

# Policy Update



30<sup>th</sup> July – 30<sup>th</sup> August 2011

## In this issue

<b>Further Education and Skills</b> .....	3
BIS consultation on skills system proposals.....	3
Review of informal adult and community learning .....	5
BIS publishes consultation on FE loans.....	6
BIS publishes proposals for intervention.....	7
Colleges given more freedom on fee remission .....	7
DWP published results of skills conditionality pilot.....	8
Ofsted: progression post-16 for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities .....	8
RSA report on progression in further education .....	9
NIACE publication on learning and the Big Society.....	10
Information Authority launches online Individualised Learner Record learning tools .....	10
<b>Economy and Employment</b> .....	10
11 new Enterprise Zones announced .....	10
Government publication on the green economy.....	11
DWP publishes six-month offer evaluation .....	11
BIS announces intellectual property reforms.....	12
<b>14-19 and Schools</b> .....	13
Ofsted: An evaluation of approaches to commissioning young people's services .....	13
Policy statement: planning for schools development.....	13
Government advisory group voices concerns on careers services for young people .....	14
Consultation on proposed increases to contributions for members of the teachers' pension scheme ..	15
Vordeman report on mathematics education published .....	15
DfE publishes NEET Statistics for quarter two .....	16
Changes to the Care to Learn Childcare Support Scheme .....	16
<b>Higher Education</b> .....	17

BIS Technical Consultation: a new, fit-for-purpose regulatory framework for the higher education sector .....	17
First colleges gain right to award own degrees .....	18
Eight out of 10 higher education students give their courses top marks.....	18
BIS: analysis of higher education progression rates for young people in England by free school meal receipt and school type.....	19
IFS: the impact of tuition fees and support on university .....	20
<b>Local Government and Wider Public Sector .....</b>	<b>20</b>
Update on Community Budgets .....	20
Social impact bond innovation to tackle multiple problems in a family setting announced.....	20
Offenders to go full time on Community Payback .....	21
Report on future libraries .....	21
International comparisons of public engagement in culture and sport.....	22
Big Lottery Fund: consultation on proposed policy directions.....	22
One step closer to a single government domain .....	22
<b>Equality and Diversity .....</b>	<b>23</b>
Report on sexual orientation and gender identity in adult learning research .....	23
Social Mobility and Child Poverty review: call for evidence .....	23
EHRC report: sex and power .....	24
<b>Voluntary and Community Sector .....</b>	<b>24</b>
NCVO: charities face £3 billion in cuts over the next five years.....	24
Potential funding for community green spaces .....	25
<b>Devolved Administrations.....</b>	<b>25</b>
Review of Scottish vocational education.....	25
New programmes to help people into work in Wales begin.....	26
£1.6m for skills in the Justice and Safer Communities sector in Wales .....	26
<b>New Faces and Awards .....</b>	<b>27</b>
Department for Education confirms appointments to Ofsted's Board .....	27

# Further Education and Skills

## 16<sup>th</sup> August – BIS consultation on skills system proposals

Last November the Government published two strategy documents, *Skills for Sustainable Growth* and *Investing in Skills for Sustainable Growth*, which mapped out the future direction of the reform of further education for adults aged 19 and over. BIS has now published ***New Challenges, New Chances***<sup>1</sup> a consultation paper which aims to take those strategies a stage further by making proposals designed to promote the government's main overall aims for adult skills to:

- promote high-quality teaching and learning at all levels of the adult education system;
- 'free colleges and other skills providers from as many bureaucratic restrictions as possible' in order to allow them to respond more effectively to the needs of their local communities; and
- secure a fairer balance of investment in skills between the taxpayer, individual learners and employers.

Proposals for the next stage of reform are made in the following nine areas:

- vision for the FE landscape and shape of the sector;
- introducing Level 3 and 4 loans and sharing responsibility for investing in skills;
- FE college and training provider freedoms and flexibilities;
- simplifying the funding system;
- teaching, learning and qualifications;
- review of Informal Adult and Community Learning;
- review of literacy and numeracy provision for adults;
- delivering higher education and skills; and
- deregulation and devolution.

Proposed actions detailed in the paper include:

- BIS will issue a new policy framework for the FE landscape during 2011/12, replacing the current framework *Further Education Colleges – Models for Success*<sup>2</sup>. This will contain advice and information on the wide range of possible organisational and business models that are available for colleges and training organisations to consider;
- loans for further education will be introduced in 2013/14. The planned change to the statutory entitlement to Level 3 will be delayed until 2013/14 so that it aligns with the introduction of loans. Changes to Level 2 arrangements will apply from 2012/13 as planned. BIS is **consulting** (see below) on the FE loans system with the intention that from March 2013, learners will be able to apply for loans for courses starting in the 2013/14 academic year;
- further freedoms will be explored, including streamlining the approval process for vocational qualifications, and removing the contractual requirement for providers to submit an annual self-

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<sup>1</sup>We have published a quick summary to the consultation document – available at <http://www.lsis.org.uk/Services/Policy/Pages/Brief-Guides.aspx>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/further-education-skills/fe-improvement/models-for-success>

assessment report to the Skills Funding Agency and Ofsted, in favour of this becoming a sector-led approach to performance scrutiny;

- the introduction of *'proportionate external scrutiny and/or reviews'*, including reviewing inspection requirements on colleges and training organisations judged 'outstanding' (unless their performance drops) with a view to considering whether this approach should be extended to 'good' providers. Ofsted will also consult during the autumn on proposals to improve and streamline the Common Inspection Framework for further education and skills;
- moving from the requirement to report performance through Framework for Excellence in favour of using the sector's own process for improved public information and removing all requirements for employers training only their own staff to report publicly their performance;
- continuing to work with HM Treasury on the implications of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) decision, in October 2010, to classify FE colleges as central government bodies. The ONS has recently reviewed its decision in light of the proposed legislative changes to free colleges from *'unnecessary burden and bureaucracy'* but remains minded to keep the existing classification for FE colleges. BIS is reviewing these and considering the possibility of introducing further legislative changes to free colleges from central control wherever this is practicable;
- working with sector representatives to develop a simplified rates matrix including publishing a shadow rates matrix in the 2011/12 academic year. DfE is also preparing to consult on the 16-18 funding methodology;
- a focus on developing *'inspiring'* teaching and learning, led by *'the sector harnessing its own expertise, working with sector organisations such as LSIS, the Institute for Learning and the wider National Improvement Partnership'*. For STEM subjects lead national subject experts, drawn from relevant expert organisations, will be appointed. BIS and DfE will discuss with the Institute for Learning and LSIS a proposal to establish an independent commission on vocational pedagogy; and
- the continuation of the review of literacy and numeracy provision for adults, which will report in autumn 2011.

Key questions include:

- What barriers currently constrain flexibility and responsiveness, in terms of structural development, and how might the government address these to help the sector to reorganise for the benefit of learners?
- BIS proposes that the existing college merger criteria should be broadened to cover the need for effective leadership and management and the promotion of competition and diversity in the local area. Do you agree that these changes are sufficient to support the government's ambitions? Are there any others you would propose?
- How have you used the freedoms already made available to make a difference in your communities – what lessons can you share?
- Do you agree with the categories and descriptions for a 'trigger point' for intervention? If not, what suggestions do you have for changes/improvements?
- How can we best engage the knowledge of learned societies and professional bodies to empower improvement in the FE sector?
- What more is needed to accelerate the rate at which the most successful teaching practices/models of delivery spread across the sector?

