

# The importance of being local

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Reframing the role of learning and skills in the strategic development of place

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**LSIS** LEARNING  
AND SKILLS  
IMPROVEMENT  
SERVICE





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# Executive summary

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- i. Over recent years, we have seen the increasing focus in government policy on locality and the need for public services to respond flexibly to their service users, personalising services to meet the particular needs of individuals and communities.
- ii. More recently the drive towards localism has gained further impetus from the recognition that better and more efficient public services can be delivered by public services working together in the locality – pooling expertise and resources – to address shared priorities which require multi-service responses. Most recently this has been exemplified through the Total Place pilots.
- iii. A local and cross-public sector approach to delivery allows services to be designed around the holistic needs of an individual, a total person approach to supporting citizens. Such an approach can reap far greater benefits than personalisation within one public service – it recognises that for those people most vulnerable to social exclusion, alignment between a range of services is needed to make a difference.
- iv. Greater integration of services and discretion to meet local needs implies a fundamental shift in the balance between national and local determination. Services can only be properly responsive to customers and citizens if greater headroom and flexibility is devolved to the local level. As yet it is unclear how this might be realised in the learning and skills system and in our systems of accountability in particular.
- v. Thus, despite this increasing policy commitment to greater local flexibility, currently national determination and accountability dominate, restricting the capacity of our sector. Further discussion is needed about devolution of decision-making and evolution of the accountability arrangements to accommodate greater local determination.
- vi. The barriers to delivering the promise of more integrated service design and delivery are substantial, both in terms of systems – for example, silo-based policy, funding and accountability - and in terms of cultures and human behaviours – for example, short-termism, protectionism and new leadership challenges.
- vii. Leadership within coalitions and partnerships requires different notions of authority. For example individuals may need to cede power to the collective while securing authority to do so from their governors or trustees. The capacity to create with others and stand by a shared vision for a locality; to lead thinking without formal authority; to empathise and stand in the shoes of one's partners; and exercise social and political judgement were also highlighted.
- viii. To transform services, we also need to stand differently with our customers and citizens, empowering them as catalysts for improvement and bringing them inside to co-design services and define quality. Legitimacy with the local community and partners does not derive exclusively from our direct customers but from the wider impact we have on the quality of life in the community. A strong narrative about this wider contribution would raise the profile of the sector within local civil society.
- ix. Acquisition of learning and skills is central to strategies to address most social and economic priorities. Therefore learning and skills providers should step up as key strategic partners and leaders within local public service coalitions, bringing their expertise and capacity to the table. The sector should not wait to be asked to step up but should take the initiative and make the case that their contribution is essential to the well-being of communities. In the context of increasingly scarce public resource, it is imperative for all learning and skills providers to consider their positioning in the locality to maximise their contribution to the delivery of local strategic priorities.

# Foreword

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Dr David Collins, chief executive, LSIS

1. This report captures discussion and presentations to a series of policy seminars held in the autumn of 2009 to look afresh at the role of our sector in supporting their local communities.
2. Over the course of the three seminars, we heard from an inspiring range of speakers from government departments, local authorities and other organisations with an interest in public service and learning. Seminar participants – leaders and opinion formers from the learning and skills world, government departments and agencies – explored and challenged ideas with the speakers, steered by a talented chair. LSIS prepared careful reports of the discussions, checking these with speakers and participants to create an authoritative report of discussion at each seminar, drawn together here into a powerful account of the opportunities, ambitions and challenges we considered.
3. It is noticeable that many of the themes we discussed are reflected in the highly influential report<sup>1</sup> of the Total Place pilots, published after these seminars took place. Critically, the pilots, like our discussions, indicated the need for changes both to systems and to human behaviours and skills.
4. In relation to the former, the Total Place report echoes our view that changes are needed to accountability arrangements to afford greater local freedom from central performance and financial controls. There is a critical opportunity here for the sector to engage in debate in their localities and through their own associations, about how systems need to change to enable the sector to respond to the needs of local customers and citizens and demonstrate the value of learning to the prosperity and well-being of localities.
5. In terms of behaviours, there is a need for new skills to be developed in working laterally across boundaries to deliver joined-up services in the locality; leaders need to be able to ‘work with peers, other public services, communities and voluntary organisations to lead across a whole system. Critically from LSIS’s perspective, it highlights the need for a more integrated approach to leadership and improvement among the bodies charged with supporting different sectors.



**“Systems need to change to enable the sector to respond to the needs of local customers and citizens and demonstrate the value of learning to the prosperity and well-being of localities”**

<sup>1</sup> *Total place: a whole area approach to public services, HMT and CLG, April 2010*  
[http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/total\\_place\\_report.pdf](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/total_place_report.pdf)

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#### Taking the agenda forward...

6. In LSIS we are reviewing fundamentally, with close sector involvement, our leadership and management development programmes to ensure that they are fitting the sector for leadership within a locality and as part of a coalition of public services, as well as for leadership within their own organisations and sector. In doing this, we will be working increasingly with other public service leadership and improvement bodies to share practices and where appropriate align and rationalise our approaches, and to develop joint, cross-public sector professional development opportunities.
7. In addition to reviewing our own leadership programmes, LSIS is discussing with the Leadership Centre for Local Government how we can support, in partnership, further stages of Total Place development, and we hope to engage the Improvement and Development Agency (the improvement body for local government) in this and other collaborations.
8. The role of our sector in supporting local strategic objectives will continue to be an important strand in LSIS's research activity, building on a substantial body of existing work. This includes research to explore the role of colleges in the Total Place pilots that ran during the 2009-10 financial year, drawing out lessons about how to strengthen their strategic role in such activities; an examination of current practice by colleges which exemplifies their new duty to promote economic and social well-being in the locality; a review of how colleges are opening up their premises to their communities and to adult learning; and work to understand and develop the role of colleges and providers in promoting community cohesion.
9. All of this provides rich evidence of the strategic role and contribution of colleges in their communities which will be show-cased to spread ideas and possibilities more widely around the system. LSIS is also analysing the learning across these pieces of research in order to inform the development of a community scorecard, proposed by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, as a means of increasing accountability to and enhancing the engagement of providers with their communities. We will be inviting 'pilots of the willing' to help us with this over the summer.
10. Finally, building on the seminar series reported through this publication, we are launching another seminar series in May 2010 on the theme of Changing public services – changing professional practices. This new seminar series will give us an opportunity to learn from leading thinking and practice across public services, including other leadership and improvement bodies, so that we are as well-informed as possible to develop our leadership and professional practices to face the challenges ahead. We will disseminate emerging themes as the seminars progress and promote wide dialogue and debate.

#### Using this report...

11. The fundamental case for greater integration of services in the locality is to achieve better outcomes from public investment – a critical consideration as the extent and impact of financial constraint for the public sector become clearer. Thus for colleges and providers in our sector, assessing the potential for increasing efficiency and effectiveness, and for encouraging innovation, will be critical – and local authorities and partners will be increasingly important in determining local priorities and spend. A seat at that local strategic table could therefore be critical in shaping the profile of learning and skills – and of our sector – within local priorities and spending plans.

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12. We hope that the issues raised and the narratives in this report are useful to you in thinking through with your senior colleagues and trustees how to position your organisation within your local communities and at strategic tables. There will be opportunities to influence policy and systems design, both locally and nationally, and we hope that this report is a resource or stimulus to thinking that can assist you in those deliberations.
13. As always I would welcome any feedback on whether this report is useful and on how it might be made more relevant to your needs. We would also be interested to hear about how leaders in the sector are developing their engagement with their communities.

## Using this report

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14. This report contains a wealth of ideas and challenges for those of us working in and with the learning and skills sector. In order to help readers – whether trustees, senior leaders and managers, teachers or other practitioners – to reflect on the implications, we suggest below some prompt questions that might be considered either individually or collectively. They can be used to consider future strategy in relation to your locality, your positioning in that locality and with partners.

### Thinking about your role in the local area...

15. What priorities and outcomes are important for your local area and how do they map against your mission?  
What are the major contributions that you make to the locality?  
Do opinion formers and influencers in the locality fully understand your contribution? Is your standing high with local citizens?  
Do you have an effective voice in local and regional arenas?  
How could you enhance your role and influence?  
What are the implications of the above for your priorities and strategic planning?

### Thinking about your partnerships...

16. Are you involved in the most relevant and influential partnerships in your locality?  
Is your level of involvement sustainable and efficient?  
How highly is your involvement valued by other partners?  
How effectively have you engaged your governors and trustees in understanding and endorsing the aims and accountabilities of partnership activities?

### Thinking about shared services and joint delivery of services...

17. Have you established any shared (back office) services – eg HR, marketing, procurement, etc. – with partners in the locality?  
Are you involved in joint delivery of services

or local strategies, for example for NEETs, to support particular neighbourhoods, or combat unemployment?

Are you involved in any joint CPD with other public services in your locality?

Were they valuable, and should they be extended?

Have you analysed the costs and benefits of these approaches?

Is there potential for extending such approaches?

We would be interested to hear whether these prompt questions were useful and how they might be improved.

Please send any comments to:

[policy@lsls.org.uk](mailto:policy@lsls.org.uk)

# Main report

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## Introduction

1. This report summarises discussions and presentations given at the LSIS autumn 2009 seminar series – The importance of being local: reframing the role of learning and skills in the strategic development of place. LSIS organised this seminar series to provide a forum to explore the opportunities and potential for the sector to play a stronger role within their communities shaping and delivering local priorities in collaboration with other public services.
2. The aims of the seminar series were to:
  - Scope and scale up their ambition for the role of the sector in the strategic development of the locality;
  - Consider the implications of greater local responsiveness for policy-making and accountability at local, regional and national levels;
  - Review the potential for achieving greater operational efficiency and effectiveness through collaborative, cross-public sector action; and
  - Consider the implications for the leadership and management of FE and skills organisations and for their curriculum.
3. This report draws together material from across the reports of the individual seminars into a single composite document. Part one provides a report of the major themes that emerged across the seminar series. Part two provides summaries of the presentations by the keynote speakers. See the accompanying pdfs for a full list of speaker biographies and a full list of seminar participants.

