

Policy Update



1st April – 15th April 2011

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Further Education and Skills

11th April – Review of Employment and Skills

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills has published a *Review of Employment and Skills* which identifies where and how joint working between the employment and skills systems provide an opportunity to maximise the outcomes for individuals and employers. The findings of the report are based on observations from fieldwork activity and captured examples of where joint working is effective and has impact. The recommendations have been designed to be taken forward by local partners to ensure that the flexibility offered in the new landscape delivers maximum benefit, supported by national departments and agencies where appropriate.

The report identifies four key areas of action:

- coherent information that increases the awareness of the needs of both individuals and employers to improve the performance of and participation in local provision;

- collaboration between partners through fair and inclusive partnership arrangements, aligning the goals and resources of the local employment and skills systems and facilitating local flexibility;
- customer focus that gives communities a voice to influence and engage to tackle local priorities effectively; and
- once these enablers are in place, this provides a platform for progression in work to be the *'focus and ultimate collective goal'* for the employment and skills systems to support individuals to move out of low-paid work.

Recommendations include:

- define progression using a *'basket'* of measures including 'hard' measures such as wage gain and employment durations along with 'softer' measures such as job satisfaction;
- adopt a high-level commitment to sustainable employment and progression in work; and
- identify local progression routes.

8th April - Ofsted: tackling the challenge of low numeracy skills in young people and adults

Ofsted has published a **report** which evaluates the quality of numeracy provision for young people and adults seen in visits between May and November 2010 to 59 providers including colleges, independent learning providers, local authority providers of adult and community learning, prisons and probation trusts. Key features of effective practice and the most commonly identified reasons for underperformance are explored in detail. The report also presents the main challenges faced by providers in securing further improvement. Key findings include:

- across all the settings visited, initial assessments demonstrated a high level of need for numeracy provision up to and including level 2;
- initial assessment of learners' numeracy skills was no better than satisfactory in 19 of the 35 providers of full-time vocational provision visited. The weaker providers either did not assess all their learners effectively, or tutors did not use the results of the assessments in sufficient detail to plan learning; and
- despite a high level of need, the take-up of discrete numeracy provision was low in five of the six prisons visited.

Recommendations include:

- BIS and DfE should identify strategic priorities which relate specifically to numeracy in the planned review of basic skills provision, and ensure that staff have greater access to training leading to qualifications in teaching numeracy at level 5 and above, as well as subject-specific continuing professional development;
- national agencies responsible for quality improvement in post-16 provision should ensure that they focus on improving tutors' skills in developing learners' understanding of mathematical concepts and helping them relate their numeracy learning to everyday and work contexts; and
- providers should structure all vocational provision, including apprenticeships, so that numeracy is integral to each course up to and including level 2, increase the promotion of work-based discrete numeracy provision to employers and improve the involvement of employers in planning the content of numeracy provision.

12th April – Ofsted: Best practice in safeguarding in colleges

Ofsted has **published** the results of a survey of best practice in safeguarding based on visits to 14 of the 15 colleges that received an outstanding grade for the leadership and management of their safeguarding arrangements in 2009/10. Key findings include:

- all the colleges visited had developed, prioritised and embedded a culture of putting learners' safety first and developing responsibility in learners. By making the best use of every educational opportunity, learners took responsibility for their own and others' safety;
- the promotion of safeguarding was led well by principals and senior managers, with strong support from governors and trustees. Equally, the culture had permeated all parts of the college's workforce. A sound policy basis and good awareness of legislative requirements underpinned the culture;
- thorough safeguarding training for all staff along with key managers' highly developed expert knowledge were key features of colleges' strategies to safeguard learners. Training coverage extended from support staff, such as cleaners and security guards, to governors and designated officers; and
- strong and extensive collaboration had taken place with a wide range of external agencies to support safeguarding. The range included many highly specialised organisations such as those with expertise in supporting learners with complex learning difficulties or in areas such as road safety.

13th April – John Hayes' statement on the National Careers Service for England

Minister of state for further education, John Hayes, has delivered a **statement** on the National Careers Service for England. The key features of the new National Careers Service are described below; the roles of schools and local authorities in new arrangements for young people are set out on the DfE **website**.

The single points of access to online and helpline services, and the network of organisations funded by BIS, will be known as the National Careers Service from April 2012. As well as providing free face to face guidance to priority groups, the network of organisations funded by BIS will be able to offer services on the open market to those individuals/organisations which are willing to pay.

Subject to passage of the Education Bill, from September 2012 schools will be under a legal duty to make sure their pupils have access to independent, impartial careers guidance, *'recognising that schools are best placed to make decisions about the kind of support that will meet the needs of their pupils'*. Schools will be free to make arrangements for careers guidance that best suit the needs of their pupils, engaging, where appropriate, in partnership with external, expert providers.