- What can we do to improve awareness and identity of what further education can offer in terms of delivering higher education and skills?

The consultation will close on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2011.

## 16<sup>th</sup> August – Review of informal adult and community learning

As part of the *New Challenges, New Chances* consultation BIS has published a consultation on the **review of Informal Adult and Community Learning** (IACL). The document sets out the BIS intention for IACL to *'continue to contribute to people's quality of life, health and well-being'*. As a result, BIS will review the use of the Adult Safeguarded Learning (ASL) budget to:

- maximise its contribution to wider policy objectives, such as building the Big Society;
- deliver value for money by focusing public funding on people who would not otherwise have access to learning and maximising income from learners who can afford to pay; and
- support progression, including to further learning, training and employment.

Following the consultation BIS will publish details of key implementation milestones in the skills investment statement for 2012/13, planned for publication autumn 2011. There will be ongoing communication and implementation activity that BIS will develop jointly with stakeholders up to the planned start date. Following consultation with stakeholders, the document sets out six key challenges for BIS funded IACL:

- to clarify government objectives for spend on IACL and its role in supporting wider government policy objectives, including the Big Society, localism, wellbeing, social inclusion and digital inclusion;
- to ensure that government funding is sufficiently focused on the most disadvantaged. *'Comfortably-off, educated learners'* are currently over-represented. However they pay fees which can cross-subsidise those who cannot afford to pay;
- to provide robust evidence for IACL. Social and economic impact measures for BIS-funded IACL are *'under-developed'* and government does not collect data on non-government funded IACL;
- to address funding anomalies and make funding fairer. *'Funding is currently based on an historical, and in many cases inequitable, distribution'*;
- to create the conditions that will enable a much wider range of informal learning to thrive, whether this is supported by government, self-organised in local communities, delivered in the private sector or enabled through harnessing the power of the internet; and
- to ensure that workforce training and quality assurance arrangements support the new vision for BIS-funded IACL.

Consultation questions include:

- Do you agree that BIS-funded IACL contributes to the development of the Big Society and complements the delivery of other government policies, and if yes, which policies and how might IACL's contribution be measured?
- Should BIS funded IACL be aimed solely at supporting specific outcomes such as progression to training and employment, or enable progression in a broader sense? If the latter, what other types of progression are relevant and how could they be measured?
- What should be the respective national and local roles in relation to IACL?
- What (if any) steps could facilitate the changing role of central Government in IACL?
- What are the implications of seeking a wider local provider base?

- Should BIS-funded IACL be targeted or universal, and why?
- What are the key challenges to generating fee income and what associated solutions would encourage more sophisticated approaches to income generation?
- What core information should recipients of BIS investment have to provide in relation to learner characteristics and learning activity?
- How can administrative data be used effectively to map fee income and learner disadvantage?
- Should BIS IACL funding be used to fund capacity building and innovation? If yes, how should funding be balanced and what type of activity should be funded?
- Is there a need for quality assurance arrangements to be changed in light of the potential changes to BIS funded IACL? If yes, in what way?

The consultation will close on 21 October 2011.

There is also an additional survey which is part of this review, gathering the views of individuals who have an interest in informal adult and community learning available at <http://www.niace.org.uk/current-work/the-iacl-review>. The deadline for responses to this consultation is 31 October 2011.

## 16<sup>th</sup> August – BIS publishes consultation on FE loans

As part of the *New Challenges, New Chances* consultation BIS has published a **consultation** on how it can implement the policy and delivery model to ensure that there is an '*efficient and effective*' loans system in place. Loans will apply to all provision at Level 3/4 for those aged 24 and over, including Access to HE courses as well as Advanced and Higher Level Apprenticeships. The consultation questions are as follows:

### Consultation issue 1 – communications

- What information do learners, employers, colleges training organisations and careers advisers need about FE loans to cover learner contributions?
- How can we engage individuals and employers so that they make use of loans to support skills and training?
- How can we support learners who are progressing from FE to HE using loan support?
- Will the introduction of FE loans to cover learner contributions for Level 3/4 for those aged over 24 create any particular barrier(s) to access provision based on (i) race, religion or belief; (ii) disability; (iii) gender; or (iv) age?

### Consultation issue 2 – model for FE Level 3/4 loans system

- How can we minimise (additional) bureaucracy as we implement the FE loans model?
- What safeguards should be in place to ensure that learners make the best use of the loans available to them?
- Do respondents believe that payment of FE loans to colleges/training organisations should be made (i) 3 times a year (in line with HE); (ii) quarterly or (iii) monthly?
- Do respondents believe that allocations should be reassessed (i) annually but not in-year, (ii) once during the year and at the end of the year or (iii) more regularly during the year?

- In a demand-led system, what would be the most effective way of ensuring that our spend and commitments stay within the available loans budget?

The consultation will close on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2011.

## 16<sup>th</sup> August – BIS publishes proposals for intervention

As part of the *New Challenges, New Chances* consultation BIS has **published** a document which sets out proposals for intervention according to institutions' performance in categories *'failed'*, *'costing/failing'*, *'successful'*, and *'highly successful'* in order to clarify the point at which intervention will occur. The document also sets out a number of indicators so that providers understand how and when their performance will be judged. The *New Challenges, New Chances* consultation asks: Do you agree with the categories and descriptions for a 'trigger point' for intervention. If not, what suggestions do you have for changes/improvements?

## 9<sup>th</sup> August – Colleges given more freedom on fee remission

Skills minister John Hayes has **announced** *'greater freedoms for colleges to deliver fully subsidised training to help people on benefits enter employment'*.

Under new rules that come into force for the 2011/12 academic year, only benefit claimants on Jobseekers' Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance (Work Related Activity Group), who are required to seek work as a condition of receiving their benefits, will be eligible for free training. However to enable colleges to *'meet local demand for the skills that lead to employment and growth'*, FE providers will also be given some local discretion to provide fully subsidised courses for people on a wider range of benefits *'provided the training is to help them enter employment'*.

Any funding to support this local discretion to provide full fee remission will be made available from within existing budgets. FE colleges and providers have received their funding allocations for the 2011/12 academic year and *'will have to prioritise funding within this'*. This local discretion will apply to academic year 2011/12. The position for 2012/13 will be set out in the autumn. Changes to DWP benefits rules are being staggered with further planned changes and the future introduction of Universal Credit.

Information about this change to the local discretion available to colleges and training providers has been included in updated versions of the Skills Funding Agency's **2011/12 Adult Skills Budget Funding Requirements Version 1.1** and **2011/12 Learner Eligibility and Contribution Rules**.

- The former states:
  - providers must note that the Education and Skills Act 2008 Part 3 paragraph 4B subsection 8 states:
 

*" "tuition fees", in relation to a course, means—*

*the fees charged in respect of the course by the person providing it, and such fees in respect of other matters relating to the course (such as undergoing a preliminary assessment or sitting an examination) as may be specified in regulations made by the Secretary of State."*
  - Therefore, the SFA would expect learners studying learning aims covered by the Adult Entitlements, not to be subject to any fees or charges related to their course. In addition, the SFA expects fully-funded provision delivered to learners in receipt of Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) or Employment and Support Allowance (Work Related Activity Group) (ESA (WRAG)) in classroom learning not to be subject to any fees or charges related to their course. During 2011/12 providers can continue to use their discretion in the charges they make to other

learners that are fully funded, for example Progression Funding (as detailed in the 2011/12 Learner Eligibility and Contribution Rules).