## Key themes from the discussion

### Balancing national and local determination

4. There is an increasing drive towards localism in the interests of better, more responsive public services. The prevailing view in the seminar discussions was that the dominance of national determinations inevitably limits the space for local discretion, flexibilities and planning and complicates accountability lines. National policies intended to empower one set of local bodies may have unintended consequences for others or create local–national tensions by cutting across local priorities and militating against more integrated delivery of public services.
5. However, there is not yet a consensus about how to divide decision-making between national and local levels in the learning and skills sector. What level of discretion could be devolved to the local level? How can powers be distributed so as not to hamper responsiveness and partnerships close to delivery?
6. It was noted that some national determinations have a negative impact on local powers. For example, the ‘sixth form presumption’, a nationally determined policy that allows expansion of school sixth forms, can hamper rational local authority planning, cut across partnerships and create tensions at the local level. Academies funded from the centre complicate accountability lines, local collaboration and planning in the locality. The Government’s skills activism could also create local-national tensions it was suggested by cutting across local priorities. How should these tensions be resolved?

### National or local entitlements

7. The consensus of discussion was that entitlement was best determined nationally, but recognising the whereas there is a national and universal entitlement for 16–19 year olds, in the adult arena there are priorities for

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funding rather than actual 'entitlements'. For example, although ESOL is a priority, provision in many areas has to be rationed because the demand is so high.

8. Local action can however be critical to promote take up where people are unaware of their entitlements. This signals the danger that increasing limitations of funds could make it increasingly difficult to maintain a focus on the most vulnerable and those most in need of support. Unless there is local discretion in use of funding, this focus is more difficult to sustain. Responsiveness and listening locally are vital to ensure scarce resources are used effectively.
9. One future option suggested was that in future, targets might be replaced by a 'statement of entitlement', with local authorities and services held to account for how well they deliver these entitlements. This was summarised as outcomes national – operational local. A view was expressed that trouble happens when national decisions impinge on operations.
10. This was also described as 'local responsibility within national frameworks'. In essence, this would mean that basic standards and entitlements would be set nationally, but local partnerships would have control of implementation without excessive central interference. Crucially it was argued that the national framework should specify broad outcomes – a broader perspective - rather than inputs and the means of achieving them.

### Accountability and targets

11. It was widely acknowledged that a more localised system needs a different system of accountability. Even if budgets are devolved, one attendee pointed out, it won't make a great deal of difference if local bodies are still required to meet national indicators. Currently lines of accountability lead vertically to Whitehall rather than horizontally to the local community.
  12. There will have to be some form of local accountability, of ensuring responsibility for 'local needs'. We were reassured that there is an appetite now in government to reduce national targets. Inspections do look at and evaluate partnership work, but it is not the dominant factor in grading institutions.
- ### Accountability in a polycentric system
13. Looking to the future, we envisaged a system increasingly with multiple nodes of power and influence – local, national, sectoral, etc. Even with greater localism, central government will still be held responsible for public services. Some providers work within a specific industry or economic sector which also has its own culture and sense of identity, and this, too, is a form of place. 'Don't obsess about locality'.
  14. The seminar wondered who held whom accountable in a system which, at least theoretically, had no single 'centre', no supreme authority or level. How do you handle quality and accountability in a non-linear system? We noted the example of Wikipedia<sup>2</sup>, where accuracy is maintained by the users and contributors themselves, who collectively edit the encyclopaedia and remove mistakes or outrageous claims. The system operates through auto-poiesis – the science of self-regulation.
  15. Others suggested that accountability itself will be polycentric. A partnership or its individual members may be held accountable by the national government and to its local partners, and to citizens on top of that, all at once. Polycentric systems co-exist with other systems including markets. There would be multiple accountabilities to multiple partners, even if no one body holds the ring at the centre. This can cause strains in partnerships – for example attendees identified that the NHS tends to worry more about its responsibilities to its national level of management than to local partners, while the police place more emphasis on the local level and in many areas have established local priorities for which they are accountable.

<sup>2</sup> The foundation which runs Wikipedia and its sister sites has only seven full-time employees.

16. It was also noted that the polycentric networked model still encompasses hierarchies and markets – both of which continue to be useful and important and fit for purpose in particular circumstances.

### The benefits of cross public service delivery strategies

17. Putting the Frontline First: Smarter Government<sup>3</sup>, the most recent paper on public service reform, makes a strong argument for greater integration of services in the locality and to facilitate this, the current government is, for example, committed to reducing the number of ring-fenced budgets to enable the pooling of resources needed to develop integrated strategies across public services. Total Place pilots have been examining the barriers and benefits to more integrated cross-public sector strategies to address key priorities in a region.
18. Our discussions also explored the benefits of cohering services around the needs of an individual – an approach that could complement integration of services in the locality. Individual learners often have an array of needs<sup>4</sup> that keep them from realising their full economic and social potential – transport, health, money difficulties, etc. By focusing funding on the individual and planning around his or her needs, the public services can deal with them holistically and coherently, rather than duplicating efforts across multiple agencies, and they stand a better chance of making a lasting impact. This suggested a total person approach to supporting citizens. As described, this moved beyond personalisation within one public service and perhaps is a key future shift needed in delivery of services.

### ...and what gets in the way

19. There is a continuing problem of multiple budgets – money for education, skills and training is still sliced across many different

programmes, and it is hard to knit these funds together. Not all of these funds are labelled ‘training’, which means that melding them together often creates complexity in achieving the required outcomes for accountability purposes.

20. One barrier, as witnessed in the Total Place pilots, is the way in which central government itself works in silos and fails to communicate across departments. However, it was also argued that space for discretions and innovation is found where government policy is unclear or contradictory, or doesn’t join up!
21. We questioned whether a natural inclination to look for structural or system changes, is always appropriate. For example there was a view that the role of leaders is to work around systems – for example, to bend resources to meet actual needs, despite silos. Sometimes structures can be used as an excuse for inaction – ‘we need to make what’s there already work well’. In the end it is the people who can make things work in the locality and they need to use their own agency and power to do so – innovation comes from practice, not ‘from the system, however revamped’.
22. On the other hand there was a conviction – which also seems to underpin Total Place – that the systems do need improvement. We have had decades of professional improvement, and now the ambitions of highly competent professionals are frustrated by the systems within which they operate.

**“As in every part of the public sector, the recession coupled with reductions in public funding will require innovative and concerted effort to meet increasing needs”**

<sup>3</sup> An LSIS Brief Guide to this report – which is generally referred to as Smarter Government - is available here [http://www.lsis.org.uk/Libraries/Policy/briefguidetofrontlinefirst\\_2.sflb.ashx](http://www.lsis.org.uk/Libraries/Policy/briefguidetofrontlinefirst_2.sflb.ashx)

<sup>4</sup> See paragraphs 14-15 in the report of the third seminar <http://www.lsis.org.uk/Libraries/Policy/LSSsectorandtheeconomic-crisisseminarthreefinalreport.sflb>

23. Participants identified that a significant barrier to integrated delivery in the locality is the way Government works. For example, Government is focused on the political needs of the moment whereas transformation of place is a long-term project. So new initiatives and projects come and go without making much impact; leaders, politicians and managers stay in post for only one or two years, inaugurating new projects without seeing them through. Responding repeatedly to new funding streams and ‘the latest policy idea’ can be ‘enormously depressing’.

### ...and what helps

24. Nevertheless this pattern is not inevitable. We heard examples of where significant change has been achieved when leaders have stayed in the same organisation for many years, building relationships and a pervasive and powerful culture and trust with communities and with partners, and often across generations of citizens. There were several examples of very long-serving principals who have a sense of belonging-ness to their communities and who share in its reputations. We also heard how effective leaders can build on a strong sense of direction to establish the confidence to respond only selectively to new initiatives.

25. We also heard of localities that had successfully developed unified systems of service provision. There was the example of the Kent Gateway<sup>5</sup> approach where all local services are housed under a common roof and branded together as ‘public service’. Where does this leave the professional knowledge of our sector? Should we subsume our professional expertise within the generic idea of public service? How will our customers and citizens perceive this?

### Serving citizens and creating our public

26. Our discussions suggested that the active engagement of the citizen and customer inside the system is the real catalyst for improving service delivery. Trusting and enabling

customers to co-design services makes the greatest impact. It is also a means of stretching our influence and legitimacy into civil society. Legitimacy with the community derives not just from our direct customers but from the impact that we have on the quality of life in the community as a whole. A strong dimension of localism is the creation of a public, as distinct from customers – that is, people who have a sense of ownership and responsibility for their community and place, and who personally invest in services as well as using them.

27. How can our sector raise the profile of citizens’ voices as well as learners’ voices? How too can the voices of multiple constituencies (young people, old people, business, etc) be incorporated into service design and development? An argument was made for a ‘deliberative’ or ‘facilitated dialogue’ approach to enable small groups to meet and discuss contentious issues – overcoming misconceptions, building mutual understanding and respect.

28. Another locus for citizen influence is around measurement of quality and outcomes – ‘these must serve the punter rather than government departments’. Sometimes approaches to measuring things differently are dismissed because they are not perfect even when they might be more meaningful than existing approaches. So although distance-travelled and quality of life indicators are not perfect, they should not be dismissed.

