

LSIS Brief Guide

New opportunities: Fair chances for the future



Introduction

1. The Cabinet Office published *New opportunities: Fair chances for the future*¹, a White Paper on social mobility, on January 13th, 2009. *New opportunities* sets out the Government's strategies to increase social mobility. This Brief Guide summarises those parts of *New opportunities* that are most relevant to the FE and skills sector. The implications for FE are drawn out in the final section (paragraphs 40-43).
2. In addition, an Independent Commission on Social Mobility, created by the Liberal Democrats, published its own paper on the topic on January 12th. Its key points are summarised in Annex A (starting at paragraph 44).

Background

3. Social equality and mobility have been Labour Party policies since the party's foundation – indeed, they are central to the whole idea of social democracy. So, in a sense, *Fair chances for the future* reflects policy trends dating back more than a century, to the Webbs, the first progressive taxation schemes of the early 20th century, and the establishment of the welfare state and comprehensive schooling by postwar governments.
4. The paper reflects, especially in its first chapter, a concern with equality as a matter of right. New Labour has always been marked by a strong concern for equalities legislation (for example, the Human Rights Act 1998, the recently proposed Single Equality Bill and a comprehensive array of protections for gays and lesbians). *Fair chances* extends this to matters of economic inequality.
5. The paper also draws on more recent Labour concerns about the global economy. Policy-makers have long been worried that Britain lacks the necessary pool of skilled workers to compete in an increasingly globalised economy, which is more dependent on high-skilled workers and includes a wider array of competitor nations (such as India, China and other newly emergent economies). The paper notes that, despite the current economic crisis, *'the world economy is expected to double in size within the next 20 years, creating up to 1 billion new skilled jobs and industries and spreading global prosperity. ... The World Bank is forecasting that by 2030 there will be more than a billion people in developing countries belonging to the global middle class. Technological development will drive new production patterns and industries in both services and goods, and the rapidly emerging economies of Asia and South America will provide new markets for trade and exports'* (New Opportunities 3).
6. The Government identifies four key areas where people require support to reach their full personal and economic potential:

¹ <http://www.hmg.gov.uk/media/9102/NewOpportunities.pdf>

LSIS Brief Guide

New opportunities: Fair chances for the future

- *support for parents and children in the early years which have a profound impact on later life chances;*
- *success in school, as educational attainment at 16 remains one of the most important determinants of future success;*
- *investment during the critical transition years from compulsory education through further and higher education and into work; and*
- *fresh opportunities to get on in work throughout people's lives, ensuring they have continuing chances to fulfil their potential (p. 6).*

Social mobility

7. The first chapter of the paper deals with '*social mobility*' – the ability of people to transcend the class or economic situation into which they were born, and ascend to a higher standard of living. Increased social mobility has been a hallmark of European society throughout the period after World War II.
8. The Government defines 'absolute social mobility' as 'each successive generation gaining better jobs'. This differs from 'relative social mobility', which is defined as '*ensuring that everyone has the chance to achieve their potential and gain better jobs, no matter what their background*' (New Opportunities, p. 16-17)².
9. *Therefore this Government has two aims for the future:*
 - *each successive generation to gain better jobs; and*

² These are not the only definitions of these concepts. A Department for Work and Pensions research paper, published in 2007, uses this phrasing: '*Social mobility can be thought of in absolute and relative terms. The former refers to processes of adjustment in the income or occupational structure of the economy. The latter, sometimes called social fluidity, is associated with an individual's opportunities for progression within the social hierarchy. Social mobility can also be thought of as intra-generational (chances for social progression within an individual's own life time) and inter-generational (a comparison of achieved social position with that of one's parents)*'.