- The latter includes the following as additional information:
  - the SFA recognises that there are unemployed individuals who are in receipt of a state benefit (other than JSA or ESA (WRAG)), who want to enter employment and need skills training to do so. For 2011/12, at the discretion of the provider, they will be eligible for full funding for units and other learning aims that will help them enter employment.

### 19<sup>th</sup> August – DWP published results of skills conditionality pilot

The Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) Skills Conditionality Pilot was launched in April 2010 with the aim of exploring the labour market effects of mandating participation in training. The pilot targeted JSA claimants entering stage 3<sup>3</sup> of the Jobseeker's Regime and Flexible New Deal (JRFND) who had an identified skills need. DWP has **published** a report on the pilot evaluation. Key policy recommendations include a need for:

- improvements to the implementation and operation of future pilot programmes, including control of the number of pilots operating in Jobcentre Plus offices, preparation of advisers, briefing of training providers and information to claimants;
- measures to address problems in the supply of training, including delays in training which occur through 'roll-on, roll off' courses and closures during the summer months;
- fuller claimant engagement in decisions about their training needs and improved internal communication between Next Step and JSA advisers to ensure that claimant Skills Action Plans are used to best effect;
- no mandating to training for claimants already engaged in training aimed at improving their employment prospects and use of discretion for claimants who are volunteering, setting up their own business or have other clear strategies for finding work. Advisers should be able to use judgement and discretion;
- discretion in application of sanctions where claimants have made genuine errors affecting attendance and reminders to those who are likely to forget to attend; and
- personalised attention to the non-skill needs of some claimants who are hardest to help, such as ex-offenders.

### 23<sup>rd</sup> August – Ofsted: progression post-16 for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Ofsted has **published** the results of a survey which evaluates the arrangements for transition from school and the provision in post-16 settings for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities up to the age of 25. Through visits to 32 providers and the completion of 111 detailed case studies, inspectors assessed the effectiveness of provision in enabling learners to develop greater independence, and progress to further learning or open or supported employment. Key recommendations include:

- BIS should consider the introduction of national programmes of extended workplace learning in conjunction with third sector providers, using models developed through the successful projects identified in this survey;

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<sup>3</sup> corresponding in most cases to six months of unemployment

- BIS should ensure that learners can access equitable funding and quality of provision irrespective of the post-16 setting in which they study, and that funding arrangements do not significantly disadvantage learners who are not on 'active benefits', or who might take longer than their peers to complete programmes such as apprenticeships;
- BIS should develop a national database that enables all providers to find out about enabling technologies and specialist training;
- local authorities should build on the expertise within the post-16 sector and the third sector, to improve local capacity, particularly for learners with the most profound and complex needs;
- providers should explore ways to provide job coaching and internships to prepare learners for open or supported employment and apprenticeships; and
- providers should ensure that teaching and learning focus on providing meaningful practical activities that match individual needs.

### 9<sup>th</sup> August – RSA report on progression in further education

The RSA has **published** a report which investigates why some students are more likely than others to thrive in education and the workplace, and what organisations such as the RSA can do to help disadvantaged students. The paper argues that a lack of cultural, economic and institutional capital has a detrimental effect on young people from low-income backgrounds in the FE sector, and in their progression into education or the workplace. Key findings include:

- many young people are unaware of how important networks and other forms of cultural capital are for progression. In particular young people from low-income backgrounds often have a strong aversion to using cultural capital to further their own ends. They considered this 'cheating' and preferred to 'make their own way';
- disadvantaged young people struggle to meet the everyday costs of college and feel priced out of higher education as a result of spiralling fees; and
- whilst doing the best they can for their students, FE colleges are not always able to provide the advice, guidance and support that these young people need because of the sector's own lack of social and economic capital.

Key recommendations for policy and practice include:

- the government should consider the implications of this for EMA. It is also necessary to provide early and in-depth information about financial support available for students in higher education;
- the all-age careers service planned for launch in 2012 must provide high-quality, realistic careers advice as per the Wolf Report and it must make provision for specific careers advice for 16-24 year olds that can be accessed in FE colleges;
- government should continue to expand the flexibility of FE institutions, allowing them to award shorter qualifications and develop their role as a '*community hub*' that reflects and responds to local needs; and
- the FE sector needs to further strengthen its networks and contacts. FE practitioners could take some responsibility for maintaining these networks and contacts if they are provided with CPD opportunities that facilitate this. Building relationships with local employers needs particular attention in order to ensure FE provision is sensitive to their needs. This could be achieved by rejuvenating employer advisory boards that are subject-specific.

## 28<sup>th</sup> July – NIACE publication on learning and the Big Society

NIACE has published *Learning for a Change: Why adult learning will make the Big Difference to the Big Society* a paper which outlines key facets of the relationship between adult learning and the Big Society. The paper sets out some elements of the contribution of learning and skills to this agenda. It argues that the role of learning is understated in current analyses, to the detriment of the further education and skills sector's capacity to engage with the Big Society concept and its underpinning reform programme

The paper sets out the following arguments for how learning can become central to the Big Society:

- learning for active citizenship is central to the Big Society and, in particular, to empowering communities and building a 'culture of responsibility' and social action;
- volunteering and learning are deeply connected and complementary activities. Each is both a route towards, and an outcome of, the other. *'The Big Society agenda is an opportunity to encourage and build on this reciprocity'*;
- co-creation or co-production is the systematic process of creating new solutions *with* people, not *for* them. The learning and skills sector (and particularly those parts that focus on community development learning) has considerable experience of working with learners and local residents to develop learning services;
- digital technology has the potential to be empowering when it is used and supported well. Much adult learning already makes good use of the potential of digital technology; and
- learning families, where diverse forms of informal and formal learning are encouraged, where curiosity, enterprise and creativity are fostered, and social and self awareness are nurtured, are at the heart of the Big Society vision.

## 24<sup>th</sup> August – Information Authority launches online Individualised Learner Record learning tools

The information authority has launched a number of online learning tools to assist understanding of the single Individualised Learner Record (ILR) and the 2011/12 ILR changes:

- an **interactive online tool** demonstrating the changes to the 2011/12 ILR; and
- an **interactive online tool** to inform providers about the **single ILR**, which is being introduced from August 2011.

# Economy and Employment

## 17<sup>th</sup> August – 11 new Enterprise Zones announced

Prime minister, David Cameron, the chancellor of the exchequer, George Osborne, and the communities secretary, Eric Pickles have **announced** the location of eleven new<sup>4</sup> Enterprise Zones<sup>5</sup>, designed to boost local growth and create over 30,000 new jobs by 2015.

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<sup>4</sup> The first round of Enterprise Zones was announced in the Budget 2011 and will be based within the following eleven local enterprise partnerships: Birmingham and Solihull, Sheffield City Region, Leeds City Region, Liverpool City

During the Budget announcement, the government announced 11 Enterprise Zones in some of the country's largest cities, including Manchester, Birmingham, Merseyside and Newcastle, as well as inviting applications for more in other areas.

The location of Zones in the Black Country, Tees Valley and the North East have also been agreed. This brings the total to 22 Enterprise Zones across the country. It is anticipated that the zones will *'attract hundreds of new start up firms, with simplified planning rules, super-fast broadband and over £150 million tax breaks for new businesses'* over the next 4 years.