### What colleges and providers offer to their locality

29. Several contributors suggested that the sector needs to define its ‘unique selling point’. Colleges and providers are capacity builders; they can, perhaps in partnership with HE, become capacity builders for the locality to support strategic priorities. Their contribution to wider, cross-public service priorities such as digital inclusion needs to be clearly understood and exploited for example. They offer more

<sup>5</sup> For more information, see the joint publication between Kent County Council and Guardian Public <http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Society/documents/2009/08/28/Kent-Gateway-screenready.pdf>

- than people will necessarily divine ‘from the tin’ and this needs to be articulated more effectively.
30. They are experts in the specific skills needs of a community or region and help address mismatches between skills demand and supply. Local authorities may lead local partnerships on a variety of matters (including 14-19 commissioning), but colleges provide an ‘institutional backbone’ to support delivery capacity that should be fully exploited.
  31. In many partnerships, the police authorities and the NHS dominate, because they tend to have a single leader (a chief constable or a manager), and local authorities may be weakened by internal political dissent. This means that local strategic partnerships focus a lot on security and health care, but not much on economic development. College leaders are a vital means of bringing the economic and skills agenda to the forefront. They have a key responsibility in playing their part as public service leaders in this regard<sup>6</sup>.
- ### Taking a strategic position in the locality
32. This focus on the relationship between colleges and other public services in the locality encouraged us to think about how to position colleges and other providers alongside other players within the community – ‘to think about how we stand with others’.
  33. We observed that professions have enormous capacity to develop, and sometimes drive, public policy. The campaign against cholera during the 19th century was entirely conceived and led by the medical profession, without the help of the Victorian-era state. Medicine is a ‘crusading service’. Does the learning and skills sector display this crusading spirit? Does the sector force its way into the halls of government and shape its destiny sufficiently, as professional experts in learning and skills? It was suggested that the crusading dynamic was not sufficiently visible.
  34. There was a hint at times in the discussion that colleges expect to be invited to the strategic table or expect others – such as local or central government – to advocate their involvement. The prevailing view was that ‘we must show what we offer not wait to be invited’. Colleges in particular have a compelling case to make for a place at the strategic tables on the basis of their role, capacity and contributions.
  35. Public service partners working together in the locality can pool multiple perspectives to create a better understanding of their communities and citizens. All partners can influence a strategic needs assessment so that it is more sophisticated – and so help to ensure that greater attention and local discretion are given to the day-to-day concerns of local people. They can also ensure the stable delivery of entitlements to those most in need. In addition, effective partnerships should improve understanding of the impact of one set of actions on other public services – so for example the impact of housing policy on health, or the contribution of education to reducing worklessness. This should lead to more holistic decisions – after all, ‘none of us is as clever as all of us!’
  36. Local partnerships can develop a shared definition of need and establish a community of providers working together, signed up to a local strategy, competing on quality; they can potentially offer more efficient budgeting and rationing of resources. Through local deliberation and discussion, they can also develop greater accountability to the community and local priorities, establishing a degree of democratic and community legitimacy – which might also be used to develop consensus on how to manage rationing.

### The potential of partnerships and public service coalitions

<sup>6</sup> The AOC’s research report for LSIS on the involvement of colleges in the Total Place pilots describes how the colleges in Kent have formed the Kent Association of Further Education Colleges to engage with local authorities and other stakeholders. This has enabled the FE sector in Kent to be more fully recognised as a local strategic partner.

37. However, to what extent can a local partnership be highly-tuned and accountable to the locality? Can it really guarantee coverage of provision and manage trade-offs between its members? Are these reasonable expectations? In addition we were asked how effective consortia could be in seeking out 'customers that we don't yet have or businesses that have not yet been established'. It is not sufficient to deal 'with what comes through the door'. How can local coalitions develop this strategic capacity and what level of local discretion would they need to do so?

### The politics of partnership

38. It was universally acknowledged that partnership working is not simple. We heard a view from a number of colleges that local authorities are not always open to partnership working with other agencies. When confronted with differences of opinion, they can fall back on their democratic mandate to close down debate - even though that mandate may be based on a low voter turnout.

39. However councils are in a pivotal position in relation to funding and to democratic accountability, so should have the ability to lead partnerships. At the same time, both local councils and their strategic partners are gaining autonomy, making it harder to understand power relationships – but if we want more autonomy for ourselves, we must accept it for others.

40. It was also recognised that learning and skills leaders have their limitations in partnership working. How effectively will local partnerships resist the strains of competition in leaner financial times? Leaders may focus first on protecting their own institutions – helping out the wider community may seem distinctly less important.

### Sharing problems and power in partnerships...

41. A pre-requisite for effective partnerships is an ability to trust and empathise with one's partners. One attendee described this as 'fellowship' – 'your problem is my problem'.

Partners may fear that they will lose out by participating – that their budget and resources will be redirected to things that benefit someone else. People are seen as 'taking from partnerships' rather than contributing. Some argued that 'sharing power' would be a good first step towards establishing trust. Others suggested that partnerships needed a 'shared sense of strategic purpose' to properly function.

42. At one point we likened behaviour in effective collaborative partnerships to a jazz band. The band starts with an agreed theme but does not play to a pre-ordained score, but is made up of individuals able to improvise in relation to other players and to the tempo and tone of their signals. Such a relationship needs to be built on trust and understanding – so for example in partnerships we need to be able to trust others to represent our interests.

43. It was also noted that partnership is not dependent upon consensus. Allies for a shared purpose need not always agree – indeed, enforcing a consensus can freeze out needed voices and dissent. Relationships should be 'trusting, but open to questioning and debate'.

44. To function well, they must have a clear purpose and goal. Without this, partnerships often become talking shops – people meet periodically, 'talk strategically for a few hours' and then disperse, without any action resulting. The twin dilemmas for partnerships are first 'strategic direction and steering' and second 'multiple accountabilities'.

### Partnerships can be time-consuming

45. A barrier to effective partnership working is the time demands that it makes. Many colleges and providers work in several local authority areas, and specialist colleges may work in dozens. Thus, there are multiple partnerships, formal and informal, that can claim a principal or chief executive's time - too many for any one person or institution to contribute effectively to all of them. 'We have to be cautious about our use of time and money.' Although partnership-building is vital for leaders, it isn't the only, or even the main, requirement of their posts.

Although they should delegate leaders equally can't forget their 'day jobs' – ie running their institutions.

46. In general it was suggested that we need 'fewer and better partnerships'. Some advised simply not joining all of the partnerships on offer or only joining when membership would 'add value'. Often, an institution needs to 'simplify its partnership architecture', which can often become crowded with a wide variety of bodies holding a lot of meetings but accomplishing little. Too many partnerships at local, sub-regional and regional levels may create confusing layers of accountability, so that they fail to accomplish their goals, breeding cynicism about collaborative activity.
47. Another reality is that partnerships tend to work more slowly than a single provider might. Projects 'lose pace' as partners divert energy to the negotiations and planning that make partnerships work. Not every project should be submitted for partnership work. One delegate described the experience of a local NEET strategy group involving the local authority and Connexions which deliberated rather than acting. In this instance the college decided it needed to get on and do something - sometimes we just have to 'do it'. Their experience was then used to inform the strategy group.

### Implications for professional development and leadership

48. Working within coalitions and partnerships requires a different set of competencies and skills from those traditionally associated with senior posts where hierarchies afford unambiguous authority.
49. There are particular issues to do with authority where public service leaders cede power to the broader coalition. Individual actors within a coalition need authority to act, endorsed through their own highly diverse governance arrangements – for example, nominated, elected, paid or voluntary; appointed by secretary of state in the case of primary care trusts or elected in the case of local authority councillors. What level of delegated authority does a principal need to act effectively within a local partnership? What kinds of reassurances and boundaries would a governing body need in order to give a principal such delegated authority?
50. The creation of cross-public sector coalitions requires empathy, an ability to stand in the shoes of one's partners and an ability to understand others. We also noted that leaders need to hold a steady vision and direction. A clear sense of professional identity and values helps to maintain this clarity of purpose. 'If you can get the culture right and create a common sense of mission, the rest will follow'. They also need to be highly mobile, 'operating on the battlefield and on the balcony' – both taking a strategic view and engaging in the detail of real delivery. Partnerships are unlikely to flourish around one dominant leader but instead need a coalition of ambition – we coined the term 'collectiveship'. Leaders will need a degree of social and political intelligence to function effectively in partnerships.
51. How effectively does current leadership development fit this new context and take account of the need for leaders to communicate across public sector boundaries; to lead thinking without formal authority; to shape and influence definitions of common cause and shared ambition as the basis for collective action? It was also suggested that we should be training leaders of public services for the 'leadership of place' as well as the leadership of specific institutions – creating a new genre of public service professionals.
52. We heard about one specific example of capacity building for coalition working facilitated by Warwick University. Members of the Leicestershire Leadership in Partnership programme<sup>7</sup>, (middle managers drawn from local government, health service, police service, fire and the voluntary sector) are learning and working together by tackling complex cross-

<sup>7</sup> This refers to a Diploma programme that included 25 participants and enabled a significant dimension of social learning.

cutting problems collectively, making mistakes collectively, and participating in group exercises some of which were deliberately designed to be fun or silly. This not only breaks the ice between people, but also allows members to develop the kind of trust necessary to share real difficulties and dilemmas as well as success stories. Some noted that it is actually easier to do this in groups from different services rather than in a small work group within a single institution, where everyone knows and judges one another constantly.

### Defining local

53. So how to define the local area?
54. Large colleges usually take learners from multiple local authority areas. This complicates partnership working, particularly with local authorities and their structures. In recent years mergers have created a significant number of colleges with expansive geographical catchment areas – a model that may extend in leaner financial times given the economies of scale it provides.
55. Specialist colleges work at a national level with dozens of local authorities but under the new 14–19 commissioning system they will also be expected to work with a lead local authority with responsibility for commissioning. Which partnerships would they join at a local level? How would the creation of a lead commissioning authority affect their relationship with the other councils they work with?