To ensure the quality of careers guidance, BIS is working, with the support of the careers professional associations, to:

- establish a quality standard, *'which will assure users that providers of careers guidance are delivering a high quality service'*. Organisations in the National Careers Service will be required to hold the standard; and
- provide a focus on expert, professional careers guidance, through common professional standards and codes of ethics, supported by appropriate initial training and continuing professional development. *'Organisations in the National Careers Service will be expected to support their staff to achieve these standards'*.

The indicative BIS budget for information, advice and guidance services in 2012-13 is £84.4 million. This figure is subject to final confirmation when budgets for 2012-13 are agreed across the Department

8th April – Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities closes

Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities announces that it has ceased operating. Following a period of financial difficulty, Skill's Board of Trustees has decided that it is no longer viable to keep the charity open.

The Chair of Skills' Board of Trustees, Peter Little OBE said *'this is sad day for all of us. We had recently appointed an outstanding new Chief Executive and agreed a clear strategy to reduce our costs and turn around our finances, but in the end time was against us. Skill is the only pan disability charity that focuses on promoting equality for disabled people in education, training and employment. It is hoped that others may step in to fill the gap this has left in the support available'*.

All Skill's website resources and **information booklets** are still available

Economy and Employment

12th April – First round Regional Growth Fund winners announced

The government has **announced** the results of the first round of applications for the Regional Growth Fund (RGF) where £450m of funding was allocated. The government anticipates that over 27,000 jobs will be directly created and safeguarded, with close to a further 100,000 jobs in associated supply chains and local economies.

£450m of funding has been allocated to successful projects including the development of a former eye hospital in Manchester into a biomedical centre of excellence; the construction of a manufacturing plant on Teesside to develop resins for food and drink packaging; development of a cutting edge factory & R&D laboratory for Holroyd Precision Ltd in Rochdale, and a proposal from General Motors to build the next-generation Vivaro van in Luton.

The **second round** of the fund is now open. A third round may follow but this would be very small and would aim to commit any remaining unallocated money at the end of Rounds 1 and 2. The fund is for a total of £1.4bn across three years. In addition to projects and packages of projects, Round 2 is open to programme bids that demonstrate a clear over-arching investment strategy for a specific geographical area.

Deputy prime minister Nick Clegg said *'Today is a step towards rebalancing our economy away from an unhealthy overreliance on a small number of industries and a few areas. We need to spread opportunity across the whole country, drawing on our many talents'*.

6th April – British Chambers of Commerce to lead local enterprise partnership network

Communities and local government secretary, Eric Pickles, has **announced** that the British Chambers of Commerce will work with local business people around the country to bring together a new, national network for local enterprise partnerships.

David Frost, director general of the British Chambers of Commerce, will chair the new network. It will bring together a range of local businesses, *'to tackle the big issues'* around local growth. The network will aim to encourage broad participation and private sector support within local enterprise partnerships in the months and years to come. Eric Pickles also confirmed that government will make some grant funding available to support the network during its start-up phase.

In a separate **speech** on localism and growth, secretary of state for communities and local government welcomed the announcement about the creation of enterprise zones, saying *'think of these Zones as being a little bit like a clothes horse - you can choose what you hang on them. As long as it's high on ambition and low on bureaucracy then it will work'*.

7th April – Department for Work and Pensions Delivery Plan 2011-12

DWP has published a **delivery plan** which sets out the challenges facing the department from April 2011 to March 2012 and the plans that it has in place to meet them. It describes how the department will start to implement the government's programme of welfare and pensions reform, drive forward its strategy for social justice, and enhance the quality and accessibility of the services it provides to millions of people.

- continue to develop and implement the welfare and structural reform plans set out in the Department's four-year Business Plan, published in November 2010¹;
- improve its services to the public, and access to those services, both in terms of working age and pension age benefit processing, and help for those seeking employment; and
- increase productivity and deliver further value for money savings in order to live within the Department's four-year resource settlement announced as part of the 2010 Spending Review².

The document states *'In focusing on these priorities, it is particularly important that we initiate sustained, long-term, change for individuals and in particular for those in or at risk of poverty. Through outcome-focused programmes, we seek to stabilise the lives of the particularly vulnerable and break the intergenerational cycle of poverty. This will ensure that our policies and reforms improve outcomes for citizens and achieve social justice'*.

5th April – Families and work: revisiting barriers to employment

DWP has published a **report** which explores whether incentives are helping parents to overcome the barriers known to impede their engagement in the formal labour market. The report explored the relationship between work and parenthood for adults with dependent children living in low-income neighbourhoods. The discussion is organised into four sections: returning to work; searching for work; easing the transition into work; and experiences of work. Policy implications include:

- for mothers, the return to work is shaped by their ability to find work that fits around nursery or school hours or, alternatively, to access trusted sources of informal childcare. Childcare policies will have little impact on this group. Instead, policy will need to further encourage employers to offer employment with 'family-friendly' hours that fit around the nursery or school day;
- the requirements of Lone Parent Obligations (LPOs) do not always align with parental views about the appropriate time to return to work, in terms of the age of the youngest child; and
- the move to a single system of working-age benefits, in the form of Universal Credit, has the potential to provide greater transparency and certainty about the financial implications of moving into work. The proposed reduction of high marginal tax rates for a large proportion of parents returning to work may also help to alleviate some of the concerns that parents have about the financial gains of moving into work.