Alongside the new Zones, the government is also announcing that it will make enhanced capital allowances available for plant and machinery investment to a limited number of Enterprise Zones in Assisted Areas, including the Tees Valley and North East. With effect from 2012, companies setting up in these areas will be eligible to claim enhanced first year allowances for plant and machinery, giving them an upfront cash flow benefit.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> August – Government publication on the green economy

BIS has published *Enabling the Transition to a Green Economy* a publication which sets out what the transition to a green economy means for businesses. The document is the government's response to requests from the private sector for greater clarity on what government means by a *'green economy'*. It also sets out commitments from government on actions it will take to support businesses and help establish the clarity needed to underpin private sector investment. These include

- promoting international action;
- attracting investment in infrastructure;
- proportionate environmental regulation *'which minimises the burdens on business'*; and
- voluntary agreements as an alternative to regulation; and equipping the work force with the *'right'* skills.

The full suite of information available includes:

- a timeline for the key policies and investments;
- a document for SMEs on what the transition means for them; and
- three case studies highlighting how the chemicals, food and drink and automotive sectors are responding to the issues of moving to a green economy.

#### 23rd August – DWP publishes six-month offer evaluation

DWP has published a **report** which presents the findings from one part of the evaluation of the Six Month Offer (6MO). As part of a package of measures implemented in 2009 in response to the economic

Region, London, Greater Manchester, West of England, the Black Country, Derby and Nottingham, Tees Valley and the North East. More details can be found at: [www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/1872164](http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/1872164).

<sup>5</sup> The second wave of Enterprise Zone will be located in: Humber Estuary Renewable Energy Super Cluster; Daresbury Science Campus, near Warrington and Runcorn; Newquay AeroHub in Cornwall; The Solent Enterprise Zone at Daedalus Airfield in Gosport; MIRA Technology Park in Hinckley Leicestershire; Rotherwas Enterprise Zone in Hereford; Discovery Park in Sandwich, Kent and Enterprise West Essex in Harlow; Science Vale UK in Oxfordshire; Northampton Waterside; Alconbury Airfield, near Huntingdon in Cambridgeshire; and Great Yarmouth in Norfolk, and Lowestoft in Suffolk.

recession, the 6MO gave all claimants reaching six-months unemployment additional advisory help from Jobcentre Plus advisers. In addition, claimants were given the opportunity to participate in four voluntary strands of activity:

- volunteering opportunities to improve employability;
- access to work-focused training;
- a recruitment subsidy for employers; and
- help to become self-employed.

Key conclusions drawn from follow-up interviews include:

- across findings from all four strands, the work outcomes that were achieved at the initial interview have proved sustainable to the medium-term. Within the self-employment and recruitment subsidy strands, the relatively high proportions of participants already in paid work by the initial interview were sustained by the follow-up interview. Within the volunteering and training strands, the proportions in paid work more than doubled. Majorities of individuals within each strand progressed with their employer in terms of hours, responsibilities, pay and/or contract status over the 12 months between their initial and follow-up interviews;
- across all four strands a majority of those working for an employer were on a permanent contract, the majority considered their current job to be a good match for their skills, experience and interests and most felt that they were better off financially than they had been while claiming JSA;
- within each Strand there was a significant minority who said they were no better off financially and whose employment outcomes might therefore be considered vulnerable. This was particularly likely to be the case for those who participated in the self-employment strand and had entered self-employment; and
- where employers received a one-off payment (under the bulk-billing route) individuals were less likely to remain in employment than those working for employers who received the recruitment subsidy payments in two parts. Where payments were made in two parts, it might be expected that following the second payment there would be an increase in returns to JSA, but there is no evidence from this survey to suggest this happened.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> August – BIS announces intellectual property reforms

The government has **announced** plans to ‘*support economic growth by modernising UK intellectual property laws*’. Ministers have accepted the recommendations made in an independent review which estimate a potential benefit to the UK economy of up to £7.9 billion. The recommendations were made in May 2011 by Professor Ian Hargreaves in his report ***Digital Opportunity: A review of intellectual property and growth***. Modernising intellectual property law is one of the action points from the government’s Plan for Growth, published in March alongside the Budget.

The government will consult on the detail of how it will proceed over the next few *months and set out its plans in a White Paper in spring 2012 with a view to legislating in this parliament ‘where necessary’*.

# 14-19 and Schools

## 9<sup>th</sup> August – Ofsted: An evaluation of approaches to commissioning young people's services

Ofsted has **published** the results of a small-scale survey which examined approaches to the commissioning of services for young people in 12 local authority areas. Key findings include:

- only five of the 12 local authority areas visited had sufficiently well-established commissioning arrangements for youth services;
- in most cases, local authorities were not giving sufficiently impartial consideration to new providers as part of their commissioning processes, particularly voluntary sector, community and charitable organisations;
- creating a collaborative culture of shared values across organisations within a local area is as critical as getting the technical aspects of commissioning correct;
- in the less effective practice, the process of commissioning was poorly understood; confusion between procurement and commissioning impaired planning;
- structural changes within local authorities in the light of the current financial climate had militated against long-term planning in the areas visited; and
- practice in relation to young people's participation in commissioning activity was often good. The young people involved learned much from this.

The report includes recommendations that local authorities should:

- take a lead role in creating a collaborative and shared approach to commissioning;
- ensure commissioning is informed by evidence-based judgements;
- ensure they give proper consideration to using new providers, including those from the voluntary sector, community and charitable organisations;
- ensure a proper role for voluntary, community and charitable organisations in the design, decision-making and monitoring of commissioned services; and
- recognise the value in maintaining local networks of practitioners and other local organisations.

## 15<sup>th</sup> August – Policy statement: planning for schools development

The secretary of state for communities and local government Mr Eric Pickles and the secretary of state for education Mr Michael Gove have published a **statement** which sets out the government position on the development of state-funded schools and their delivery through the planning system. This statement supersedes the statement of 26 July 2010.

The government believes that the planning system should operate in a positive manner when dealing with proposals for the creation, expansion and alteration of state-funded schools, a number of principles should apply with immediate effect including:

- there should be a presumption in favour of the development of state-funded schools, as expressed in the National Planning Policy Framework;

- local authorities should give full and thorough consideration to the importance of enabling the development of state-funded schools in their planning decisions;
- the secretary of state will attach significant weight to the need to establish and develop state-funded schools when determining applications and appeals that come before him for decision;
- local authorities should make full use of their planning powers to support state-funded schools applications; and
- local authorities should ensure that the process for submitting and determining state-funded schools' applications is as streamlined as possible, and in particular be proportionate in the information sought from applicants.

### 8<sup>th</sup> August – Government advisory group voices concerns on careers services for young people

The Advisory Group on the All-Age Careers Service established by the Government has been reconstituted as the National Careers Service Advisory Group. The group has **published** a press release stating concern about the '*significant*' reduction in the group's remit and in the scope of the new service. The group's concerns are set out as follows:

- the National Careers Service will include face-to-face services for adults, but not for young people. Instead, its service for young people will be confined to telephone- and web-based services;
- responsibility for providing the face-to-face services is being transferred to schools, '*without any transfer of funding*';
- heavy staff redundancies are potentially damaging to young people's lives and ultimately to the economy at a time when young people are facing significant changes in further and higher education, and new apprenticeships as well as high youth unemployment; and
- quality assurance and accountability measures announced to date are not yet considered adequate.