**“Public service partners working together in the locality can pool multiple perspectives to create a better understanding of their communities and citizens”**

### ...and community identity

56. People do not always identify with their local council, especially where borders cover several towns and neighbourhoods, or where they live in multi-borough city regions. They may in fact identify with a smaller community or neighbourhood, or even with a larger sub-region or region (Teesside, or Merseyside, for example). Some Total Place pilots, for example, cover more than one local authority (the Greater Manchester and Warrington pilot covers eleven, while several others cover two or three).
57. Furthermore, people may be much more aware of and engaged with communities of interest (young mothers, other people with a specific health condition, local historians, people with disabilities, musicians, sports fans, etc) than geographic communities. Some communities are connected via specialist, national or local organisations or the internet (Facebook groups, for example).
58. One delegate pointed out that learners in colleges choose or create their own sense of place through their course choices. Providers may create a community, developing a shared definition of need, signing up to a local strategy and competing on quality. These other ‘concepts of community’ should not be ignored.

### Universal or targeted services

59. We questioned whether public services could or should be provided evenly across neighbourhoods and other sub-sections of a community. For example, there is a wide variation in life expectancies, demographics and other factors between the various neighbourhoods and wards in Leicester, and this places uneven demands on different elements of local services. This is typical of all localities.

60. There is a challenge in addressing inequality so that the process does not create fears of postcode lotteries. The establishment of baseline entitlements could help address this dilemma. Governments and local authorities often focus resources on deprived areas (as Leicester did) while in some local authorities, such as South Tyneside, neighbourhood residents can select certain local services over and above the basic universal entitlement. Some public services will be universal, and others focus on the most deprived. 'You need a strategic overview of how you prioritise resources, and accept that some areas will get more funding than others' – a decision that must be then justified to the citizens.

### Recession as a spur to innovation

61. As in every part of the public sector, the recession coupled with reductions in public funding will require innovative and concerted effort to meet increasing needs. The one certainty is that funding will be reduced, especially for learners aged 19 and over. It was argued that growth in demand for 16–19 provides an easier context for managing cuts in the unit of resource - although some were concerned that local authorities are likely to want to keep their 16–19 learners within their own boundaries, which would distract from the principle of funding following the learner. Post-19 there is both a reduction in the unit of resource and the volume of provision, which creates a more difficult context – and a context in which ingenuity and new thinking will be vital if services are to be safeguarded.

62. Indeed some people argued that the recession could spur innovation and that we could gain a more rational and strategic approach as a result of straitened financial times. We could take the lack of public funding as an opportunity to invent new, more efficient ways of working, creating savings and benefits all round (including for learners).

63. For example, it was suggested that it may be easier to challenge existing assumptions such as the value of small sixth forms. The financial climate could provide the urgency needed to

look critically at the totality of provision and spend in a locality – which would be expected to raise questions about the viability of some small sixth forms. The potential of increasing shared services between providers was also mentioned. There is growing pressure to move in this direction and as the Total Place approach develops, place-based approaches – ie shared services in a locality - may make more sense than a sector-based approach.

64. One delegate noted that innovation comes from practice, not 'from the system, however revamped'. Thus, learning around real tasks with space for reflection and engaging more people can create more capacity to innovate. While we applauded long-serving leaders for their commitment to a locality, we also noted that we may need to refresh the people around the table to get innovation. Innovation is about the 'season's new growth' – not about new initiatives.

**Caroline Mager**

**Executive director, Policy, Research and Strategic Intelligence, LSIS**

# Keynote Presentations

## Seminar one: Public services, learning and skills - fit for place

### The challenges for public services in the locality

Helen Bailey, director, Public Services, HM Treasury



1. Helen began by explaining her own role at the Treasury. 'Public Services', in the context of her work, covers health, education, local government, housing, the devolved governments and public service reform, the last item including the reform of central government targets. Prior to working for the Treasury, Helen was the chief executive of the London Borough of Islington, where she sat on a Local Strategic Partnership with City and Islington College, among others.
2. As a background to her discussion of learning and skills, Helen noted that local government was once suffocated under enormously detailed targets which absorbed the vast amount of its working time. At one point, local government was required to report on about 1,500 targets, many of which included their own sub-targets. Worse yet, these targets often failed to produce the outcomes that the central government wanted in the first place – one could meet the target while 'missing the point' of the thing.
3. The idea of 'place' first became fashionable with the Lyons Review, which was published in March 2007. This placed a new emphasis on local agencies working together in partnership, which, though 'time consuming and difficult', is 'the right thing to do', as all local public services serve the same people.
4. As the recession sets in, the concept of 'place-shaping' has been modified, or accompanied, by the idea of 'place-shielding', which aims to preserve the economic and social well-being of a local community from the ravages of the downturn.
5. There is increasing concern about what outcomes are achieved through the expenditure of public money – the efficacy and efficiency of public expenditure. The Total Place pilots are part of this, in that they create a single map of what a local area (either a local authority or a sub-region) spends and how they spend it, allowing policy-makers to see where spending is replicated or redundant, and to determine what is actually being accomplished with the expenditure.
6. The Government is also pressing for greater efficiency in its internal operations, through the sharing of back-office operations, IT systems and other support functions (as presaged by the Operational Efficiency programme published in the spring). Whitehall is also eager for local authorities to make similar savings in this area.
7. A key challenge is how to release creativity and encourage efficiency at the front line. Cities are, and always have been, engines of economic growth under ideal circumstances. A new city regions pilots programme will examine how decision-making and financing impede cities' ability to support regional economic growth.
8. Helen then turned to the role of learning and skills. Firstly, she said, the new localism will allow the sector new opportunities to explain their view of the local economy and its skills needs to other local leaders. This wouldn't necessarily be easy, and Helen in fact called the process 'a bit rocky – a bit jagged', as local authorities are not necessarily receptive to outside views. The centre makes constant demands on public services in a locality – focus on increasing skills levels; stop social exclusion; reduce teenage pregnancy – and this makes it hard to maintain strategic clarity. The game is to 'demonstrate

the value of doing things locally' in partnership, showing how this can meet local public service goals better than central government can.

9. She then noted that it was also an opportunity to present the local case to Whitehall. The localism agenda will not obviate the need to control spending – the Treasury had announced a pay freeze for many public sector workers that very day. Place-shaping, however, is as much about devising a more efficient and effective use of money as it is about the specific control of public spending. If there were less money but more freedom to spend it – more potential for accountability to the locality – how would you argue that you can spend it better than Whitehall?
10. What's next? Helen said this was both a 'good time and a bad time' for her presentation. The Pre-Budget Report (PBR), which foreshadows spending for the next year, was due, along with the interim results of the Total Place pilots and public spending plans. The details of the PBR were still being negotiated behind closed doors, but the Government seems through its public utterances to remain committed to high levels of education spending – in that sense, education is in a stronger position than many other public services. All parties seem to remain committed to increasing skills levels.
11. How do we measure outcomes locally? Helen referred to subjective assessments such as 'public satisfaction' and 'perception' included in the current Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) and asked participants: What do people expect of learning and skills providers? What do they expect young people will learn in learning and skills institutions? What skills do they expect the sector to provide? Are they satisfied with the service they are now getting? If you were given the opportunity to construct a more decentralised model with more autonomy, would you be ready to include a greater focus on satisfaction and perceptions? Is that an opportunity you are ready to grasp? Do you feel empowered to do so?

## FE Skills, activism and the economy

Stephen Marston,  
director general,  
Universities and Skills  
Group Department for  
Business, Innovation  
and Skills (BIS)



12. Stephen explored 'activism' and its local implications. He affirmed that there should be common ground between local and national agendas in this area, but that the respective responsibilities and powers of the two spheres need to be defined, and a balance struck between national goals and local autonomy.
13. 'Activism', both in industry and in skills, has been led by Lord Peter Mandelson, the business secretary since the autumn of 2008. (FE, skills and HE were added to his remit in June 2009.) Lord Mandelson has argued that people have lost confidence in the ability of the state to positively shape the economy for the benefit of the nation, and that we should attempt to rebuild that confidence.
14. This is not the same thing as central planning. Markets should have full play wherever they can provide for public and consumer needs, but they will not always give the best solution. The government will assess where and when markets are working, and how best to intervene in the national interest where they are not.
15. The key document in the activism agenda is *New industry, new jobs*<sup>8</sup>, which was published in April 2009. It sets out Government's intention to examine its role in the economy, which it plays through its spending, legislation, procurement policy, investment and other activities, and to look at how that can support wealth creation and economic gain through the active, coherent use of those levers. It included calls for specific support for certain areas of the economy that are predicted to be major growth sectors in future<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/new-industry-new-jobs>