¹ <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/dwp-business-plan-2011-2015.pdf>

² http://cdn.hm-treasury.gov.uk/sr2010_complereport.pdf

7th April – Government launches red tape challenge

The government has launched a **website** challenging the public to help cut unnecessary regulations. The campaign is part of the government's growth agenda and aims to tackle the stock of more than 21,000 statutory instruments *'that are currently putting barriers in the way'* of businesses, volunteers and the public. The website is open for anyone to comment on. The first five themes of the Red Tape Challenge campaign will be:

- retail (pilot phase open for four weeks beginning April 7);
- hospitality, food and drink (open for two weeks beginning May 5);
- road transportation (open for two weeks beginning May 19);
- fisheries, marine enterprises and inland waterways (open for two weeks beginning June 2nd); and
- manufacturing (open for two weeks beginning June 16).

The campaign will also have six cross cutting themes that affect all businesses and are open throughout the whole of the campaign. The themes are:

- employment law;
- pensions;
- company law;
- equalities;
- health and safety; and
- environment legislation.

The process will run from April 2011 until April 2013. Once a theme has closed to the public, ministers will have three months to explain why a regulation is still required, or it will be scrapped. Progress reports setting out what action has been or will be taken will be added to the website for each sector three months after comments on that sector have closed.

7th April – One-in, one-out: statement of new regulation

The government has **published** an overview of all the regulations implemented or planned to be implemented by government departments in the period between 1 January 2011 and 30 June 2011. It also lists the regulations that will be removed during this period.

4th April – A state pension for the 21st century: public consultation

The government has launched a **consultation** which seeks views its proposals for simplifying the State Pension system to deliver a, flat-rate contributory state pension that lifts the majority of future pensioners above the standard means-test. It includes two options:

- option 1: acceleration of existing reforms so that the state pension evolves into a two-tier flat-rate structure more quickly; or
- option 2: more radical reform to a single-tier flat-rate pension set above the level of the Pension Credit standard minimum guarantee to speed up the transition to a two tier flat rate pension.

Questions include:

- what further reforms might be required to the State Second Pension, such as crediting arrangements and uprating of pensions in payment, to better meet the government's principles, recognising that there is a trade-off between coverage and the potential level of any combined, two-tier flat-rate pension? and
- how should the government respond to the frequent revisions in life expectancy projections while giving individuals sufficient time to prepare?

13th April – Better Choices, Better Deals: New strategy to empower consumers

Minister for employment relations, consumer and postal affairs, Edward Davey, has announced that businesses will provide 'key information' to their customers on how they use and buy goods and services. The new approach is published in **Better Choices, Better Deals: Consumers Powering Growth** and marks a shift away from legislating to make change happen. Instead it announces new ways to help consumers help themselves and challenges business to innovate, which in turn will drive growth in the economy.

Part of the initiative will be a project called mydata, which will assess how to give people their personal data in a format that is safe to pass onto third parties, such as price comparison sites. If an application or website can pick out the one perfect deal based on your user information, this will help to make consumer choices simpler. Consumers will also be able to work with businesses and other organisations on a larger scale:

- the government expects regulators, departments and public service providers to release more information about complaints and performance data and will launch a competition to support new ways of using this data;
- BIS will work with Community Organisers to encourage collective purchasing deals and launch an Innovation Prize with Co-operatives UK to reward innovative new ideas on collective purchasing, with a fund of up to £30,000 to award in grants;
- the Behavioural Insights Team will pilot a green collective purchasing scheme with B&Q;
- BIS will support the development of a self-regulatory quality mark for web and comparison sites; and
- there will be a new resolution scheme for e-commerce disputes

The government also wants to ensure everyone has access to better choices, and is asking for a review by Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland, with Consumer Focus, into 'how to empower the most vulnerable'.

14-19 and Schools

13th April – A consultation on school funding reform: rationale and principles

The consultation is on the rationale and principles for reforming school funding. The White Paper *The Importance of Teaching* described the current funding system as 'opaque', 'full of anomalies' and 'unfair'. The aim is to create a new funding system which is fair, transparent and able to support a diverse range of school provision.

This is a shorter, six week **consultation** as this is the first stage of a two-part consultation. Taking into account the views expressed in response to this document DfE expects to publish further proposals, which will be subject to a full twelve week consultation later in the spring or over the summer. Questions include:

- do you agree with the stated characteristics of an ideal school funding system?
- do you agree that the aim of ensuring all deprived pupils get the same level of funding no matter where they live is the right one?
- do you think the school funding system should be based on a purely national formula? Or should there be flexibility for local decisions about funding levels?

Separately, because the coalition government deems the current system for funding Academies to be *'unsustainable'*, DfE is also publishing more detailed interim proposals for the funding of Academies alongside this consultation (see below).

The consultation will close on 25th May 2011.