## 28<sup>th</sup> June – Consultation on proposed increases to contributions for members of the teachers' pension scheme

DfE has **launched** a consultation to seek views and evidence on whether the proposed contribution increases for members of the teachers' pension scheme meet the principles set out by the government. The current member contribution rate is 6.4% of salary. The proposed contribution rates for 2012-13, on which the Department is consulting, are as follows;

Lower Salary	Higher Salary	Contribution Rate in 2012-13	Increase (against 6.4%)	Membership	% of membership
	14,999	6.4%	0%	1,400	0.2%
15,000	25,999	7.0%	0.6%	116,000	17.1%
26,000	31,999	7.3%	0.9%	117,000	17.2%
32,000	39,999	7.6%	1.2%	271,000	39.6%
40,000	74,999	8.0%	1.6%	172,000	25.2%
75,000	111,999	8.4%	2.0%	4,000	0.6%
112,000		8.8%	2.4%	600	0.1%

Consultation questions include:

- Are there any consequences of the proposed contribution tiers that you consider have not been addressed?
- Do you consider that there are equality issues that will result in any individual groups being disproportionately affected by the proposed contribution tiering? If so, what do you consider to be the disproportionate effect?
- Two alternative proposals have been provided to calculate the FTE salary to set the contribution rate. Which alternative do you consider effectively balances equity, fairness and administration considerations? Do you propose an alternative method?

The consultation will close on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2011.

## 8<sup>th</sup> August – Vordeman report on mathematics education published

An independent maths taskforce commissioned by the Conservative Party has published ***A world-class mathematics education for all our young people***, a report which argues that the problems many young people experience in their maths education become entrenched during primary and the early years of secondary school. A child's mathematical 'career' is effectively determined by the age of 11. 90% of those who fail to achieve the SAT target (Level 4) at age 11 will go on to 'fail' GCSE. Conversely, 94% of those who surpass the target (Level 5) will 'pass' GCSE. Key recommendations include:

- the present system for GCSE Mathematics, based on a single award, *'is not fit for purpose'* and should be replaced by one offering two GCSEs as soon as possible;
- *'the growing practice'* of entering students early to obtain *'a mere passing grade in order to improve the school's league table position'* should be strongly discouraged;
- to bring this country into line with the rest of the world, mathematics, in some form, should be made compulsory to the age of 18. *'The implementation of this recommendation is a matter of urgency'*;

- university departments offering degrees in STEM subjects should consider increasing the level of mathematics in their offers and the advice they provide to applicants;
- the examination boards should be accountable to a Mathematics Steering Committee drawn from stakeholders including the mathematics subject community, employers, higher and further education and the government; and
- the new Ofsted Framework must ensure that the quality of mathematics education is inspected and reported fully in all primary and secondary schools. *‘Each inspection team must contain at least one inspector who is qualified to inspect mathematics’.*

### 24<sup>th</sup> August – DfE publishes NEET Statistics for quarter two

DfE has **published** the latest statistics available on young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) in England. It includes data from the department's 16 to 18 participation release, the labour force survey and regional figures. NEET rates for 16-24 year olds are as follows:

	Quarter 2 2009	Quarter 2 2010	Quarter 2 2011	% point change from Q2 2010 to Q2 2011
Age 16	8.0%	4.9%	6.3%	1.4
Age 17	11.2%	10.2%	8.8%	-1.3
Age 18	16.5%	15.0%	14.3%	-0.8
Age 16-18	11.9%	10.2%	9.8%	-0.3
Age 19-24	17.8%	16.5%	19.1%	*2.6
Age 16-24	15.9%	14.4%	16.2%	*1.7

The latest SFR NEET rate for 16-18 year olds, at end 2010, was 7.3 percent; the lowest level since consistent records began in 1994. This was partially due to the first increase in the employment rate for young people not in education or training since 2007.

Participation in education and training continued to rise: between 2002 and 2010 participation in education and training amongst 16-18 year olds rose every year, causing the size of the NET group to fall from 25.0% to 15.6%. Previously, the proportion of the cohort which was NEET had remained broadly stable (at around 10%). This was because the increase in the proportion of 16-18 year olds in education and training was counter-balanced by a fall in the proportion of 16-18 year olds in employment.

### 26<sup>th</sup> August – Changes to the Care to Learn Childcare Support Scheme

DfE has published a **consultation** which seeks views on options for the future of the Care to Learn childcare support scheme for young parents in education or training in England, from September 2012.

Care to Learn provides non income-assessed support for childcare and associated travel costs to young parents of up to £160 a week (£175 in London) to enable them to complete their education, gain qualifications and enter employment. Childcare payments are made direct to the childcare provider.<sup>6</sup>

A research report commissioned by the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) found that most young parents receiving Care to Learn would not have returned to learning without support for their childcare costs. Those young parents who stay in education after the original course funded by Care to Learn often progress to higher level learning. Evaluation also shows that Care to Learn has an important role in reducing the proportion of young parents who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

The proposed options are:

- deliver childcare support through a discretionary scheme operated by schools, colleges and training providers;
- assess the eligibility for Care to Learn on the basis of the young parent's income;
- reduce the maximum weekly amounts that are payable for childcare costs; and
- limit eligibility for Care to Learn to young parents who are aged 18 or under at the beginning of their course. (This is DfE's preferred option, *'as it brings eligibility for childcare support in line with other forms of financial support for young people and adults'*.)

The consultation will close on 28 October 2011.

## Higher Education

### 4<sup>th</sup> August – BIS Technical Consultation: a new, fit-for-purpose regulatory framework for the higher education sector

The recent White Paper *Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System* set out a commitment to introduce a new, *'fit-for-purpose'* regulatory framework to establish the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) as lead regulator. BIS has published a **technical consultation**, to be read alongside the White Paper, to inform what changes in procedures, powers and duties will need to be considered, particularly in forthcoming legislation, in order to protect the student interest and provide a high quality experience.

The document seeks views on how the new regulatory system should operate within the principles that BIS has set out in the higher education White Paper. It covers:

- the introduction of an independent lead regulator;
- a single regulatory framework for provider designation for student support and HEFCE teaching grant;
- the adoption of a single gateway for entry to the higher education sector;
- reforms to Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs) and University Title (UT) criteria; and
- simplifying the process for changing corporate status.

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<sup>6</sup> In academic year 2009/10 the programme cost around £37 million and provided childcare support to 7,933 young parents.

Key questions include:

- What are your views on how flexible provision such as two year courses could be encouraged?
- Do you consider that alternative models for entry e.g. single subject taught degree awarding powers would give more scope for new providers to enter the system? Would you be interested in the development of a single-subject model?
- The document sets out the regulatory framework for designation for student support and HEFCE teaching grant – are there any processes within this framework that could be improved or reduced to make it more risk-based and ensure proportionate requirements and a level playing field while still protecting the student interest and public funds?
- *'While it is not Government's role to underwrite independent providers that have become unviable'*, how can we best protect the interests of students in the event a provider fails in some way or becomes insolvent?
- Do you agree with our proposal to reduce the numbers criterion for university title to 1,000 full-time equivalent higher education students of which at least 750 are studying for a degree alongside a requirement that more than 50% FTE of an organisation's overall student body is studying HE?
- Do you agree that it is important to retain the Privy Council as an independent element in the process for awarding, renewing and removing degree awarding powers and university title?