16. It also built on former skills secretary (June 2007–June 2009), John Denham’s ‘skills activism’ policy. Skills are critical to the economy, and informed and empowered customers clearly articulating demand should be able to obtain them through market mechanisms. But there are clear areas of skills need that are not securing a sufficient market response, often arising when the demand side is not giving clear enough signals to the supply side to encourage investment in new products. For example, this is likely to happen in relation to the skills needs of emerging businesses or new sectors of the economy. Employers complain that long-term or prospective demands aren’t being translated into supply.
17. Stephen described this as: ‘Markets where markets can’ but Government involvement where they cannot. Skills activism has developed to meet a number of market failures in the provision of skills – supplying the skills that markets are not eliciting from suppliers<sup>10</sup>.
18. The most local relationship in the skills world is between a consumer and the learning and skills provider. This relationship should be as free of encumbrance as possible. Stephen asked what this meant for learning and skills providers? First, ‘colleges must be local institutions’. They are responsible to and at the service of their local communities, and are community assets. Their contribution to their communities must be recognised and celebrated. However, colleges also have wider regional, sectoral and national responsibilities – they are not bounded solely by the local context – and those roles need to be recognised as well.
19. Stephen then looked at what activities are best delivered in a way that varies depending on local priority, and which are best delivered consistently and on a standard basis across the country.
20. He suggested that some skills outcomes are likely to need to be the same across the country, and we should have a consistent national set of skills outcomes: the skills to be a good plumber do not vary from place to place, so it helps a flexible national labour market to have a single set of defined skill outcomes that drive qualification design across the country. There should also be uniform standards for achievement, so that employers, learners and the public can have confidence in the level of attainment that a given qualification represents – a Level 2 qualification should conform to the same standards no matter where it is taught.
21. He asked if the learner entitlement should be set nationally. Entitlements are legally binding obligations the public service has to citizens, and arguably should be universal. Basic skills entitlements, for example, are universal, as are the entitlements to Level 2 qualifications and (for young people), Level 3 qualifications. If entitlements are set locally, do we risk creating a postcode lottery?
22. Stephen also wondered if the sector’s service to employers should be a uniform national entitlement. Businesses are frustrated by the varying levels of service they receive in different parts of the country. Train to Gain has the potential to be a consistent, national service for employers.
23. At the local level, policies should be implemented to meet local needs, in the manner best suited to the local context. However, there is a ‘very crowded field’ of agencies (local authorities, local strategic partnerships, Regional Development Agencies, Employment and Skills Boards, etc) all of which could claim a role in defining needs, and which could impede the provider-consumer relationship that is the backbone of the sector. How do providers intervene effectively and efficiently in this crowded arena? Is it clear how needs are ultimately agreed between the different agencies involved and how discrepancies are reconciled?

<sup>9</sup> BIS has published follow-up documents on key sectors of the economy that the New industry report singled out for special support – for example, low-carbon technology, advanced manufacturing and bio-sciences

<sup>10</sup> Helen noted that further thinking on this would be provided in a skills strategy to be published within the next few weeks – subsequent to the seminar Skills for Growth in November 2009 – <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/skills-for-growth>

24. Lastly, Stephen addressed the question of colleges and providers working together. 'Intermediary' agencies – ie, the bureaucracy – have long taken the key role in determining skills supply. Learning and skills providers, in the meantime, have become both more subject to central control and more competitive. This is not good. When government tries to encourage local learning and skills partnerships to determine local priorities, colleges and providers have been wary. How should colleges and providers come together to influence? Can colleges and providers work collectively to define local need, and do so without forming an 'anti-competitive cartel'?

## Seminar two: Leadership within a public service coalition

### Shaping public services in the locality – the role of citizens, customers and professionals

Lord Victor Adebowale,  
chief executive, Turning  
Point



sector and third-sector funding, and that the distinction between these sources of funding is of little import to the people who use the services (they 'don't give a monkey's').

25. Victor started with a brief description of Turning Point: it is a not-for-profit organisation that provides personalised counselling and social services in about 250 localities in England and Wales<sup>11</sup>. Its services include substance abuse counselling, employment advice, and specialist care for people with mental health problems or learning disabilities.
26. Victor noted that in addition to heading Turning Point (and sitting in the House of Lords), he is a member of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills and the Audit Commission (which oversees local government expenditure).
27. Victor described the complexity of the learning and skills system and its funding as Kafkaesque. 'Placing FE in the locality will be a major challenge', he said.
28. Speaking of the social services system as a whole, Victor stated that the system is currently 'unacceptable', and must change. 'If we carry on doing what we've always done, we'll keep getting what we always get,' and that is far from sufficient – indeed, with public funding diminishing, we're likely to get 'appalling services delivered for very little money'. He called for a new system of commissioning as distinct from procurement, which would be underpinned by an understanding of individual and community needs. He also noted that most of the services Turning Point provides are delivered by a combination of state, private-
29. Victor's main concern in delivering social services is to focus on the distance between the state and those it serves, between the public service providers and the system's recipients. The Government provides a wide array of education and support in the community, but they are far removed from the day-to-day experience of people from low-income or certain minority backgrounds. They do not understand them and fear them – for example, people from African and Caribbean backgrounds are completely unfamiliar with the mental health system, and avoid it entirely unless 'in extremis'. On one estate, Turning Point found that three-fifths of the deprived people it spoke to, expressed an interest in working in health or social care, but most had no idea how to obtain training in these professions. They are 'self-excluded' from education, training, health care and other aid. This is defined as the 'inverse care law' – if people do not understand what services do, they will avoid them, no matter how much assistance is provided or how many offices are opened. What is the corollary for the learning and skills sector and what are the implications for commissioning and citizen engagement?
30. Turning Point tailors its programmes to help people 'where they are at' in relation to the system. The charity starts with the specific individual problems to be solved, and builds the service around that. Once that is done, they identify 'repeatable techniques' which can be applied universally. This is the opposite of the normal Government approach, which is to develop a policy at the centre and then attempt to implement it universally on the ground. Turning Point's approach is focused on the citizen and enlists them in helping to design the delivery of the services they need. Victor called this approach 'connective care'.

<sup>11</sup> *The Turning Point website says 244.*

One example of this is a centre that provides substance abuse counselling, GP consultations, mental health services and employment advice under a single roof.

31. The implications of the connective care approach are ‘profound’ – not least because it produces ‘significant and immediate savings’. However, it is difficult to obtain state support for such an approach. Bureaucrats prefer control to change, and doubt that poor people are competent to design the services they use. As a result, it is difficult to get funding for these sorts of bottom-up, integrated schemes. Victor can get ‘edge money’ from the margins of local or departmental budgets, surrendered grudgingly by directors, but this money only lasts for perhaps a year, and then the bureaucrats restore the status quo.
32. Victor called for social workers and other staff to be stationed in the communities they serve, in the housing estates. He called on public sector managers to co-ordinate services and not individual workers.
33. But it is very difficult to change spending patterns and working practices. The new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), which is used to rate local public services, does include measures of citizen satisfaction, providing an avenue for the people to indirectly influence the services they receive. But bureaucracies are remarkably resilient, and very skilled at perverting measurement and management systems to further their own purposes, or allow them to continue doing what they’ve always done.
34. Victor finished by saying that you can deliver bespoke services to the poor via a combination of public, private and charitable funding, and save money doing it. The system is the main obstacle. But ‘it can be done. You just have to be Machiavellian and brave’.

### Whole systems thinking and action – stepping up to the challenge

Professor John Benington, Institute of Governance and Public Management, University of Warwick



35. John said his presentation would combine Gramsci’s ‘pessimism of the intellect’ and ‘optimism of the will’. He noted that, over the past 60 years, there has been a continuous pendulum in public policy, swinging between greater localisation and greater centralisation. The last decade has been a time of centralisation, and the pendulum is on a trajectory back to the local end of the spectrum. But we need to stop oscillating between centralising and decentralising policies. Instead, we need a ‘Copernican revolution in our mindsets’ and new paradigms, which see local and national (and indeed supra-national) as inter-connected parts of a ‘complex adaptive system’.
36. John started by considering the relation of ‘place’ to identity and suggesting the need for a more critical analysis of place as an arena of competing interests and cross-cutting identities. Most people have some sense of identity with locality and neighbourhood, but also have other important sources of identity (with people who share common interests and values) that cut across locality.
37. John also noted that the Total Place pilots are not the first attempt to search for better co-ordination and more efficiency through local collaboration. In the early 1970s, the Government (then under Ted Heath) ran a Community Development Programme (CDP) very similar to Total Place, the main difference being that it focused on 12 very small, narrowly defined neighbourhoods. Total Place focuses on whole local authorities or groups of local

- authorities, covering hundreds of thousands of people.
38. Between the 1970s and now, there have been many pilots with similar goals. There has been considerable research and evaluation of these programmes but little appears to have been learned from this experience.
  39. One important thing to keep in mind is that ‘the problems experienced in localities are not caused in those localities’. The problems of poverty and unemployment in Coventry’s Hillfields did not originate in that district, but rather in the decline of the British automotive industry, which underpinned the economy and social structure of the whole region. Similarly Sheffield’s economic and unemployment problems were tied to the wider European restructuring of the iron and steel industry. However, recognising that local problems usually have external causes should not paralyse our ability to act – ‘think global, but act local’.
  40. John also argued that local collaboration does not magically solve all problems. Not all public services should work in unison. Warwick Business School has been studying a project which puts all of the various components of the criminal justice system under one roof – the courts, the crown prosecution service, the probation services, and so on – in order to provide integrated access, and more joined up services. But some users seem to think that ‘joined up justice’ might amount to ‘stitched up justice’! Total Place might even carry a risk of ‘totalitarianism’ freezing out internal dissent or the participation of minority voices within civil society.
  41. The long string of pilot programmes testing local collaboration, stretching back four decades, illustrates another point – pilots don’t last long enough to make much difference to the culture of localities. It requires five or 10 years to really make a lasting alteration to the culture of a place.
  42. But with that ‘pessimism of the intellect’, you can also have ‘optimism of the will’. A ‘whole systems approach’, like the one advocated in the paper John co-wrote with Jean Hartley, *Whole Systems Go!*<sup>12</sup> can help public leaders and managers to think clearly and act decisively, even within a context of change, volatility and uncertainty. But thinking and acting in terms of whole systems will require different approaches to leadership and management development.
  43. Leicestershire and Rutland County Councils, Leicester City Council and the District Councils have established an innovative approach to unified public leadership development, working across all the local authorities as well as the various Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and the police, fire service and voluntary organisations. They have set up a joint public services leadership board, comprising elected politicians and senior managers from the council and from the National Health Service (NHS), police, fire services and other agencies, to take corporate strategic responsibility for the leadership of the whole area. They are also looking at ways to pool procurement, and budgets for training – the last item may be a niche FE colleges can fill.
  44. The Leicestershire in Partnership programme is being developed in close partnership with Warwick Business School (who link it to a Diploma in Public Leadership and Management) and will continue this programme for at least three years, creating a corps of about 75–100 managers trained in a ‘whole-systems’ approach, and capable of working collaboratively with members of other public, private and voluntary services, to tackle the complex problems facing citizens and communities.
  45. John suggested that if local leaders are to successfully manage complex systems, they need to:
  46. Involve central government, bringing civil servants into the locality to witness problems