13th April – Academies' pre-16 funding: options for the 2012/13 academic year

This DfE **consultation** argues that the current method of replicating local authority formulae and calculating a grant in lieu of central services which a local authority would provide for a maintained school *is 'too complex, lacks transparency, is prone to error and is administratively inefficient, particularly since the growth in Academy numbers'*. The proposed option is to roll forward per pupil school budget share figures from the previous year. The consultation asks a number of questions including:

- are there other aims we should have for the Academy funding system in the absence of cross-system reform, such as a Fair Funding Formula?
- are there changes you think we should consider to the way the local authority central spend equivalent grant (LACSEG) is calculated for FY2012/13?
- are there potential advantages and disadvantages in implementing each option that we have not considered?

The consultation will close on 25th May 2011.

29th March – 16-18 funding allocations

Funding allocations for 2011/12 to schools, general further education colleges, sixth form colleges and all other YPLA funded providers of 16-18 education and training were issued on the 29th March 2011.

Peter Lauener has written to all providers and local authorities outlining the detail of the settlement and the funding policy decisions taken in relation to the 2011/12 funding allocations. You can view the letters and other supporting documents on the **allocations page** of the YPLA website.

12th April – Ofsted publishes report on girls' career aspirations

Ofsted has published a **report** evaluating the extent to which careers education, guidance and other provision raise aspirations and inform the choices of courses and careers by girls and young women to support their long-term achievement. It identifies weaknesses and examples of good practice in these areas. Key findings include:

- the girls surveyed held conventionally stereotypical views about jobs for men and women. They retained those views throughout their schooling despite being taught about equality of opportunity and knowing their rights to access any kind of future career;
- the girls and young women spoken to had limited knowledge and understanding of how choices about courses and careers influenced pay and progression routes; and

- for a few girls, career ambitions were changed through direct observation of a professional at work, through mentoring activities, and through personal encounters and extended discussion with a professional about what their job was actually like.

Recommendations include that schools and colleges should:

- ensure that young people have a better understanding about career choice, subsequent progression and its impact on their long-term earnings;
- develop better, and more carefully planned opportunities for young women to meet professionals working in non-stereotypical roles, and to learn more about what such work entails; and
- consider how to link the content of lessons and the skills to be developed more frequently to career opportunities.

8th April – Review of education capital

DfE has published a **report** which sets out the research and analysis undertaken as part of the review of all capital investment funded by the Department for Education. The report makes 16 recommendations on the future delivery models for capital investment for 2011-12 onwards including:

- DfE should avoid multiple funding streams for investment that can and should be planned locally, and instead apportion the available capital as a single, flexible budget for each local area, with a mandate to include ministerial priorities in determining allocations;
- notional budgets should be apportioned to local authority areas, empowering them fully to decide how best to reconcile national and local policy priorities in their own local contexts. A specific local process, involving all Responsible Bodies, and hosted by the local authority, should then prioritise how this notional budget should be used; and
- there should be a clear, consistent DfE position on what fit-for-purpose facilities entail. A suite of drawings and specifications should be developed that can easily be applied across a wide range of educational facilities. These should be co-ordinated centrally to deliver best value.

8th April – Review of cultural education – call for evidence

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Education have launched an independent **review**, to be led by Darren Henley, Managing Director of Classic FM, to consider how to ensure that every child experiences a wide variety of *'high quality cultural experiences'*, ensuring both quality and best use of public investment. The review will aim to answer a number of questions including:

- what cultural experiences should be included?
- how can cultural organisations create an offer which fulfils the needs of schools in providing a broad and truly rounded education for their students?
- how can we ensure that all opportunities are as good as the very best?

The closing date for evidence is 20 May 2011.

1st April – £4 million to fund free nursery places in 15 areas

Fifteen local authorities will benefit from £4 million of government funding to provide free early learning and childcare to the most disadvantaged two-year-olds in their communities.

The trials will test out ways of making sure that enough nursery places and staff are available in the right areas so that every disadvantaged two-year-old can benefit. They will also look at how 15 hours a week of free early learning and childcare for two-, three- and four-year-olds could be offered more flexibly to help support parents juggle work and family life.

The **successful local authorities** who will be taking part in the trial are Derbyshire, Gloucestershire, Hartlepool, Hertfordshire, Manchester & Tameside Consortium, Medway, North Yorkshire, Northamptonshire, Rotherham, Southampton, Stoke-on-Trent, Sunderland, Sutton & Merton consortium, Tower Hamlets and Walsall & Wolverhampton consortium.

6th April – Michael Gove formally accepts the resignation of Christine Gilbert, Her Majesty's chief inspector

Education Secretary, Michael Gove, has **formally accepted** the resignation of Christine Gilbert, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector. She will leave Ofsted on 30 June 2011. Christine Gilbert announced her intention to resign from her post earlier this year. Michael Gove thanked the chief inspector for her years of dedicated service and praised her commitment to raising standards in education and improving outcomes of children and young people. Baroness Sally Morgan, Ofsted Chair, said '*Christine Gilbert will be a hard act to follow. She can be justifiably proud of her achievements with Ofsted which she leaves stronger and ready to face the challenges ahead*'.