## 8<sup>th</sup> August – First colleges gain right to award own degrees

Two further education colleges have become the first institutions to be given the right to award their own foundation degrees.<sup>7</sup> The Privy Council has **granted** foundation degree awarding powers to the Corporation of Newcastle College and the Corporation of New College Durham, following detailed scrutiny of their applications by the Quality Assurance Agency.

The Privy Council has also agreed to award the School of Oriental and African Studies, a constituent college of University of London, taught and research degree awarding powers.

Business Secretary Dr Vince Cable said *'foundation degrees have grown in popularity in recent years, with around 100,000 students enrolled in them last year. We want to increase the study choices for students by enabling FE colleges to offer higher education qualifications; they can often do so in a more flexible way'*.

## 17<sup>th</sup> August – Eight out of 10 higher education students give their courses top marks

The results of this year's National Student Survey (NSS) conducted by Ipsos MORI have been **published**. The satisfaction rate for students studying for a higher education qualification at UK higher education institutions (HEIs) and further education colleges (FECs) remains high, with 83 per cent saying they are satisfied overall with their course. A further 8 per cent were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their higher education experience; and 9 per cent were dissatisfied.

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<sup>7</sup> Scrutiny of applications for degree awarding powers is carried out by the Quality Assurance Agency's Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers. Formal approval is bestowed by the Privy Council on the advice of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. Foundation degree awarding powers are initially awarded for a six year period and are renewable.

In each of the seven categories covered by the survey<sup>8</sup>, satisfaction has either improved since 2010 or stayed the same. In particular, staff were felt to be doing a good job: 84 per cent of students were satisfied with the quality of teaching on their courses and 77 per cent were satisfied with the academic support they received.

Around 265,000 final-year students responded to the survey this year, from 154 HEIs and 99 FECs from across the UK. This represents a response rate of 65 per cent, the highest rate in the seven years that the NSS has been running.

## 10<sup>th</sup> August – BIS: analysis of higher education progression rates for young people in England by free school meal receipt and school type

BIS has **published** an Official Statistics Release which provides information on the number of 15 year olds in receipt of free school meals (FSM) who progressed to higher education by age 19 by 2008/09. The information is presented at national and local authority level. Further data is also provided on the number of young people taking A levels or equivalent qualifications who progress to the most selective institutions by school type. This release replaces the previous Full-Time Young Participation by Socio-Economic Class (FYPSEC) measure. Key statistics include:

- an estimated 13% of maintained school pupils who received FSM entered Higher Education in 2005/06. This rose steadily to an estimated 17% in 2008/09. The estimated progression rate for pupils not receiving FSM also rose, but with a smaller increase, from 33% to 35%. The gap between FSM and Non-FSM rates is therefore estimated to have fallen slightly, to 18 percentage points;<sup>9</sup>
- the data suggests that 88 Local Authorities out of 149 (59%) have a larger gap between the progression rates for FSM and Non-FSM pupils than the England level gap (of 18 percentage points);
- an estimated 72% of those who studied A levels and equivalent qualifications in state schools and colleges in 2004/05 progressed to HE by 2006/07. This rate fell to 68% in 2007/08 and rose to 69% in 2008/09. Over the same period the estimated progression rate for independent school and college pupils fell from 85% to 82%;
- the table shows that the proportion of pupils with FSM has remained steady between 2005/06 and 2008/09 at 14%. For the most recent data point, there were 80,300 pupils who were in receipt of FSM at age 15 in 2004/05 who represented 14% of all 15 year olds on the matched dataset. It is estimated that around 7% of HE entrants had received FSM when they were aged 15; and
- the estimated progression rate for state school and college pupils to the most selective<sup>10</sup> HE institutions was 26% in 2008/09, up by one percentage point from 2007/08 but the same rate as in 2006/07. The equivalent progression rate for independent school and college pupils was 62% in 2008/09, which had fallen by one percentage point from 2007/08.

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<sup>8</sup> The teaching on my course, assessment and feedback, academic support, organisation and management, learning resources, personal development, and overall satisfaction.

<sup>9</sup> This measure only tracks entry to HE by age 19. A number of pupils enter HE at a later age and are not included in this measure. Prior attainment is not accounted for in this measure. Many pupils will not continue their education; therefore may not hold the qualifications to progress to higher education.

<sup>10</sup> The 'most selective' HEIs are defined as the top third of HEIs when ranked by mean UCAS tariff score from the top three A level grades. This measure only covers HE courses at UK Higher Education Institutions and excludes HE courses at English further education colleges.

## 15<sup>th</sup> August – IFS: the impact of tuition fees and support on university

The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has **published** a paper which aims to separate the impacts of tuition fees and maintenance grants on the decision to enter university in the UK. The IFS has used Labour Force Survey data covering 1992-2007, a period of variation in higher education finance, which saw the introduction of up-front tuition fees and the abolition of maintenance grants in 1998, followed some eight years later by a shift to higher deferred fees and the reinstatement of maintenance grants. The IFS then created a pseudo-panel of university participation of cohorts defined by sex, region of residence and family background, and estimated a number of different specifications on these aggregated data.

The findings suggest that tuition fees have had '*a significant negative effect on participation*', with a £1,000 increase in fees resulting in a decrease in participation of 3.9 percentage points. Non-repayable support in the form of maintenance grants has had a positive effect on participation, with a £1,000 increase in grants resulting in a 2.6 percentage point increase in participation. These findings are comparable to, but of a slightly lower magnitude than, those in the related US literature.

# Local Government and Wider Public Sector

## 28<sup>th</sup> July – Update on Community Budgets

Sir Bob Kerslake, permanent secretary for the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), has **written** to Local Authority chief executives to provide an update on Community Budgets. Sir Bob wrote '*I have been struck by the number of councils not only wanting to pursue a Community Budget for families with multiple problems, but wanting to use the approach to tackle other issues and press for the radical approaches we recently announced. There is a belief in the concept – we now need to develop and apply it together and demonstrate its power through real change and improvement in service delivery, outcomes and efficiency*'.

Key details include:

- the plan to roll out Community Budgets for families with multiple problems to another 50 areas by April 2010; and
- some areas are applying the Community Budget approach to tackle other local priorities for example, Lincolnshire.

The letter also outlined future steps for testing out future approaches to community budgeting. These are:

- work with two areas to co-design a neighbourhood level community budget; and
- work with a further two areas to co-design a Community Budget which brings together all funding on local public services in an area into a single pot.

DCLG expects to issue a prospectus in early September inviting areas to set out their case for being one of the neighbourhood or single budget pilot areas by the end of September. Selected areas will then be announced by the end of the year.

## 26<sup>th</sup> August – Social impact bond innovation to tackle multiple problems in a family setting announced

Minister for civil society Nick Hurd has **announced** the trial of a new '*way to fund intensive help for families blighted by anti-social behaviour, crime, addiction and poor education*'.

It is estimated that up to £40million could be raised by four Social Impact Bond pilots launched in Hammersmith & Fulham, Westminster, Birmingham and Leicestershire. Social Impact Bonds let people invest in social projects to address these issues and be paid a return if the projects are successful. These would be the first Social Impact Bonds to tackle multiple problems in a family setting. Investors and philanthropists can invest in the bonds which then fund intensive interventions. If they are successful and families are taken out of deprivation and long term dependence on the state the taxpayer will repay the investments with 'a decent return'. If not, then the taxpayer won't pay.

The Government has committed to support the growth of the Social Investment Market. Big Society Capital (formerly Big Society Bank) has been launched and will invest around £600million in social finance products like Social Impact Bonds with the aim of attracting more private investment into the market. In time it is hoped that products like social ISAs and pension funds will be available to everyday savers.