<sup>12</sup> See <http://www.nationalschool.gov.uk/downloads/WholeSystemsGoPaper.pdf> and the *LSIS Brief Guide* at: <http://www.lsis.org.uk/Libraries/Policy/briefguidetowholesystemsgofinal.sflb>

at first hand and talk with those who actually deliver services<sup>13</sup>;

47. Recruit support from business. For example, to successfully tackle alcohol abuse, one must convince supermarkets to stop selling alcohol so cheaply, and to stop selling it illegally to the underage.
48. We must ‘think and act whole systems’, John said – ‘it is a necessity’. Government can no longer be exercised purely through vertical silos or hierarchical structures. Instead, governance has to be carried out through a tangle of different organisations, lines of authority, funding and accountabilities. In many ways, it is similar to the Internet, a vast interconnected system with no single apex, no supreme authority. This trend away from simple vertical stovepipes and hierarchy and towards a more congested and inter-connected ‘polycentric system’ has been ongoing since the 1980s.
49. A ‘polycentric system’ has no ‘central’ government per se. The ‘centre’ of government may be on the streets of Leicestershire or Brussels or Whitehall. We need a much more agile leadership cadre to navigate such a system, one which can work in the local A&E ward and the corridors of Brussels with equal agility. We also need more research into this polycentric architecture, and what it means for leadership development and training, because this model undermines ‘all traditional business school thinking’ about the need to separate strategic thinking and operational delivery. Now we need to move continuously between strategy and operations, between the balcony and the battlefield. Traditionally, a leader made strategy from above, as if he were surveying the landscape from a helicopter. Now there’s no above, as it were.
50. John then went on to summarise the key propositions from *Whole Systems Go!*<sup>14</sup> (there are seven, though John did not go through them one by one). He noted that we need new paradigms of how we perceive the distribution of power in the system. ‘Citizens and users [of services] are inside the system’ now, and power is dispersed away from the state – there is no single ‘centre of power, and government now has to find out how it can influence thinking and behaviour in arenas (eg teenage pregnancy; alcohol and drug misuse) over which it has no direct control’. For public service leaders, this is a bit like playing in a jazz band: Not only do you have to play your instrument and your part, but you have to react instantly to another band member’s improvisations, which occur without warning. This often scares people if they have no conceptual frameworks to help to make sense of what is going on.
51. To negotiate such a system, managers may need to create a ‘holding environment’ a chamber or forum where different interests can be helped to find the separate voices and to negotiate a coalition or common purpose. They need not always form a consensus, as current policy suggests, but they do have to recognise, negotiate and reconcile competing interests. Universities and FE colleges can create a ‘holding environment’ for these sorts of debates and discussions.
52. Nor does leadership rest solely on formal authority. A local alliance can’t legally stop a supermarket offering discounted alcohol. It can, however, exercise its influence to persuade it to stop, or threaten to ‘name and shame’ it if they does not. Often, local leaders will find themselves operating in the spaces between various actors – between the central and local levels of government, between the state and the people, and so on. These are ‘stressful spaces’.
53. All of this requires more in-depth research and new conceptual frameworks – experience alone will not create a new, coherent philosophy of whole-systems management. It requires new types of distributed and collaborative leadership, and not just ‘charismatic, heroic’

<sup>13</sup> *One of Whole Systems Go’s recommendations is that Whitehall civil servants be required to spend three months working at the front line outside London.*

<sup>14</sup> *The LSIS Brief Guide mentioned above provides the complete list.*

figures. In this system, relatively junior personnel may sometimes lead, and even have to break the rules while doing so. This will also require new methods of leadership and management development, which can transmit knowledge not just to individuals and institutions, but throughout the whole system. Leaders should sometimes be trained in workplace teams rather than as individuals, solving complex problems in real time. In addition to the Whole Systems Go! report, John recommended Ron Heifetz's book *Leadership Without Easy Answers* as a guide to this kind of thinking and practice.

A response from the sector

Nick Brown OBE,  
principal, Oldham Sixth  
Form College



54. Nick started with his first experiences as a principal. He took his post in 1990, and recalled a saying from a speaker at his first FE conference: 'a buccaneer is the loser's definition of a winner'. He thought that this macho and self-aggrandising mind-set was very negative for the sector, which through collaboration and partnership can serve communities far better than a type of local imperialism.
55. Nick said he had learned in these past 19 years how much FE can contribute to the community, how strong our communities are, and that the learning and skills sector is not especially good at exercising policy influence. Nick has been seeking to use FE to improve his community, while simultaneously extending the sector's influence in the making and implementation of local policy. His contribution focused on how to create a local coalition around the FE mission.
56. Noting that the areas with high unemployment in this recession are the same as those from the last two recessions, Nick stated that the system can't be working if it keeps failing the same people. What use have all the innovations been – they come and go, and are often the pet projects of civil servants, politicians or leaders trying to make their marks in jobs they don't plan on holding for very long. These waves of innovations create the opportunity costs of constantly adjusting to change, and waste time and resources. They also create a burgeoning, ever-growing bureaucracy, without actually engaging with deprived communities.
57. How do we effect change? To make any progress, we must first identify a specific need. We need to engage people with public services that are often detached from the person on the streets. And we need to have people in the same positions over the long term – we need the same people who start a programme to be in post, available to be held accountable, at the end.
58. Our systems are becoming more complicated, forcing us to ask what leadership is, and where it is located. We have to juggle our responsibilities to our individual institution with a need to collaborate across an increasingly impoverished public sector. Institutions can no longer stand on their own – they must form mutually beneficial, mutually protective coalitions.
59. To do this, partnership leaders need clear strategic thinking on the most pressing needs of the community they serve and also an operational assessment of what can be speedily delivered. For FE colleges this should be particularly easy as we can influence a variety of other partners' missions and aid them with delivery. We are therefore initially seen as givers and not as takers and we can unlock the solution to some of the communities' problems. In this way our capability becomes understood, our mission appreciated and the potential of the locality to work through us grows. We are also a semi-permanent form of solution as our mission tends to be fixed in some of the more

immutable needs of the people we serve. In other words we have a history of tackling long-term inequality and deprivation. In Oldham's case the needs are community cohesion and economic regeneration. In both of these cases the one solution on which everyone agrees is the up-skilling in a sympathetic mixed-race environment of young people, particularly those who have historically under-achieved.

60. Oldham is a poor borough, Nick said, with historically low proportions of people who progress into higher education. Its Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) focuses on correcting this. That LSP won a European award for the best such local partnership in Europe, from among 300 applicants, and also won positive comments from the Audit Commission.
61. This success is in part due to a commonality of mission and focus among the various partners. This is so pronounced that Oldham College (the FE college, not Nick's sixth form college) has hired a former local council executive as its next principal, who understands the more complex systems FE works in. There is a 'common stream of interest' in the borough.
62. The Oldham LSP has three corporate objectives, which have also been adopted by the council itself. The main objective is to make Oldham a 'university town', with a university-run science centre which will supply science graduates to the Greater Manchester area. This is the borough's strategic niche within the sub-regional market. This science centre will draw on many sources of funding, and give Oldham a pool of skilled students.
63. The partnership collectively determines commissioning priorities, and this allows it to shape provision. For example, the partnership or its members might not commission a small sixth form college if doing so would hurt the broader goal of increasing overall HE progression (which might be better served by commissioning a larger provider).
64. If we do shift the paradigm about community work, the sector can become hugely influential at the local level.

## Seminar three: Scaling up the ambition

### Public service transformation – the challenges for localities and for the centre

Irene Lucas CBE,  
Director General,  
Local Government  
and Regeneration,  
Department for  
Communities and Local  
Government College



Irene began by referencing a significant customer-driven Government initiative being launched that week – Putting the Frontline First: Smarter Government. This draws heavily on the early findings from 13 ‘Total Place’ pilot projects and signals strong cross-government support for the Total Place concept (see paragraph 8). Smarter Government focuses on: strengthening the role of citizens and civic society; recasting the relationship between the centre and front line; and streamlining central government for sharper delivery. Irene also discussed the Pre-Budget Report (PBR) and the first Comprehensive Area Assessment results, which were announced on 9 December 2009.

66. Smarter Government is about giving citizens what they want, using rapid technological change to provide the responsive public services they demand. The emphasis is on maintaining quality, while driving down cost. In short, value for money. Key to this are greater localisation and devolution of power, more joined-up working between service providers – for example through shared services and procurement.
67. As we move from recession to recovery, public services work in a time of increasingly straitened public finances. There will be a re-balancing of power in favour of local
68. Some public services will be protected from budget cuts, creating a shift of focus in state resources. The consequences of this are that there could be larger cuts in some areas. However, she stressed that these are the priorities evident to her at the moment – and that governments always remain flexible in assessing and fine-tuning their priorities.
69. Regarding accountability and relationships, there is a ‘real shift’ here. There will be a great deal of work around a change in performance management regimes. The diffusion of power from the centre is the next stage in public sector reform. Oversight will be more nuanced and locally tailored for all public agencies. There will be a focus on learning and understanding the needs of local people (which, of course, vary between geographical and socio-economic areas), and a focus on the ‘understanding of place’. Irene said the Government has learned from the way the regional development agencies (RDAs) have functioned – she noted that their success varied depending on how much their intervention was needed, and that some didn’t work very well at all.
70. Indeed, the current geographical basis of services delivery is changing. Ten years ago, services were organised in a simple system not dissimilar to the way e-mails are sent and delivered. Now, it’s more like Facebook, a series of interconnected networks with dizzying degrees of connections in all directions. ‘Partnership has become viral’, existing at a variety of different geographical levels (local, city-regional, sub-regional, regional, national, etc.), and partners have to learn about the many different dynamics of these multiple levels of alliance. Partnerships now happen

government and the community and away from central government. National government’s interventions will diminish in a process of democratic renewal and closer scrutiny of service providers. The watchword is greater accountability to local people and freedom of action for service-providers.