Miriam Rosen, a former executive director at Ofsted, will be the interim chief inspector until a permanent appointment is made.

Higher Education

6th April – Vince Cable speaks at the HEFCE Annual Conference

Secretary of state, Vince Cable, delivered a **speech** at the HEFCE annual conference covering managing financial change, value for money, competition and number controls in higher education. Vince Cable set out:

- that international students who wish to continue their studies can remain in country, so long as the new course they wish to embark upon is at a higher level than the one they have just completed, while other graduates will have the option to apply for an entrepreneur's visa.
- an expectation of '*a ferment of creative thinking*' on how to redesign course structures and manage major change among staff so as to promote higher quality but lower-cost teaching. '*I may be missing something, but I haven't seen much evidence of this*'.
- an intention to review OFFA's powers in light of the number of universities charging fee levels at the top end of the £9,000 limit
- that government is exploring measures to create a more demand responsive system '*in circumstances where places are unfilled, we might then withdraw those places, and institutions should not assume they will easily get them back*'... *to reward the most competitive providers, we are considering whether we might modify student number limits on any institution that decides to charge lower amounts for its courses, whether a university, college or private provider*'.
- that universities need to work to reduce administrative overheads, wage bills, and to run campus facilities more effectively... *some universities should be thinking seriously about a narrower and more*

viable mission as specialist teaching institutions – perhaps following the example of the great liberal arts colleges in the US. I would welcome detailed publication of what individual universities are doing in these matters. It would help people to understand the broader rationale informing their pricing decisions’.

- the intention for student choice to drive supply, rather than government intervention. *‘but it is a legitimate role for Government to examine options for intervention in markets which are not operating to best effect – and to support fair competition, for example between FE colleges and universities. Where we see barriers to entry, or uneven playing fields, we will take steps to address them’.*

Vince Cable said *‘by mid-decade, I want to see a sector whose global reputation is enhanced beyond current high levels; whose contribution to economic growth is commensurate with its potential to stimulate growth; a competitive sector – with a healthy presence among FE colleges and private providers – where institutional autonomy means more than it does now, because there are fewer price or number controls; and a sector in which student choice extends beyond subject and location to mode and length of study’.*

13th April – Student support package for 2012/13

David Willetts, the Universities and Science Minister, has **announced** the student support package for 2012/13 for new and continuing students, including those at alternative providers, as follows:

- maintenance grants will be increased for existing undergraduates at the start of the 2012/13 academic year – this is the first increase in maintenance in three years;
- maintenance grant loan levels for particular groups of undergraduates starting in 2012/13 – such as those living away from home and studying in London and those living at home while studying;
- distance learning students will be entitled to tuition loans on the same basis as full-time students for the first time; and
- undergraduates at higher education providers not funded by HEFCE will be entitled to borrow up to £6,000 to cover their tuition costs, so long as their course is designated by BIS.

15th April - New research shows colleges aiming for affordable tuition fees

The Association of Colleges (AoC) has conducted **research** which highlights that the majority of further education colleges teaching higher education expect to charge 2012 tuition fees under the threshold requiring ‘access agreements’. The survey of 50 colleges showed that for 31 colleges funded directly by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), 12 expect to charge £6000 or over and 19 expect to charge less than £6000.

	<i>Under £6,000</i>	<i>£6,000</i>	<i>Over £6,000</i>
<i>Directly funded courses</i>	19 Colleges	9 Colleges	3 Colleges
<i>Indirectly funded (i.e. in partnership with Universities)</i>	16 Colleges	27 Colleges	11 Colleges

Nick Davy, AoC Higher education policy manager said *‘colleges offer affordable excellence as an alternative to university higher education. There is often a distinction between college ‘higher skills’ education and a standard university degree. College courses tend to have a vocational emphasis and be designed in partnership with employers. Many colleges teach higher education in areas without a university*

or where a university does not recruit locally. They are likely to have smaller class sizes and score well with students for time given over to tutorials. Colleges operate efficiently; their focus is often on teaching rather than research and they frequently have lower overheads than universities’.

Local Government and Wider Public Sector

5th April – Deputy prime minister launches social mobility strategy

Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg has unveiled the coalition government's Social Mobility Strategy which sets out the government vision of a socially mobile country and declares social mobility as *‘the principal goal of the government’s social policy’*.

The paper, ***Social Mobility Strategy – opening doors, breaking barriers*** highlights statistical evidence relating to social mobility. These include:

- only one in five young people from the poorest families achieve five good GCSEs including English and maths, compared to three quarters from richer families. Children on free school meals are only half as likely as other children to get five good GCSEs;
- one in five children receives free school meals, yet this group accounts for less than one in a hundred Oxbridge students;
- only a quarter of boys from working class backgrounds go on to get middle class jobs; and
- only 7 per cent of people attend independent schools, yet they account for over half of the top level of most professions.