The standard Wikipedia reference, drawing on an article by Grunsky and Manwai in the 2004 book *Social Stratification: Class race and gender in sociological perspective*, puts it this way: '*Absolute mobility means that living standards are increasing in absolute terms: You are better off than your parents, and your children will be better off than you. Structural changes, such as changes in occupational structure rates, means that there is more room at the top, which leads to high absolute mobility rates. ... Relative mobility refers to the degree to which individuals move up or down compared to others in their cohort. In other words, relative mobility means that if your family is poor, you have a decent chance of moving up the relative income ladder. That is, the rank order of people in society is malleable. Relative mobility relates to the openness or fluidity of society and is insensitive to the impact of structural changes*'.

LSIS Brief Guide

New opportunities: Fair chances for the future

- *everyone having the opportunity to realise their potential and having fair chances to access these better jobs* (p. 17).
10. Historically, absolute social mobility increased dramatically for men in the United Kingdom between 1945 and 1970, when the number of highly skilled jobs stopped growing and absolute social mobility became static. Absolute social mobility has continued to grow for women, whose position vis-à-vis their parents' generation has been steadily improving since 1930 (p. 17).
 11. *'On relative social mobility, the chances of people from different backgrounds realising their potential have not increased in recent decades'*. Relative social mobility has not increased since the end of World War II (p. 17). Indeed, if income is used as a measurement of relative social mobility, then society has become less fluid: *'if measured by income, there is evidence that for people born in 1970, their background actually had a bigger influence on their chances of attaining a highly paid job than for those born in 1958'* (p. 18).
 12. The Government has committed to studying the problem of social mobility, and *New opportunities* lists in detail the Government's programmes in education, training, children's services and other areas which aim to improve the life chances and employability of Britons.
 13. But the Government states *'our aim now is to go further and provide more opportunities for current generations to be socially mobile'*. Furthermore, the social mobility agenda *'must also maintain a focus on equipping people to access the opportunities of the future. To achieve this we need to'*:
 - *position the UK economy to benefit from emerging global job opportunities;*
 - *help build up everyone's capabilities and unlock their talents, throughout their lives, so they can take advantage of these opportunities; and*
 - *ensure that the families and communities in which people develop are best able to support them to realise their potential* (p. 20).
 14. The paper also notes that central Government will not be delivering this agenda alone. *'These choices are not just ones for government, but for everyone in the UK. This white paper sets out how the Government will provide strategic leadership to increase social mobility, but the Government cannot deliver this alone. We will work with people, families, communities, businesses, local government and partners, and the third sector to give the UK the right platform for success and to benefit from the new opportunities'* (p. 21). The Government pledges that *'any net additional costs'* imposed on local councils by the White Paper's proposals *'will be fully and properly funded by central government so that no additional pressure is placed on council tax bills'*. The paper also acknowledges the measures on social mobility taken by the devolved governments in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (p. 21).

LSIS Brief Guide

New opportunities: Fair chances for the future

The requirement to end discrimination by class

15. Perhaps most importantly, the White Paper proposes a radical new interpretation of equal rights, which will charge the state with ending discrimination based on social or economic background – in other words, public authorities will be formally required to reduce or eliminate the effects of class.
16. *'We have already legislated to require public authorities to tackle the inequality that arises from race, gender, or disability. But we know that inequality does not just come from your gender or ethnicity, your sexual orientation or your disability',* the Government says. *'But we know that inequality does not just come from your gender or ethnicity, your sexual orientation or your disability. Co-existing and interwoven with these specific inequalities lays the persistent inequality of social class. While we have PSA targets and indicators across Government to narrow gaps arising from social class and income, there is currently no over-arching requirement on public authorities to address the inequalities people face associated with where they live, their family background or the job they do'* (p. 22).
17. Therefore, the Government may introduce new laws requiring the public services to work to reduce social inequality: *'we will consider legislating to make clear that tackling socio-economic disadvantage and narrowing gaps in outcomes for people from different backgrounds is a core function of key public services. This could take the form of a new strategic duty on central departments and key public services to address the inequality that arises from socio-economic disadvantage and place this objective at the core of their policies and programmes'* (p. 22).
18. *The purpose of such a duty would be to firmly engage the public sector in delivery of the ambitious agenda set out in this White Paper, to ensure successive generations have the opportunities to realise their potential and improve their position in society, delivering improvements in wealth, well-being and ambitions for individuals and their families and ensuring a fairer and more equal society* (p. 22).
19. The White Paper states that more consultation and deliberation will be needed before any such statute is passed, and that this will draw on the findings of the National Equality Panel *'which is looking at how factors such as who you are interact with your social and family background to affect life chances'*. (p. 22)³.

