funding without LPs. Bidding processes can be unhelpful.- churches are sometimes seen as the partner of last resort in areas where there is little understanding of the churches' long-term engagement with grassroots community work. Induction (especially explanation of acronyms etc) would be helpful for community reps on LPs.
- Kate Keefe, **Catholic Education Services**, offered some supportive comments saying how collaboration ensures that students are offered the opportunity to continue to study with a faith based provider.
- **Government Offices** reported on the value added through joined-up regional projects and sharing good practice; on good relations with RDAs and LSPs; on the role of LPs in communicating messages in support of DfES policy; on the apparent reluctance of DfES/Government to use and trust LPs to deliver; on the need to review the number of Partnerships (without opening up old wounds); on the need to review funding.
- **Learning partnerships** echoed many of the points made above (e.g. the joining-up role of LPs with the policies of other Government Departments; the different stages of LP development across the country and the time it takes to get effective partnership working; the cradle to grave remit of many LPs; the need for a strengthening of the LP core role from central Government). Also pointed out that repositioning was already underway in many areas, in response to local situations and in advance of any announcement about future arrangements. Given the emphasis that Government is placing on partnership working, and the need to operate at a strategic level, should there not be some commitment to a national/regional training for LP (and other similar) managers. Favoured retention of current funding route through GOs.

6. Peter Mucklow thanked members for their contributions, said that DfES would take the opportunity afforded by the review to clarify the remit of LPs and the relationships with local LCSs and LSPs. **Action DfES Learning Partnerships Team** to produce an outline process for change as part of the review process.

Meeting Individual Talents and Aspirations at 14-19

7. Matthew White gave an overview of the Green Paper, which is now published and <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19greenpaper> takes you to a copy. He was asked whether learning partnerships were mentioned; they were but the Green Paper prescribed no preferred model for promoting collaboration. He was also asked about

the overarching award which will recognise achievements outside the academic sphere in key skills, volunteering and which will draw on current good practice elsewhere, e.g. in Scotland, as ideas are developed.

#### AOB and Dates of Future Meetings

8. The Group felt it was important to meet again soon after the Review. Options are 19<sup>th</sup> or 26<sup>th</sup> April or 3<sup>rd</sup> May. **Action** Sue Allen, DfES Learning Partnerships Team to canvas group members for the best date for next meeting and let people know. Sue also to book London venue and refreshments.

Further meetings planned for 2002 are:

Friday 19 or 26 April or 3 May  
Thursday 6 June  
Thursday 3 October

9. It was agreed that the April/May meeting would focus on the Learning Partnerships Review submission.

**Jane Dyer**  
**February 2002**