The paper sets out the steps that government will take to underpin the government’s commitment to social mobility these are: external scrutiny; a new set of leading indicators to help track progress; and ministerial activity to *‘ensure social mobility remains at the heart of [the] policy agenda’*:

- a new statutory Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission to assess progress on both social mobility and child poverty, *‘holding the government and others to account and acting as an advocate for change’*;
- publishing indicators of progress. The strategy identifies seven key indicators to track progress *‘for the first time, as departments develop new policies, they will need to consider their impact on social mobility’*. These indicators will be included in departmental business plans; and
- the deputy prime minister will continue to chair a group of key ministers *‘to maintain the momentum for change’*.

<i>Life stage</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Measures</i>	<i>Lead department</i>
<i>Foundation years</i>	1	Low birth weight	Department of Health
	2	Child development	Department for Education
<i>School years</i>	3	School attainment	Department for Education
<i>Transition years</i>	4	Employment and participation in education of	Department for Business Innovation and Skills & Department for Work and

		18-24 year olds	Pensions
	5	Further education attainment	Department for Business Innovation and Skills
	6	Higher education participation and institution	Department for Business Innovation and Skills
<i>Adulthood</i>	7	Social mobility in adulthood (access to the professions, progression in the labour market and availability of 'second chances' to succeed in the labour market)	Department for Business Innovation and Skills & Department for Work and Pensions

The document highlights a number of new and existing policy measures to address social mobility across the life stages of foundation years, school years, transition years, and adulthood. These include:

- urging employers to sign up to a Business Compact on Social Mobility, in which they commit to reforming their internship schemes and ensuring opportunities are available to all;
- the government is working to encourage saving and building resilience in retirement through measures including the Junior ISA, auto-enrolment onto company pension schemes and payroll saving options;
- supporting the “Speakers for Schools” programme to get high-profile speakers in state schools;
- working with the Education and Employers Taskforce charity on “Inspiring the Future”, an initiative to get 100,000 individuals to visit schools and colleges to talk about their jobs and how they got to their position; and
- *‘leading by example’* and reforming the civil service with a *‘fair and transparent’* internship scheme. *‘From 2012 there will be no informal internships in Whitehall’.*

5th April – Baroness Warsi announces cross-Whitehall internship programme

Baroness Warsi, minister without portfolio, has **launched** the Whitehall Internship programme, as part of the deputy prime minister’s social mobility strategy.

The internship programmes are:

- *fast Stream Summer Diversity Internship (undergraduates and graduates)*: This established scheme is designed to help students develop their skills and career prospects and give a taste of the wide ranging opportunities the Civil Service can offer.
- *college level (16-17 year olds)*: This scheme has been designed to offer school leavers two weeks *‘meaningful’* work experience in the Civil Service.
- *secondary school level (13-14 year olds)*: This scheme will be a day long programme where students come to Whitehall to meet senior figures and build knowledge of the Civil Service and working in a professional environment.

1st April – First communities to use powers to bring growth, jobs and homes to their neighbourhoods

Decentralisation Minister, Greg Clark, has **announced** the first communities to test new rights to *'give local people much greater ability to shape development in their area'*. Seventeen communities³ will *'spearhead'* a trial of neighbourhood planning, a new right being introduced in the Localism Bill.

Neighbourhood planning is a reform designed to *'create the conditions for communities to welcome growth by giving local people a real voice in deciding the look and feel of development in their area'*; from determining the locations of shops, offices and schools to setting standards of design for new housing. Local people will be able to decide the types of development given automatic planning permission through a Neighbourhood Development Order. If approved by a local referendum, a council will need to adopt a neighbourhood plan providing it is in line with wider ambitions for growth in their area.

The 17 neighbourhoods will be led by local authorities who will work with community groups and parish councils to prepare draft plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders. Each of the 17 areas will receive £20,000 towards developing their plan from a £1m fund set up to help communities to trial neighbourhood planning. A further 33 grants of £20,000 will also be awarded from the fund to projects that applied to be front runners to help them carry forward their plans on their own.

Greg Clark said *'localism and growth will go hand in hand. By giving local people a greater say together with new incentives to share in the benefits of growth, our reforms will help to create the conditions where communities begin to welcome development rather than resist it at all costs'*.

12th April – Support for families with multiple problems: a call for evidence

DWP has launched a **call for evidence** which seeks views on the commissioning of employment-focused provision for families with multiple problems, supported through the DWP's co-financing arrangements with the European Social Fund. The intention is that local authorities will be the primary route to identify families who would benefit from the provision, and it is likely that providers and local authorities would work closely together. Questions include:

- do you have any views on how we can ensure that the support delivered by ESF providers to each family best complements current Local Authority activity?
- for funding reasons, it may be necessary to prioritise inclusion across geographical areas. How should families be prioritised for this support within Local Authorities, and what criteria would you use?
- are family intervention services the most appropriate mechanism for referral?

The call for evidence will close on 6 May 2011.