³ The class equality legislation has acquired the name 'Harman's Law' in the media, after Harriet Harman, the leader of the House of Commons and minister for equality, who's most associated with the proposal. Polly Toynbee, an influential columnist with *The Guardian*, refers to it as such, and calls the measure *'legislation of extraordinary radicalism - simple, fundamental and profound'*, addressing what Toynbee considers to be the core inequality from which all others flow. For their part, *The Daily Telegraph* calls it *'a battle-cry for a return to class warfare, something we thought had been expunged for good by Tony Blair's modernisation of Labour'*.

LSIS Brief Guide

New opportunities: Fair chances for the future

World-class schools

20. Chapter Four of *New opportunities* deals with improving life chances through reforms and investment in schools. *'Our vision for schools is excellent quality teaching of an engaging curriculum, in an environment of good behaviour and high quality facilities, with excellent leadership and support from beyond the school when it is needed'*, states the paper in the chapter's introduction (p. 45).
21. This chapter begins by summarising the Government's major programmes in school improvement, such as the Children's Plan, the National Challenge programme (to provide £400 million in funding to secondary schools failing to meet minimum GCSE targets) and the Building Schools for the Future capital programme.
22. The chapter lists several new initiatives designed to increase school quality. These include:
 - a pathfinder project that provides *'extended services to disadvantaged families'* will be expanded, to £40 million next year and £217 million the year after.
 - expanding personalised learning. It *'will make one-to-one tuition an entitlement from 2010/11 for every child in Key Stage 2 who has already fallen behind, thus ensuring that every child leaves primary school ready for secondary education'*. It will also fund personalised learning for a cohort of 1,500 Year 10 students on an existing *'tailored programme with access to a core programme of Progression Academies (two days per term across the full four year cycle)'* (p. 49).
 - recruiting top graduates into the teaching profession. The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) is working on a *'fast stream'* programme to channel prospective teachers from other professions into teaching more quickly, and is considering allowing short-term secondments to teaching posts (p. 52). The Government *'will explore with our Social Partners options for linking together an individual's possible entitlement to CPD with a 'licence to teach', on the lines of other high-status professions with a requirement to maintain high-level professional skills'*, and develop measures to more effectively combat poor teaching.
 - new measures to encourage the best teachers to teach in the worst-performing schools. These include a £10,000 *'golden handcuff'* payment to teachers who agree to work for three years in a poorly performing school. Newly qualified teachers and heads of department will gain access to the new Master's in Teaching and Learning and there will be *'a network of teachers from other participating schools to share effective practice'* (p. 53). The most effective of these teachers may apply *'for one of two new Excellent Teacher or Advanced Skills Teacher positions in each participating school, to strengthen pedagogic leadership and excellent classroom practice, and boost capacity for coaching and mentoring'*. The Government predicts the programme could involve as many as 6,000 teachers in 500 schools annually (p. 53).
 - a pledge *'to make sure that schools are more clearly accountable for their contribution to excellence and equity'* (p. 53). The Government will guarantee *'that variances in attainment at school level rise up the agenda within schools, becoming a standard feature of every discussion between a School Improvement Partner and head teacher; an element considered in each Ofsted inspection; and a key item in the school report card'* (p. 54). It will

LSIS Brief Guide

New opportunities: Fair chances for the future

also produce *'a guidance and best practice document for schools and delivery partners setting out how through practical measures we can further narrow the gap in school results'* (p. 54).

- Introducing *'statutory targets for improving performance of pupils eligible for FSM [free school meals], within a streamlined and greatly reduced total number of targets focused on significantly underperforming pupil groups'* (p. 54).