The new trial will build on a Social Impact Bond pilot to tackle reoffending in Peterborough Prison launched by the Ministry of Justice last September. Liverpool and Essex are also looking to trial a related Social Impact Bond initiative to support vulnerable adolescents and their families with the objective of preventing care entry. DCLG expects the Social Impact Bond pilots to be funding intensive interventions from spring 2012.

## 24<sup>th</sup> August – Offenders to go full time on Community Payback

Offenders will be made to work a full five day week 'of hard work and job-seeking', under **new proposals** for community sentences confirmed by the minister for prisons and probation, Crispin Blunt.

The work will include hard manual labour, improving public areas by clearing up litter, cleaning graffiti and maintaining parks and other green spaces.

The new instructions will see '*unemployed criminals forced to work a minimum of 28 hours over four days, with the fifth day spent looking for full time employment*'. Prior to this announcement, Community Payback programmes could be spread out over 12 months with some offenders working for a minimum of six hours per week. The new, more intensive scheme, will also be delivered more immediately after sentence, imposed on offenders within seven days of sentencing, instead of the two weeks it currently takes following the court appearance.

About 100,000 individuals are sentenced to Community Payback each year across England and Wales with over 8.8 million hours of unpaid work completed last year. The public can nominate jobs for offenders via **direct.gov**. These proposals for community sentencing are part of the government's plans to '*reform sentencing and tackle the root causes of offending*'.

## 8<sup>th</sup> August – Report on future libraries

The Local Government Group and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council have published a joint report on the future of libraries. The publication, ***Future Libraries: Change, options and how to get there***, comes one year after the launch of an project to support 36 library authorities in '*developing innovative ways to modernise services*'.

Four options for helping to ensure the survival of libraries in the 21st century have been identified by the Future Libraries Programme pilots. These are:

- running libraries in partnership with the private sector, charities and other councils;
- extending the reach and range of library services by integrating them with other community facilities like churches, shops and village halls and providing public services such as health centres and the police surgeries in existing libraries;

- sharing services like back offices and mobile libraries with neighbouring local authorities to make stretched resources go further; and
- giving library users the ability to play a more active role in running library services themselves.

## 15<sup>th</sup> August – International comparisons of public engagement in culture and sport

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport has **published** an ESRC report which uses Eurobarometer, Eurostat and other data to compare Great Britain (GB) with other European countries in relation to public engagement in sport and culture. Key findings include:

- GB is in the second quartile of attendance rates for most cultural activities, having higher than average but not leading rates of attendance;
- GB is in the top quartile for attendance to theatre, public libraries, museums/galleries and reading books. It has lower than average attendance to sport events;
- in most of Europe more people attend sports events than the theatre: this is not the case in GB, due both to our high ranking for theatre attendance and low ranking for sports event attendance;
- for cultural attendance overall, income, type of area (rural/urban), sex and national background are less influential on attendance in GB than in Europe on average. Education, occupation and age are more influential (though note that the sample sizes do not support statistically significant comparisons of levels of attendance between subgroups and countries);
- education has below average influence on use of public libraries in GB; all demographic indicators have below average influence on cinema attendance; and
- GB respondents were more likely than average to say that they did not have time to take up local opportunities to be physically active.

## 22<sup>nd</sup> August – Big Lottery Fund: consultation on proposed policy directions

Policy responsibility for the Big Lottery Fund has transferred from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to the Cabinet Office. In line with the transfer of responsibilities for BIG, the Cabinet Office has opened a **consultation** on proposed new policy directions for BIG to try to address this. The policy document sets out the process for determining the persons to whom, the purposes for which and the conditions subject to which the fund is distributed. The consultation poses two questions:

- Is there anything set out in these directions that the Big Lottery Fund should not be doing? If your answer is yes, please tell us what it is and why they shouldn't be doing it.
- Is there anything the Big Lottery Fund should be doing in addition to these directions? If your answer is yes, please tell us what they should be doing and why.

## 11<sup>th</sup> August – One step closer to a single government domain

The Cabinet Office has **announced** that testing government plans for a single government web domain has progressed to the next stage with the development of a beta site, designed to '*reduce the current bureaucracy surrounding government websites*' and improve the user experience moved a step closer. It is estimated that operating a single web portal will save '*at least 50 per cent*' of the £130 million the government spends on its many individual websites each year

The single domain project was recommended by the UK digital champion, Martha Lane-Fox, as a result of the **review of the Government's online presence**. The review found that the government publishes '*millions of different pages on the web, via hundreds of different websites*', ultimately leading to '*significant*

*duplication*' and an overall user experience that is *'highly inconsistent'*. The move to publish content to a single Government domain was one of the key recommendations in her review. This announcement follows the initial **alpha prototype**, **alpha.gov.uk**, a more simple test that was launched in April. The beta stage of development will test a much wider range of features than the alpha stage and will focus on understanding and meeting user needs.

## Equality and Diversity

### 19<sup>th</sup> August – Report on sexual orientation and gender identity in adult learning research

The Skills Funding Agency has **published** research into sexual orientation and gender identity equality in adult learning. Key findings include:

- almost one in three (30%) Trans learners had experienced bullying or harassment in adult learning due to their gender identity;
- fewer than one in six (14.3%) LGB learners surveyed had experienced bullying and harassment in adult learning due to their sexual orientation;
- only around a third of respondents stated that they thought that equality policies seemed to translate into reality in their FE provision. Lesbians and Trans learners were less likely to agree;
- gay male learners are typically more likely to believe that support systems are LGBT friendly/specific. Trans and Bisexual learners are least likely to believe they are LGBT friendly/specific;
- the greatest barrier reported for learning was 'insensitive curriculum content';
- respondents related how they were attracted to adult learning through proactive action by providers e.g. taking recruitment to LGBT events; and
- there are still comparatively more problems and barriers for LGBT learners for gender stereotyped courses e.g. beauty; engineering etc.

### 16<sup>th</sup> August – Social Mobility and Child Poverty review: call for evidence

The government has appointed Alan Milburn as Independent Reviewer of Social Mobility and Child Poverty, pending the establishment of a statutory Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission next year.

A **call for evidence** has been issued. The review team will then use the responses to help to build recommendations for what action government, and wider civil society, should take in order to raise social mobility and tackle child poverty. Key questions include:

- What are the main barriers which stop people moving out of poverty or which prevent people from slipping into poverty?
- What are the best examples of projects which have brought about real progress in creating a fairer, more mobile society?
- What are the best examples of where effective projects have been expanded and best practice shared with other areas or organisations?
- What more should businesses, civil society and other non-government institutions be doing to improve social mobility and tackle child poverty?

The commission will be issuing its first report to Parliament in spring next year. This call for evidence will help inform that report, alongside Alan Milburn's discussions with a broad range of stakeholders. The report will also take into account the evidence collected for a range of recent papers including Alan Milburn's review *Unleashing Aspiration: The Final Report of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions*; and Frank Field's review *The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults*.

The closing date for responses is 16<sup>th</sup> October 2011.