5th April – Review of police leadership and training: a consultation

The **report** of the Review of Police Leadership and Training includes proposals for the creation of a new professional body for policing responsible for the key national standards, qualification frameworks, and the

³ The 17 Front Runners involve Local Planning Authorities for: Birmingham City Council - Balsall Heath (Birmingham); Bristol City Council - Lockleaze (Bristol); London Borough of Southwark – Bermondsey; London Borough of Sutton – Hackbridge; North Tyneside Council - North Shields Fish Quay; Wirral Borough Council - Devonshire Park; Allerdale Borough Council – Cockermouth; Blaby District Council – Blaby; Cherwell Borough Council – Banbury; Exmoor National Park Authority – Lynton; Gedling Borough Council – Newstead; Lewes District Council – Ringmer; Northumberland County – Allendale; Shropshire Council - Much Wenlock; Teignbridge District Council – Dawlish; West Dorset District Council - Cerne Abbas; and Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead – Bray.

leadership and training approaches for the service. Ensuring appropriate arrangements for leadership and training in policing is central to achieving the police objective of serving the public by cutting crime. The government is therefore seeking the views of policing partners and the public on how police leadership and training could be developed and delivered in the future. **Consultation** questions include:

- how can arrangements for police leadership and training best support the police in being able crime fighters?
- who should set and maintain the standards for the police service and how should it be done? Do you agree with the proposal for a professional body supported by a charter?
- how should any arrangements for police leadership and training be made accountable and transparent to the public? What role should the public themselves have in influencing how the police do their work?
- how and by whom do you think police leadership, training and development should be delivered for police officers and staff?
- how should any training and leadership arrangements be funded? How can this be done in a way that ensures value for money?
- should a new framework of professional policing qualifications be introduced? How do you think that the standards for policing and the skills of police officers and staff should be attained, assessed and maintained?

The consultation will close on 28th June.

12th April – First major central government mutual joint venture announced

Minister for Cabinet Office, Francis Maude detailed the first major 'spin out' of a central government mutual venture, a service giving employees the opportunity to take a stake in their business. The minister announced plans to transform My Civil Service Pension (MyCSP), which administers the delivery of Civil Service Pension schemes, into a mutual joint venture. The joint venture is a particular mutual model in which employees have a stake along with one or more partner organisation. The potential for offering a stake to pension scheme members is also being considered. Work is now underway to develop this approach with the final structure of the partnership *'being shaped to provide further value for money to the taxpayer'*.

My Civil Service Pension brings together separate units from across government to *'improve quality and efficiency'* and employs around 400 staff. It is anticipated that the mutual joint venture status will enable MyCSP to *'continue to improve the way services are delivered and help grow their business'*.

Earlier this month the minister for the Cabinet Office announced that the entrepreneur and business leader, Stephen Kelly, has been appointed as the Crown Representative to support the creation of mutuals from existing service teams within central government departments. He also announced the establishment of an Enterprise Incubator to help civil servants create successful enterprises from within central government, including employee and management teams who wish to form mutual companies under the Right to Provide previously announced by the Cabinet Office.

The government is developing mutual models through the **Mutual Pathfinder programme** which is supporting 21 existing and potential mutuals with mentoring and advice from experts in employee ownership. In addition, every department will put in place 'rights to provide' giving staff **new rights and support to form mutuals**.

31st March – Government launches Major Projects Authority

Minister for the Cabinet Office Francis Maude has announced new controls for major government projects, to improve performance in delivering on time and in budget. With immediate effect, all major projects will be scrutinised by the new **Major Projects Authority (MPA)**. The MPA is a partnership between the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury. It has an enforceable mandate to oversee and direct the *'effective management'* of all large-scale projects that are funded and delivered by central government. The MPA will:

- compile a government portfolio of major projects and report publicly on them once a year;
- agree the plan for every project's assurance and approval requirements at its inception;
- undertake assurance at key stages in a project's lifecycle to assess whether it will deliver on time, within budget and to the required level of quality;
- intervene directly, where appropriate, in any failing major projects; and
- work directly with departments to build capability in projects and programme management.

8th April – Growth plan to transform empty offices into new homes

Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles has published a **consultation** that proposes to scrap the planning approval requirement for changing use from a commercial property to a residential property. It is estimated that if all the long-term office space currently available was converted it could potentially deliver 250,000 new homes and save just under £140 million over ten years in *'red tape costs'*.

The government wishes to review the scope for extending the freedoms available through this route, while *'ensuring that planning and land use impacts are properly taken into account'*. To this end, the government is proposing action on three fronts:

- to provide for the change from commercial (B use classes) to residential use without the need to apply for planning permission;
- a call to local communities and local authorities to use imaginatively the powers they already have to relax planning constraints locally to target local issues, encourage development, support local economic strategies and make best use of existing properties; and
- to remove barriers to change of use through a wider review of how change of use and permitted development is managed within the planning system.

The consultation will close on 30 June 2011.