Pathways for all – skills and attainment for youths

23. The fifth chapter of *New opportunities* focuses on young people aged 16 to 25. The Government focuses on this age group because:

- *this is the best time for an individual to get the skills they need to enter the labour market and gain sustainable employment;*
- *we want to ensure that there is fair access for all young people to all forms of education and pathways to work, and;*
- *any prolonged period outside education or the labour market is particularly damaging to a young person's life chances* (p. 56).

24. The Government recaps the work it has done in this area, including the establishment of the September Guarantee (*'the offer of a suitable place in learning for all young people completing compulsory education, [which was] extended to 17-year-olds in 2008'* (p. 57)), the reform and expansion of apprenticeships, the establishment of more varied routes of progression (including the 14-19 Diplomas) and improved attainment rates.

25. New measures in this section include:

- *'a review of the way in which financial support for 16 to 18 year olds is made available'. The review will 'build on analysis of the value for money and effectiveness of our current learner support schemes', and 'consider how benefits for 16 to 18 year olds can best enable young people to participate in education and jobs with training'* (p. 60). The review will be published in 2010, with an interim report this summer. Alongside the financial support review, the Government will commission a report *'to look at barriers to young people's participation'*. This will be published at the end of 2009 (p. 60-1).
- *as many as 10 new apprenticeships training associations will be created by the end of 2009, 'with the potential to deliver up to 15,000 Apprenticeship places by 2014/15'. These 'will develop new and innovative approaches drawing on the Australian model, where apprentices are employed by a recruitment agency and hired out to host businesses'* (p. 60). *New opportunities* also reiterates the Government's commitments to expanding apprenticeships provision in the public sector.
- *a significant programme of work around people with disabilities of various kinds. For young people with learning disabilities, New opportunities promises 'to explicitly encourage supported employment and work experience within the new FLT [Foundation Learning Tier], including the role of job coaches' and 'extend the Getting a Life programme to all nine regions by adding two more sites, which will support more young people into work'* (p. 61).

LSIS Brief Guide

New opportunities: Fair chances for the future

- reducing the number of people not in education, employment or training (NEETs), by expanding the Activity Agreements pilots. The Activity Agreements are pacts *'between a young person and their Connexions Personal Adviser identifies the specific steps that they should take to return to participation, alongside the additional support they will receive'* (p. 66).

Expanding HE participation

26. Much of Chapter Five is given over to the Government's plans to ensure promising students from low-income backgrounds have a chance to attend higher education. *New opportunities* pledges to identify likely candidates for HE early and guarantee that *'they receive a package of structured assistance across their time at secondary school'* (p. 63). This *'ambition'*, to be delivered by 2012, includes:
- *have an early experience of what higher education is like, and later a more sustained one;*
 - *benefit from regular mentoring;*
 - *schools having 'structural links to a university, where teachers are equipped to properly identify and nurture their talent, including the offer of appropriate GCSEs, A-levels and Diplomas';*
 - *high-quality information, advice and guidance on their choice of subject and university; and*
 - *those with the most potential, [being] sought out and invited to a summer school or similar experience of higher education* (p. 63).
27. As part of this programme, the Government *'will provide £1 million for some National Challenge schools to fund a higher education experience at Key Stage 3 to raise young people's aspirations to attend higher education. This experience could include visits to higher education institutions, meeting lecturers and students, and inviting former pupil graduates to mentor current pupils'* (p. 65).
28. Continuing the focus on widening participation in HE, the Government promises that Hefce's Aimhigher programme and related work in this field *'ensures that those pupils from low-income backgrounds who are roughly in the top 50 percent of performers, wherever they are located, have access to a comprehensive package of assistance to attend university'*. The Government is currently working with 11 universities *'to pilot ways to identify talented students from groups currently underrepresented in higher education'*, and expects to expand the number of universities involved in these test programmes. A full-fledged programme will be operating by 2012, and is expected to help as many as 10,000 pupils a year *'to benefit from opportunities offered by 15-20 research-intensive universities'* (p. 64).
29. Starting in 2009, *'all higher education institutions will be asked to produce widening participation strategic assessments, which they will submit to the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). These assessments will set out the broad level of resources that institutions will commit to widening participation, including their outreach work with schools'* (p. 65).