## 17<sup>th</sup> August – EHRC report: sex and power

The Equalities and Human Rights Commission has published ***Sex and Power***, a report which sets out an index of women 'in positions of power and influence'. The report argues that there is continued under representation of women in senior public and private appointments. The index suggests that if women were to achieve equal representation among Britain's 26,000 top positions of power that there are over 5,000 women missing from Britain's top jobs. This includes:

- 2,129 missing from 12,210 public appointments;
- 403 missing from the 1,076 directorships in the FTSE 100 companies;
- 829 missing from the 1,966 directorships in the FTSE 250 companies;
- 181 missing from the 650 members of Parliament;
- 83 missing from the 250 senior police officers; and
- 245 missing from the 500 senior ranks of the armed forces.

The Commission estimates that for these 'missing' women to work towards positions 'of real influence' at the current rate of progress it could take another:

- 30 years to achieve an equal number of women senior police officers;
- 70 years to achieve an equal number of women directors in the FTSE 100;
- 45 years to achieve an equal number of women in the senior judiciary; and
- 14 elections, or up to 70 years, to achieve an equal number of women MPs.

# Voluntary and Community Sector

## 8<sup>th</sup> August – NCVO: charities face £3 billion in cuts over the next five years

The National Council for Voluntary organisations has published a research report, ***Counting the cuts***, which shows that according to the government figures, 'charities are facing nearly £3 billion in cuts over the spending review period (2011-2015)'. Through an analysis of the government's projected spending plans, released from the Office of Budget Responsibility, the report shows:

- the UK voluntary and community sector will lose around £911 million a year in public funding by 2015-16; and
- cumulatively, the sector stands to lose £2.8 billion from government over the current spending review period.

These figures are reached by assuming that the government will cut the voluntary and community sector on a proportionate basis, but in reality it is possible that the cuts could be much higher. Responses to Freedom

of Information requests show that half of all Local Authorities are making disproportionate cuts to the voluntary sector. NCVO has also asked charities to provide examples of cuts they have faced through its crowdsourcing website, **Voluntary Sector Cuts**, in collaboration with a number of other infrastructure organisations. Over the last six months, nearly 500 charities have reported cuts worth over £76 million.

## 26<sup>th</sup> August – Potential funding for community green spaces

The Department for Communities and Local Government has **published** a document which sets out the potential funding available to community and voluntary organisations for community green space initiatives. The paper identifies the different grant schemes open to local groups, green spaces, allotment organisations or trusts, and also includes a list of organisations to contact for further information about grants.

# Devolved Administrations

## 17<sup>th</sup> August – Review of Scottish vocational education

Willy Roe CBE was invited to examine how Scotland's post-16 vocational education and training can support people into work and help sustain them in productive employment. The review considered ways to achieve better value for money and faster progress on the national economic targets, more effective approaches to workforce development, and support for the unemployed and young people seeking work for the first time and has **published** its findings.

The report argues that the post-16 education and vocational training arrangements should be strengthened and better integrated with other parts of the education and employment systems. In addition, Scotland should commit to creating *'a truly coherent and high-performing system with the individual learner at its heart'*. A set of 12 key principles define what a learner-centred system would look like and what each of the principles implies. The system envisaged would:

- be easy to understand and navigate;
- offer excellent insights on, and access to the world of work;
- operate coherently and collaboratively, with appropriate governance arrangements;
- operate in a transparent and accountable environment;
- be market-led with strong employer engagement;
- be performance driven;
- attract an ambitious and adaptive workforce;
- embrace innovation and creativity;
- gain more from current and future technologies;
- respond to the diversity of opportunities and needs across Scotland;
- offer the country exceptional public value; and
- have strong international connections and impacts.

Key recommendations also include:

- Skills Development Scotland should provide public information about the system of resource allocation for Modern Apprenticeships to different age-groups, sectors and geographical areas of Scotland, including the rationale for year-on-year changes in priorities and distribution;
- the Scottish Government, through its funding agencies, should create a new and public institutional performance framework for learning and training providers - a balanced scorecard based on their profile of aggregate outcomes/destinations, customer satisfaction levels and quality, balanced against evidence of the economic, social and labour market characteristics of their catchment areas;
- the Scottish Government should undertake a fundamental review of how post-16 education, vocational training and workforce development is financed. The system brings benefits to individuals, employers and society, so the funding for the system should be the shared responsibility of individuals, employers and the public sector;
- at the regional and local level there are many important roles that businesses of every size can play in the school, skills and vocational education systems. At the level of each local authority (or combination of local authorities) there should be established a Business-Education Network to co-ordinate and extend the wide range of connections that exist (or will be created in the coming years) between businesses, schools, colleges, and training providers. Some places in Scotland already have a vehicle of this kind. The Networks should be co-funded from the private and public sectors; and
- in order to tighten relationships between learning and training providers and employers, and to enhance the quality and relevance of training, the vocational training system in Scotland should consider how best to enhance the Continuous Professional Development opportunities on offer to its workforce, using the Austrian model as a trigger for discussion.

## 1<sup>st</sup> August – New programmes to help people into work in Wales begin

New **contractual agreements** to deliver the Welsh Government's Apprenticeships, Traineeships, and Steps to Employment programmes, and provide more opportunities to young people, have now begun.

- Apprenticeships is the Welsh Government's flagship programme for learners in employment;
- Traineeships is a new scheme to help unemployed young people aged 16 to 18 enter work or learning at a higher level; and
- the new Steps to Employment programme will assist non-employed adults, not eligible for JobCentre Plus training, back into work.

The £125m Work Based Learning arrangements, which will run for three years, are expected to be part financed by the European Social Fund through the Welsh Government. The new arrangements will also see the number of lead providers reduced from 66 to 24, with the aim of creating '*better alignment*' between the Work Based Learning network and 14-19 partnerships.

## 22<sup>nd</sup> August – £1.6m for skills in the Justice and Safer Communities sector in Wales

Minister for Local Government and Communities, Carl Sargeant has **announced** that a £2.8m project to '*improve the skills of individuals working in Wales' justice sector and deliver more efficient services to the public*' has received an EU funding boost.

Led by Skills for Justice, the Leadership Integrated for Tomorrow (LIFT) programme has been awarded over £1.6m from the European Social Fund through the Welsh Government. The LIFT project has been designed to encourage better information and data sharing practices, exchange knowledge and experience as well as ensure smooth co-operation between public, private and third sector service providers.

Working closely with employers, the project includes support for probation officers, drug workers, prison officers, court managers and Womens Aid workers as well as targeting employees *'who may have otherwise taken a back seat because of the pressure on front line delivery'*. The EU funding will be used to develop accredited training courses for:

- under-represented groups across the sector at aspiring, first line and middle management grades;
- leadership skills;
- performance management skills; and
- process improvement skills.

## New Faces and Awards

### 24<sup>th</sup> August – Department for Education confirms appointments to Ofsted's Board

Education secretary Michael Gove has **confirmed** a number of appointments to the Board of Ofsted. Linda Farrant, Andy Palmer, Paul Snell CBE, Sir Alan Steer and Professor Geoff Whitty CBE have been appointed to serve as Ofsted board members for three years. John Roberts CBE has been re-appointed for three years.

Ofsted's Chair, Baroness Morgan of Huyton, said *'I am delighted to welcome our new Board members, bringing with them the skills and experience to make a valuable contribution to Ofsted, the Board and those who use or experience the services that we inspect and regulate. I am especially pleased that the Board is strengthened by the addition of members with adult skills, higher education, social care and schools – as recommended by the Education Select Committee– as well as the wider skills needed on a public board. I look forward to working with the new Board members over the coming years.'*

## 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](mailto:angela.nartey@LSIS.org.uk).

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