

LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS NATIONAL ADVISORY GROUP MINUTES OF MEETING 3rd OCTOBER 2002

Present

Peter Mucklow, DfES, Divisional Manager, Further Education and Partnerships (Chair)
Ian Goodwin, DfES, Team Leader, Learning Partnerships
Lindsey Evans, DfES Learning Partnerships (Secretary)
Alex Sutherland, LSC National Office
Janet Bell, London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham Education Dept.
Sue Gardener, NIACE, Regional Agent for London
Graham Morris, Plymouth Learning and Skills Partnership
Sarah Billington, Catholic Education Service
Rob Pilling, DfES School Admissions, Organisation and Governance Division
Roy Porritt, GO Y&H
Allan Taylor, GO East Midlands
Sue Taylor, Learning and Skills Development Agency
Anthea Turner, Churches National Adviser in Further Education
Janet Waghorn, Kent Learning Partnership
Maureen Wilcox, Thurrock Learning Partnership
Jeanette Trafford, Durham Learning Partnership
Bill Wood, CE, National Training Federation

Apologies

Jacqui Henderson, London Central Learning and Skills Council
Pauline Bailey, Gloucestershire LSC
Carolyn Brown, SHA Education Committee
Ray Flude, Leicester & Leicester City LP
Mary Heslop, DfES, Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit
Michael Howard Chair, Tyneside Learning Partnership
Eileen Manley, Hon Secretary, Careers Services National Association
Marina McLean, GO London
Sarah Turpin, Policy Manager, Ufi Ltd
John Wise, London Learning Partnerships

Chairman's Welcome and Introduction

1.1 Peter Mucklow welcomed members to the meeting where the purpose was to provide an update on key DfES policy developments central to the Learning Partnership agenda, report on progress with the transfer of responsibility for LPs to the LSC, and to seek the views on the group's future. Peter explained that this would be his last meeting in the chair as responsibility for Learning Partnerships in DfES now rested with James Turner in the Learning Skills and Partnerships Unit. James would chair future meetings.

1.2 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed and action points had been discharged. It had not been possible for Janice Shiner, the DfES Director General for Lifelong Learning, to attend this meeting, but following the meeting she had accepted an invitation to participate in the next one.

DfES Policy Update

2.1 Peter reported on a number of issues. There had been a good response to 'Success for All', on reforming Further Education and Training, since its publication in June. He pointed out that the document recognised the good work done by some Learning Partnerships in promoting

collaboration. The document pointed to a strategy characterised by systematic area planning to ensure provision meets local needs, new approaches to teaching and learning, supported by professional development of the workforce and a new framework for accountability. The closing date for responses had now passed and the strategy would be unveiled at the Association of College's conference on 19 November.

2.2 On Workforce Development, Peter talked through key areas of work. These included a review of the funding Adult Learning, the Cabinet Office Strategy Unit final report on workforce development which was due to be published later this month, the LSC workforce development strategy (also due to be published in October) and the Skills Strategy and regional roadshows which Ivan Lewis was currently hosting.

2.3 On 14 -19, Peter explained that the Government is about to publish its response to the Green Paper consultation. The next NAG meeting will include a presentation from the team involved. An HE strategy document is currently under development and is likely to be published in November.

2.4 On LSC issues, Peter explained that the DfES Grant Letter would be issued to the LSC on 5 December setting out expectations and funding levels. He commented that these would offer greater flexibility to the LSC and would see a reduction in the number of individual programme budgets from 9 to 6. He reminded the group that LPs will be funded from April 2003 from the Local Initiatives Fund.

Learning Partnerships Transition

3.1 Ian Goodwin reported good progress against the project milestones. The Transition Steering Group had met three times and had proved a lively forum in which key issues had been addressed. The GO Networking Group and an LSC Consultative Group had also met recently thus helping to maintain a momentum on transition. The LP team were using the LP website and the email alert system to keep the wider LP network in touch with developments.

3.2 Janet Waghorn updated the group on progress with the LSC/LP Protocol. 'Version 1' had been circulated to the LP network and a range of comments had been received. She explained that she was taking these on board and, following discussion in the LSC consultative group, there would now be a two tier approach. The LSC National Office would issue a high level document setting out a strategic overview of LSC/LP relationship. A second document would also be produced which could be customised locally by LSCs and their LPs. A target date of 14 November had been set for producing this. This 'version 2' would be mailed out all LP managers.

3.3 On contracting through the Local Initiative Fund, Alex Sutherland confirmed that the LSC were actively considering how they could best respond to LPs' concerns for simple funding arrangements. He re-iterated that funding for every LP was guaranteed for 2003-2004.

3.4 On DfES guidance for LPs, Ian said that guidance on regeneration, to which the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit had contributed, had been issued recently. It would also be placed on the LP web-site with additional good practice examples and would be updated periodically as greater clarification of the LP role across Whitehall was gained. Additional guidance on collaboration would be developed and issued later in the autumn.

3.5 In a discussion on sustaining regional networking for Learning Partnerships post April 2003, it was apparent that this was clearly valued by Learning Partnerships (a view largely echoed by LP members present). The service was currently provided by Government Offices and at its best provided both induction/development support for LP managers as well as

'product knowledge', since GOs were able to offer a joined-up Government perspective. It was noted that there were inconsistencies in the quality and extent of support provided by GOs for their LPs. If GOs were to continue to carry out this role, a) DfES would need to include it their SLA with GOs for 2003-04; and b) the LSC would need to be involved in the decision-making.

3.6 There was discussion around professional support and development for Learning Partnership Managers. The draft tender, issued with papers for the meeting, had been put together in response to the recent review where the development needs of LP managers had been highlighted. The regeneration remit was likely to reveal additional development needs for some in LPs. Ian explained that the DfES intended to pay for the set-up costs for the programme and for an initial cohort to go through it, perhaps over two years. LSDA had presented some proposals and the tender reflected input from a number of LP managers. Questions were raised about pitching it at the right level – not an easy one given the range of experience at LP manager level. **Action: Ian agreed to let all LP managers have a chance to comment via the email alert system. Done – a good response.**

3.7 Following discussion on the DfES Role post April 2003, it was envisaged that this would comprise, a) championing LPs across Whitehall; b) advising Ministers on LPs' progress and achievements; and c) capacity/capability building in LPs through the sponsorship of the development programme. Further discussion on this would take place in bi-laterals with the LSC.

3.8 Members agreed that the current Lifelong Learning Partnerships Remit from January 1999 was out of date but saw no real need for a revised document since the Minister's letter to LP chairs provided clarity on the LP remit. The group envisaged locally agreed protocols (see para 3.2 above) setting the framework for LSC/LP relationships and joint work.

Future of National Advisory Group

4. The Chairman asked for comments on whether there was a continued need for the National Advisory Group. There was a strong voice that it should continue but that the group's terms of reference and membership should be reviewed to reflect the new remit for LPs, especially on the regeneration side. Members saw value in keeping up to date with policy developments and feeding back to their own networks as well as being able to offer an external perspective on transition that was wider than the LSC's post-16 focus. **Action: Secretariat to review membership and present revised terms of reference to the next meeting.**

AOB and Dates of Future Meetings

5. This will be chaired by James Turner. Janice Shiner has also accepted an invitation to participate. It will take place on **11 February, in the Cathedral Room, Sanctuary Buildings, starting at 10:30am, ending with a buffet lunch at 12:30.**

Lindsey Evans

3 October 2002