LSIS Brief Guide

New opportunities: Fair chances for the future

30. Over the next year, the Government will implement recommendations from the National Council for Educational Excellence (NCEE) *‘to put in place guidelines that will support the delivery of their respective statutory duties for information, advice and guidance’*.
31. The Government also states that *‘we have announced that we want to work with colleges and other training providers on how they can use their existing budgets more flexibly to support learners into sustainable employment and to progress in employment’* (p. 76).

Getting on in work

32. *New opportunities* reaffirms the Government’s commitment to upskilling those who are already in work. *‘To take full advantage of the new opportunities in a global economy, we can’t afford to miss out on anyone’s talents. We believe that whether they go to university or take a vocational route, those who have the desire and ability to study and train throughout their working life should be able to access the support they need in order to raise their skill levels’*. (p. 67). This chapter focuses on the opportunities the Government will provide or expand to workers.
33. The Government’s main themes in this area are:
 - *supporting a dynamic economy by ensuring there are relevant, high-quality training opportunities available, and a talent pool of skilled professionals from which to draw;*
 - *ensuring everyone has a fair chance to access these learning opportunities – at any time in their lives;*
 - *providing second chances for the most disadvantaged in the labour market, including those in low-paid employment and insecure agency work; and*
 - *especially in the current economic climate, providing enhanced support for those out of work altogether, so they can increase their skills and get back into work as quickly as possible* (p. 68).
34. One of the most prominent proposals in this field is the establishment of a *‘high-level panel of the major professions’*, which *‘will work closely with the professions to identify barriers to access’*, and *‘propose concrete actions to address them – from both government and the professions themselves’* (p. 69-70). This panel will be chaired by Alan Milburn⁴, a former minister under Tony Blair.
35. Other new measures include:
 - *‘a back-to-work entitlement of up to £500 for those who have been carers for at least five years, including parents, to reward their contribution and support their return into the labour market’*. Persons with prior qualifications will be eligible for these allowances (p. 72).

⁴ Milburn was chief secretary to the Treasury (1998-99), health secretary (1999-2003) and chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (2004-05). In the latter post, he had responsibility for Labour’s election campaign in 2005. Milburn is MP for Darlington.

LSIS Brief Guide

New opportunities: Fair chances for the future

- expanding of career development loans. Renamed Professional and Career Development Loans (PCDL), with plans to triple the number of loans available to 45,000 by 2011. Interest rates on the loans will be lowered, and the loans for *'study at colleges, universities and private training providers'* will be expanded from £8,000 to £10,000 (p. 72-3). The Government will promote these loans through union learning representatives, Jobcentre Plus and other means (p. 73).
- a commitment to *'trial new rights for low-income families on tax credits by raising awareness of their existing entitlements and offering an additional entitlement of up to £500 to those who need support'*. The Government will work with union learning representatives to ensure low-income workers are aware of this support (p. 73-4).
- encouraging employers on the Train to Gain programme to train their agency workers, and *'will also relax the funding rules so that agency workers can access financial support for Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications, regardless of their previous qualifications, giving maximum flexibility and opportunity'* (p. 74).
- new measures to help those with disabilities. The Government *'will publish a new cross-government strategy focused on helping people with moderate to severe learning disabilities'*, and create 'support brokers' to assist this group with accessing jobs and spending their personalised social care budgets (p. 74). It also pledges to *'improve employment support for those with severe mental health conditions'* – this group also receives personal support budgets, and the Government pledges *'to actively challenge the expectation that those with severe mental health conditions are not able to work, and ensure that reforms to government disability employment services benefit this group'*. The Government will also work to recruit more people with mental health problems into the public sector (p. 74-5).