<sup>15</sup> *In the European Union, this principle is known as ‘subsidiarity’.*

at a level appropriate to the policy area being addressed<sup>9</sup> – for example, transport issues are usually handled by sub-regional bodies, because transport links usually cross local authority lines (initiatives like multi area agreements are helping to achieve success on a cross-area scale) and tie together employment, education and other services. Radical changes in partnerships are needed.

71. Thinking about how partnerships work at various levels is moving fast, and this creates an opportunity for the skills sector. The paradigm is providing services at the level of government most relevant to the citizens being served – and not that most convenient for Whitehall. The Total Place pilots are coming up with some strong evidence-based proposals for change by looking at available revenue streams, greater collaboration and efficiencies in local areas. Whitehall departments are now working with them on specific policy proposals, as well as how to remove some of the barriers to progress they have identified. Irene said that we are already passionate about our institutions – now we must be passionate about partnerships.
72. How can we make the aspirations set out in Putting the Frontline First, work in reality? Although the Government promises public service guarantees, only some of these will be universal – some guaranteed services will be targeted specifically at communities in need. We must better understand the communities we serve, how we interact with them, capital investment, and other matters.
73. The Total Capital programme announced in Putting the Frontline First will investigate ways to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of capital investments, assets and infrastructure. This should help to eliminate wasteful duplication and achieve economies of scale.
74. Despite the difficult fiscal climate, there is a certainty of funding in at least some parts of the public sector. We have used that certainty
- to create long-term strategies around skills, employment and reducing carbon emissions. Irene said that the Government would have to retrofit its massive estates portfolio to meet new low-carbon regulations, creating a whole new industry.
75. Irene underlined the fact that all public services must be transparent about their performance. ‘All data that can be made public will be made public’, not just that around performance or public-sector salaries. This will allow citizens to compare the relative performance of their public services. There will also be a shift to providing services online. The creation of Oneplace<sup>16</sup> by the inspectorates, led by the Audit Commission, enables better public scrutiny of how their service-providers are performing under CAA.
76. There will be an increasing focus on and scrutiny of place, and the state will empower patients, parents, pupils and citizens in their dealings with the state and society. The Total Place programme is part of this agenda. It aims to offer:
- better outcomes for individuals and communities;
  - simplification of service provision and processes (for staff and citizens); and
  - efficiency savings.
77. Simplification will involve a reduction of the number of bodies in the public sector. In London, there are 33 local borough governments<sup>17</sup>, 31 NHS primary care trusts and 226 quangos. Many quangos were established with one narrow purpose in mind, but have over time expanded into other areas of service delivery. Each of these bodies has its own IT, HR, finance and other back office departments, providing vital support services. Now we must consider rationalising this architecture. This is the rationale of Total Place, which looks at how many agencies are working, and overlapping, in the pursuit of a single goal. We should also

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/localgov/audit/CAA/Pages/oneplace.aspx>

<sup>17</sup> *Technically, 32 London boroughs plus the City of London. To make things more complicated, Westminster calls itself a city and Kensington and Chelsea is styled a ‘royal borough’.*

consider having multiple agencies sharing office space, and co-locating related public services.

78. There are proposals to move more civil services and employees out of London and the South East to areas where office space is cheaper. Public expenditure has a direct impact on the economic well-being of every community in all parts of the country, and Whitehall must consider this fact when it decides where to locate public employees.

The potential contribution of learning and skills to local priorities – a local authority perspective

Sheila Lock, Chief Executive, Leicester City Council



79. Sheila said she would speak about Leicester's own experiences. She noted that she was new in post, having only taken up the chief executive's job in 2008. Prior to this, she was a director of children's services.

80. Sheila said her role is 'very challenging'. There are shifts in public service delivery, accountability, governance and other areas which are hard to deal with. The agenda is 'difficult and complex'.

81. Leicester was described as 'hugely complex':

- approximately 300,000 people live there<sup>18</sup>;
- 30,000 more are in transit in and out of the city at any given time;
- there is a large black and minority ethnic population (47 per cent according to

Sheila), and may be one of the first cities in Britain with a majority non-white population;

- it is a relatively young city – 45 per cent of its population is aged 35 or under;
- there are high levels of deprivation, social inequality and inequalities in service provision;
- life expectancy can vary by as much as 12 years across the city's various wards.
- educational services were in the bottom quartile of English local authorities in the middle of this decade, but are now 'rapidly improving'.

82. Leicester discovered that there was a limit to how much it could do as a single authority. It has a seven-point community strategy, for which it is held to account by the central government. However, Leicester decided that its Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) alone could not fulfil the local vision or reduce social inequality. Nor could the Local Area Agreements (LAAs) introduced in 2007.

83. The city of Leicester is part of the county of Leicestershire, and all areas of the county outside the city's boundaries fall under the authority of the Leicestershire County Council. Its area of jurisdiction totally surrounds the city. As people in the city of Leicester earn higher incomes, they tend to move into suburban areas under the county council's rule, linking the two areas' economies together.

84. When Multi-Area Agreements (MAAs) debuted, Leicester decided to collaborate with the county council on common goals. This was a departure from previous practice. The city council became a unitary authority in 1997, breaking free from the county council's control, and relations had not been good since. Leicester City Council is Labour-controlled, while the county council is Conservative-controlled<sup>19</sup>. But the two councils eventually determined that they had more in common than they had dividing them. For a

<sup>18</sup> The Office for National Statistics gave a figure of 292,600 in a dataset published in June 2007. At that time, 61.3 percent of the population was described as white.

<sup>19</sup> Leicester City Council has 38 Labour members, eight Conservatives, six Liberal Democrats, one Green and one Independent. It has been Labour-controlled since 1979 (except between 2003 and 2007) Leicestershire County Council has 36 Conservative members, 14 Liberal Democrats, four Labour members and one British National Party member.

- partnership to work, partners must fund these commonalities.
85. The Leicester–Leicestershire MAA was signed in January 2009. It focuses on encouraging inward investment, economic success, employment and skills. The MAA grew into the Total Place Pilot, as Leicestershire is one of the 13 Total Place pilot areas. The pilot has allowed the two councils to discuss sharing back office functions and reshaping frontline services. In health care, the Leicestershire partnership is focusing resources on the most deprived wards, where life expectancies are lowest.
  86. Sheila said they are beginning to consider using Total Place to deliver cheaper, more efficient and transformative public services, recognising new ways of accessing public services online).
  87. The Leicestershire<sup>20</sup> MAA partners spent a lot of time talking about the nature of public service leadership. In five years, we may need new types of leaders, with more ‘generic competencies of leadership’. She also noted that Leicester and Leicestershire had initiated a joint leadership training programme for their staff at the University of Warwick Business School (which Professor John Benington referenced in his talk during Seminar Two).
  88. The Leicestershire partners are also considering leadership at a community and neighbourhood level, asking how frontline services can effectively aid and monitor the well-being and success of service users. How do we get all our public agencies that work together on substance abuse to collaborate on education, health promotion and community outreach? How do we talk about such controversial issues in the community? These are key leadership challenges.
  89. Regarding accountability and governance, Sheila said that it was difficult for people to yield money from their own budgets towards a common pool of monies because their boards of trustees, or (in the case of local councils), cabinets and elected councillors do not necessarily approve of spending institutional money on partnership goals. To work in partnership may require different avenues of accountability.
  90. There are some democratic deficits at the local level. The Total Place pilot in Leicestershire found that only 5 percent of local public spending is controlled by local councils. A challenge will be how can we enhance local scrutiny and oversight of the other 95 percent? Do we do this? How do we connect local elected officials and frontline public services?
  91. Sheila said that the two councils have come to recognise that they cannot have a partnership in which each member has its own back offices. It ties up resources and money, and prevents working across service boundaries. We now have space to think more innovatively about the shape of frontline services (for example, co-locating services and sharing buildings). But we don’t identify good practice often enough, and don’t share it across the sector.
  92. The Leicestershire pilot will also be part of the Total Capital pilots, which will allow alignment of local capital funding. Their approach focuses on the mechanics of working in partnership – ‘giving up power to gain influence’, and thus creating a broader impact on the community.
  93. There are three areas in which the skills sector can assist this local public services agenda:
    - economic development and regeneration: especially in reducing social inequalities and raising education and employment levels. The multiplicity of funding streams in this area impedes work;
    - innovation and creativity: there is a gap ‘between where we are now and where we want to be’ that will require leadership development, especially at the local and neighbourhood level;

<sup>20</sup> Since both local authorities in the MAA are geographically located in Leicestershire, I use the term ‘Leicestershire’ to refer to the MAA and Total Place pilot that encompasses them both.

community and social cohesion: especially at the neighbourhood level (in Leicester, as in many local authorities, the ethnic mix varies widely by area). FE has already made a positive impact in this area in Leicester, for example through the 14–19 Partnership.

# Chair and speaker biographies

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## Chair



**Lucy de Groot CBE**, was the executive director of the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) for local government for almost six years until May 2009. Prior to that she was a senior civil servant at the Treasury responsible for wide range of public services and a local authority chief executive for seven years, at Bristol City Council, where she set up the new unitary authority. She is a graduate of Oxford University and has a diploma in Social Administration from the LSE. She received a CBE in the New Years Honours List 2009.