6th April – Disadvantaged families to get vouchers for fruit, vegetables and milk

Health secretary, Andrew Lansley, has **announced** that low-income families will now have the choice to buy fruit and vegetables as part of the Healthy Start scheme.

The scheme supports over half a million pregnant women and low-income families by giving them vouchers that until now could only be spent on fruit, vegetables and milk. The scheme is available for:

- pregnant women, new mothers, and children under 4 years old in families if they get: Income related benefits (Income support, Income-based Job Seeker's Allowance, or Income-related Employment and Support Allowance); or Child Tax Credit but not Working Tax Credit (unless the family is getting Working Tax Credit run-on only) and an annual income assessed for tax credits of £16,190 or less. This is also available to any woman under 18 years old during pregnancy.

- babies under one year old get two Healthy Start vouchers per week (£6.20) to spend on Healthy Start foods. Pregnant women and other children get one voucher a week (£3.10). Vouchers are posted every four weeks and can be spent on milk, fruit and vegetables or infant formula milk
- Healthy Start also provides coupons, which can be exchanged locally with the NHS for Healthy Start vitamin tablets for women and Healthy Start children's vitamins.

Equality and Diversity

4th April – Local Government Improvement and Development: equality and cohesion

Local Government Improvement and Development has developed a '*What's new*' resource to help public bodies understand their communities and address inequality and disadvantages so that they can improve outcomes for everyone. The resource provides links to a number of relevant papers in relation to equality and diversity.

Voluntary and Community Sector

13th April – Best value: new draft statutory guidance – consultation

The Department for Communities and Local Government is **consulting** on new best value guidance, a draft document which sets out some '*reasonable expectations*' of the way best value authorities should work with voluntary and community groups when facing difficult funding decisions.

The draft guidance sets out that:

- best value authorities are under a general duty of best value to '*make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness*'. Under the duty of best value, therefore, authorities should consider overall value, including environmental and social value, when reviewing service provision;
- to achieve the right balance – and before deciding how to fulfil their best value duty – authorities are required to consult a wide range of local persons, including local voluntary and community organisations and businesses. This should apply at all stages of the commissioning cycle, including when considering decommissioning services; and
- authorities should be sensitive to the benefits and needs of voluntary and community sector organisations (honouring the commitments set out in local Compacts) and small businesses. Authorities should seek to avoid passing on disproportionate cuts.

The consultation questions are:

- is the guidance clear, specific and proportionate?
- as there anything else that we should cover in order to provide more clarity to councils, contractors and the voluntary and community sector?
- are there any other issues you wish to raise?

The consultation will close on 14 June 2011.

International

7th April – OECD publishes Going for Growth 2011

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has published *Going for Growth* a paper which highlights the structural reforms needed to restore long-term growth following the recession and to address high and persistent unemployment in many countries. The paper identifies five structural reform priorities for each OECD country, for the European Union as a whole, and for the BRIICS – Brazil, Russia, India, Indonesia, China and South Africa. The recommendations are aimed at addressing variations in labour productivity and labour use across these countries. Moderate and high income (mainly European) OECD countries need to improve their labour use mainly by reforming their benefit and job protection systems and labour taxes. The relatively wealthy Asian member countries face a more balanced set of challenges, with a greater focus on labour productivity. The reform challenges for lower income OECD countries and the BRIICS relate to their education systems and product market regulation, as well as labour informality.

A policy recommendation for the United Kingdom in order to increase educational attainment is to '*continue the focus on core literacy and numeracy skills. Increase further the resources for disadvantaged students and improve targeting mechanisms. Encourage participation in secondary education by reintroducing the Education Maintenance Allowance. Ensure that vocational programmes provide skills that are relevant for the labour market*'.

New Faces and Awards

13th April – Liam Burns elected as 55th NUS President

The National Union of Students (NUS) has **elected** Liam Burns as its next national president. The new president will officially take up his position for a one year term on 1 July 2011, when the current president Aaron Porter's term of office ends. Liam Burns is currently president of NUS Scotland. Liam Burns, NUS President-elect said '*it's going to be a hugely challenging year for both further and higher education. I am looking forward to working tirelessly to defend, extend, and promote the rights of students*'.

24th March – New NIACE CEO announced

The board of NIACE has **announced** that David Hughes, currently national provider services director at the Skills Funding Agency will be the new chief executive of NIACE, following the retirement of Professor Alan Tuckett in the summer.

David Hughes will take up his position as NIACE chief executive on 1 September 2011, after a career that has involved leading complex organisations and implementing change in post-school education and skills. Before joining the Skills Funding Agency, David worked as Executive Director in Derbyshire and Regional Director - in both the East Midlands and London - of the Learning and Skills Council. He has also worked in the voluntary sector both in the UK - as Chief Executive of Nottingham CVS - and Australia in areas including housing, social enterprise, regeneration and education.

Contact the LSIS policy team

This policy update has been prepared by Angela Nartey, policy research officer, LSIS. Your comments are welcome – please contact Angela by email on angela.nartey@LSIS.org.uk.

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© LSIS April 2011

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

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