Other measures

36. The Government is eager to encourage young people to take leadership roles in their communities, and has already appointed youth advisors to the secretary of state for communities and local government. Expanding upon this, *New opportunities* promises a National Body for Youth Leadership, *'to increase the number and quality of leadership opportunities for those aged 13–19 and to develop their capacity to lead, encouraging them on the path to success. It will have a clear focus on young people who face the greatest risk of negative outcomes'*. A consortium will be appointed early in 2009 to implement this proposal (p. 94).
37. The paper also proposes energising youth leadership through a programme called Inspiring Communities. This scheme, which will be piloted in 15 areas, *'will invite neighbourhoods to design and deliver a package of interventions for young people, their families and communities that meets the particular needs of the area'*. There will be a 'core offer' of £10 million for the programme, *'which will include funding for young social entrepreneurs and for intergenerational volunteering; a local innovation fund; tools to develop a community pledge on youth achievement; and twinning opportunities between diverse communities'*. Local areas will have a degree of flexibility in the budgeting arrangements, to *'meet local needs'* (p. 96).

LSIS Brief Guide

New opportunities: Fair chances for the future

38. *'Each community will undertake a rigorous participatory process for designing interventions. New initiatives will build on and connect with existing offers from schools, health services, the third sector, regeneration and other agencies such as the Extra Mile project in schools or role model and mentoring initiatives'* (p. 96).
39. New vocational opportunities will be opened up in local government, through a *'new full-time programme ... that will provide 1,000 structured vocational volunteering placements in local services for ten months'*. This will comprise 30 placements in 33 local authority areas⁵. Two-fifths of these places will be reserved for NEETs (p. 99).

Conclusions and key Implications for FE

40. As a statement of the Government's broader mission, *New opportunities* is a major development. For the first time, Labour is proposing to make the state legally responsible for reducing social inequality and class-based discrimination. This represents a major expansion of equalities law. It also implies broad and sustained state action to reverse inequalities of opportunity, which could mean increased funding for, and intervention in, the education and employment sectors.
41. The commitment to combating class inequality is an opportunity for FE, which is an engine for social mobility. The sector can claim a significant role in fulfilling this equality agenda. On the other hand, any new regulatory framework implies a greater degree of Government oversight, potentially reducing the autonomy afforded to non-governmental actors. The Government may be less willing to devolve regulatory powers on equality matters than it is on, say, professional standards – after all, equality law is a matter of justice, which is a central concern of any state. However, the implementation of this legislation could offer an opportunity for the sector to co-design the resulting regulatory systems with the Government, in line with current thinking on greater self-regulation.
42. *New opportunities* introduces a number of new measures that are clearly relevant for FE. The expansion of career development loans, the introduction of carer's allowances for training and the drive to coax agency workers, NEETs and those with disabilities into training may increase the number of people enabled to access further education.
43. There is however an imperative for the FE sector to influence the detailed development of policy and implementation strategies to ensure that it has a central role in all relevant areas of social mobility – for example, youth leadership, youth progression and advancement, the apprenticeships system, and expanding the reach of training. As presented in the White Paper, some measures appear to focus on school and universities rather than colleges. For example, schools are to link up with universities, and low-income students will visit universities. The potential contribution of FE could be more fully exploited as the proposals are developed.

⁵ This adds up to 990 – I assume the authors rounded up.