## Speakers



**Dr David Collins CBE** became the chief executive of LSIS in August 2009. He is a graduate of the University of Edinburgh with an MA in Economics and Economic History and a PhD in Educational studies. David has worked in a variety of educational establishments, including a prison and a young offenders' institution as well as a number of colleges, most recently South Cheshire, where he was Principal and CEO. David was appointed CBE in the Queen's birthday honours in 2005 and was President of the Association of Colleges in 2008/09.



**Helen Bailey** is director of Public Services at HM Treasury, responsible for spending on Local Government, Housing, Health and Education. Previously she was chief executive of the London Borough of Islington. Helen has also been a management consultant. Her experience centres around change in the public sector and in her current role she brings an insight from central government into the world of Local government.



**Stephen Marston** is the director general for Universities and Skills Group at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), and formerly director general for Further Education and Skills Group at DIUS. Before the creation of DIUS he was the director general for Lifelong Learning and Skills in the former Department for Education and Skills (DfES). Prior to that he was director of Skills Group, DfES.



**Lord Victor Adebowale CBE** is the chief executive of Turning Point, a social care organisation that works with people facing a range of complex needs including substance misuse, mental health problems and learning disabilities. Victor divides his time between a range of influential policymaking bodies. He is involved in a number of taskforce groups, advising the government on mental health, substance misuse, learning disability and the role of the voluntary sector. He is an audit commissioner, sits on the UK Commission for Employment and Skills and is a social enterprise ambassador. He was appointed CBE in 2000 for services to the New Deal, the unemployed and homeless young people and in 2001 became one of the first people's peers.



**Professor John Benington** came to Warwick Business School in 1988 to develop its work on public management and policy and has led the Institute of Governance and Public Management since 2001. Before that, he worked for more than 20 years in the public and voluntary services, and has experience of research, development and consultancy work with the British government. He has worked with local councils and public service authorities across the UK, and as an adviser to the governments of South Africa, Sierra Leone and Southern Sudan on leadership and management development programmes. He is a Fellow of the Sunningdale Institute and a contributor to programmes at the Kennedy School of Government (Harvard University).



**Nick Brown OBE** is the principal of Oldham Sixth Form College, which he opened in 1992 to address Oldham's position as the third worst local authority in England for achievement and participation post-16 and to provide a focus of multicultural success in a segregated town. The college has Beacon status and was rated as outstanding by Ofsted in 2004 and 2008. Nick chairs Oldham's Strategic Partnership and Oldham Public Service Board, which are regarded as the strategic leadership vehicle for regenerating the borough. He also chairs the executive committee of the Oldham Local Strategic Partnership, which is regarded as one of the best in the country and has regeneration through education as its key priority.



**Irene Lucas CBE** has been director general, local government and regeneration, at Communities and Local Government since September 2009. Her remit covers local government finance, policy and performance, and regeneration (including implementation of the sub-national review). Before that, she was chief executive of South Tyneside Council in 2002, and has spent 34 years in local government and a variety of local authorities. Irene has held a number of public appointments, including at the BBC and the Sports Council of England and has worked with the FA, Premier League, Department of Culture Media and Sport and Sport England, to redistribute television rights funding to grass roots soccer across the UK.



**Sheila Lock** was appointed chief executive of Leicester City Council in August 2008, having joined in 2006 as corporate director, children and young people's services. She is committed to working on One Leicester, the new city strategy for the next 25 years. Sheila has been involved in the development of early years policy around Surestart and Children's Centres. She is currently a representative on the National Migration Impact Forum and on the Local Authority Strategy Form. Sheila was previously employed by Calderdale Council as the head of services to students and communities. She trained as a social worker and has extensive experience of working with children and young people and their families.

# Seminar participants

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| Aidan Relf                             | Policy and Communications Adviser                              | Association of Learning Providers                          |
| Alison Birkinshaw                      | Principal  | York College   |
| Alison Kaye                            | Director   | Work Based Learning Alliance                               |
| Andy Wilson                            | Principal  | Westminster Kingsway College                               |
| Angela Hands                           | Director   | National Audit Office                                      |
| Dr Ann Williams                        | Principal  | West Suffolk College                                       |
| Ben Margulies                          | Policy Research Officer  | LSIS   |
| Beth Maloney                           | Director of Research and Strategy                              | Oaklands College   |
| Bob Walding                            | YPLA Transition Director                                       | LSC  |
| Caroline Bostock                       | Business Development Director                                  | Local Government a4e                                       |
| Caroline Mager                         | Executive Director Policy, Research and Strategic Intelligence | LSIS   |
| Chris Minter                           | Head of Adult Skills and Learning                              | Leicester City Council                                     |
| Christina Conroy OBE                   | Principal and CEO  | Richmond Adult Community College                           |
| Dr David Collins CBE                   | Chief Executive  | LSIS   |
| David Howe                             | Head of Further Education                                      | Make Your Mark   |
| David Wilkinson                        | Partner, Public Sector Assurance and Advisory                  | Deloitte   |
| Dereth Wood                            | Director of Operations   | Ufi/learndirect  |
| Elizabeth Whatmore                     | Head of Local Analysis and Delivery Unit                       | Department for Communities and Local Government            |
| Fiona Mackay                           | Programme Director   | LSIS   |
| Garth Clucas HMI                       | Strategy Directorate   | Ofsted   |
| Graham Moore OBE                       | Principal  | Stoke-on-Trent College                                     |
| Graham Morley                          | Chief Executive and Principal                                  | South Staffordshire College                                |
| Helen Bailey <b>Keynote speaker</b>    | Director - Public Services                                     | HM Treasury  |
| Helen Pettifor                         | Executive Director Sector Development                          | LSIS   |
| Holly Wheeler                          | Learning and Development Manager                               | Leadership Centre for Local Government                     |
| Ian Ashman                             | Principal  | Community College Hackney                                  |
| Irene Lucas CBE <b>Keynote speaker</b> | Director General, Local Government and Regeneration            | Previously CE South Tyneside, Metropolitan Borough Council |
| Jane Spurgin                           | Director of Development  | Kent Association of Further Education Colleges             |

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|---|---|--|
| Jane Williams                                   | Executive Director for Further Education, Skills and Regeneration | Becta  |
| Jennifer Adshead                                | Director of Education and Training                                | Women's Institute  |
| Jev Bhalla                                      | Vice Principal  | Walsall College  |
| Joan Lawrence                                   | Chair of Governors  | Craven College   |
| Professor John Benington <b>Keynote speaker</b> | Institute of Governance and Public Management                     | Warwick Business School  |
| Kate Champion                                   | Operational Director for Regions                                  | National College for the Leadership of Schools and Children's Services |
| Kate Holt                                       | Council Member  | Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)                       |
| Keith Brooker                                   | Director, City & Guilds of London Institute                       | LSIS Board member  |
| Lee Davies                                      | Deputy Chief Executive  | Institute for Learning   |
| Lucy de Groot CBE <b>Seminar chair</b>          | Independent chair and former Chief Executive                      | Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA)                              |
| Lynne Sedgmore CBE                              | Executive Director  | 157 Group  |
| Maggie Galliers CBE                             | Principal   | Leicester College  |
| Mark Dawe                                       | Principal and Chief Executive                                     | Oaklands College   |
| Mark Ravenhall                                  | Director, Places and Structures                                   | NIACE  |
| Martin Doel OBE                                 | Chief Executive   | Association of Colleges  |
| Mary Heslop                                     | Vice Principal Strategy   | Warwickshire College   |
| Matt Atkinson                                   | Principal and Chief Executive                                     | City of Bath College   |
| Max Hamps                                       | Apprenticeships Director  | Construction Skills  |
| Maxine Room                                     | Principal   | Lewisham College   |
| Nick Brown OBE <b>Keynote speaker</b>           | Principal   | Oldham Sixth Form College  |
| Nick Foster                                     | Total Place Adviser   | Association of Colleges  |
| Nick Rousseau                                   | Team Leader, FE Policy Team                                       | Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)                   |
| Nicky de Beer                                   | General Manager   | Leadership Centre for Local Government                                 |
| Peter Davies                                    | Principal   | The City Lit   |
| Peter Grigg                                     | Head of Policy and Research                                       | Make Your Mark Campaign  |
| Peter Munday                                    | Head of Consultancy and Coaching Services                         | LSIS   |
| Phil Radcliffe                                  | Chair of the Corporation  | Strode's College Corporation   |
| Richard Chambers                                | Principal   | Lambeth College  |
| Richard Dimpleby                                | Total Place Project Coordinator                                   | Association of Colleges  |
| Rob Wye   | Acting Chief Executive  | Young People's Learning Agency   |
| Dame Ruth Silver DBE                            | Chair   | LSIS   |

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| Sheila Lock <b>Keynote speaker</b>           | Chief Executive  | Leicester City Council                               |
| Stella Mbubaegbu CBE                         | Principal  | Highbury College                                     |
| Stephen Grix                                 | Principal  | MidKent College                                      |
| Stephen Marston <b>Keynote speaker</b>       | Director, General Universities and Skills Group            | Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) |
| Stuart Edwards                               | Deputy Director  | Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) |
| Susie Knight                                 | Head of Executive and Governance Development               | LSIS   |
| Tom Milligan                                 | Manager  | Deloitte   |
| Tony Alderman                                | Chair  | Barnet College                                       |
| Tracy de Bernhardt Dunkin                    | Principal and Chief Executive                              | West of England School and College                   |
| Vic Croxson                                  | Chief Executive  | Landex   |
| Vickie Wood                                  | Policy Lead: FE Governance and Infrastructure              | Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) |
| Lord Victor Adebawale <b>Keynote speaker</b> | Chief Executive  | Turning Point  |
| Yvette Adams                                 | Executive Director Human Resources, Culture and Equalities | LSIS   |