LSIS Brief Guide

New opportunities: Fair chances for the future

Annex A: The Independent Commission on Social Mobility

44. Labour is not alone in its concern for social mobility. In the same week as *New opportunities* was published, an independent commission established by the Liberal Democrats published its report on social mobility⁶. The commission, chaired by Martin Narey, the chief executive of the children's charity Barnardo's, found that *'Britain is a society of persistent inequality', in which 'the life-chances of children in Britain today remain heavily dependent on the circumstances of their birth'* (Report of the Independent Commission, p. 4).
45. The report cites research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, which found that progress on reducing social exclusion has slowed since 2002. Whereas the foundation reported progress on 30 of 56 social exclusion indicators in 2002, they found progress on only 15 after that year, with 14 showing worsening results and the remainder being stagnant (p. 4).
46. The Liberal Democrats' commission argues that *'it is equality of opportunity rather than social mobility itself that should be the prime consideration. Equality of opportunity will improve as we positively affect the drivers of social mobility'* (p. 4).
47. The commission identifies six key areas in which policy must change to reduce inequality of opportunity: child poverty, early years, education, employment, health, and communities. It includes a list of 27 recommendations it considers *'particularly vital'* (p. 9).
48. Regarding education, the most notable of these include:
 - *targeting resources towards schools with the highest proportions of disadvantaged children, involving a review of the current funding formula to provide local authorities with greater flexibility to re-focus and target resources to schools;*
 - *providing greater individualised support to disadvantaged pupils via pupil/teacher ratios and proper teaching support in the most challenging schools;*
 - *ensuring that schools are assessed according to their performance against a range of outcomes for children and young people, not just against a narrow testing regime;*
 - *providing greater incentives to teachers to take up posts and remain in the challenging schools;*
 - *emphasising the importance of a system-wide awareness of the impact of disadvantage and inequalities on educational outcomes. This should include training and ongoing development for teachers and heads; effective literacy skills; the implementation of direct admissions policies, including greater use of admissions ballots for over-subscribed schools;*
 - *expansion of vocational and work-based learning pathways for young people aged 14-19 whose potential is not unlocked by the academic curriculum and traditional classroom learning* (p. 10-11).

⁶ Report from the Independent Commission on Social Mobility. See: http://www.libdems.org.uk/assets/0001/0263/Social_Mobility_Report_Final.pdf

LSIS Brief Guide

New opportunities: Fair chances for the future

49. Around employment, the commission recommends:
- *high quality, sustained and tailored in-work support targeted at those thought likely to be at greatest risk of falling out of employment, and developing targets for training providers that reward the sustainability of jobs rather than simply securing employment;*
 - *prioritising the objectives of Jobcentre Plus to prevent the cycling of vulnerable groups in and out of work through better job matching and getting parents into jobs that are a sustainable route out of poverty;*
 - *addressing in-work poverty by effective enforcement of employment law to ensure that: the minimum wage and other working conditions are met; the status of part-time work is improved and the right to request flexible working is extended;*
 - *reducing the work hours requirement to encourage more parents to take up employment even if for only a few hours per week (p. 11).*
50. The Liberal Democrats' leader, Nick Clegg, accepted most of the report's recommendations on behalf of his party, saying⁷: *'We agree with the overwhelming majority of the reports' recommendations, especially targeting resources in schools to those children who need most help, boosting vocational education for teenagers, and radically altering the tax credit system so it is focused on helping those families most in need. Whilst we do not agree with some other recommendations, such as the abolition of the 10p rescue package⁸ or the use of admissions ballots in schools, the report will considerably strengthen the commitment by Liberal Democrats to providing equality of opportunity to every child to succeed in Britain'.*

Caroline Mager, Executive Director, Policy and Strategic Intelligence

caroline.mager@lsis.org.uk

Telephone: 020 7297 8438

Ben Margulies, Policy Research Officer

ben.margulies@lsis.org.uk

Telephone: 020 7297 8439

⁷ Clegg's response can be found at: <http://www.libdems.org.uk/home/children%E2%80%99s-life-chances-still-tied-to-the-circumstances-of-their-birth-clegg-123335373;show>

⁸ This refers to the changes to tax law introduced after the abolition of the 10p rate of income tax in 2008. This package was designed to compensate low-income taxpayers who would otherwise have suffered an increase in their tax burden.

LSIS Brief Guide

New opportunities: Fair chances for the future

© LSIS January 2009

Published by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS).

The purpose of these guides is to stimulate discussion and debate. While every effort has been made to ensure the information contained within this publication is correct, neither the publisher nor the authors or their companies accept any liability for any errors or omissions.

The text in this document may be reproduced free of charge in any format or media without requiring specific permission, on condition that the source is acknowledged, that the material is not used in a derogatory manner or in misleading context and that the findings are not misrepresented.