

LSIS Policy Update

7 May – 24 May 2010



Further education, skills and the economy

Stop Press – May 24th – Details of £6.2 billion cuts in spending in 2010-11

Chancellor George Osborne and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury David Laws have **announced** details of how the government will save over £6 billion from spending during this financial year. These savings have been found by cutting *'waste and low value programmes'* across Government.

The areas that have been identified for protection from in-year cuts are Schools, Sure Start and spending on education for 16-19 year-olds. £500 million out of the £6.2 billion savings will be used to *'improve Britain's growth potential and create a fairer society, by reinvesting in further education, apprenticeships and social housing'*. Cuts of particular relevance to the sector include:

- Cuts of £836 million from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills; and £670 million from the Department for Education.
- £320m from elements of employment programmes, including ending further rollout of temporary jobs through the Young Person's Guarantee (the 'Future Jobs Fund') and removing recruitment subsidies from the 'Six-Month Offer';
- £200m from the university budget which will mean 10,000 extra places rather than the 20,000 that had been announced. These will generate 8,000 extra full-time undergraduate places and 2,000 part-time places this autumn.
- £270m from *'lower value'* RDA spending of which £74m to come from BIS^[1];
- £80m from closing the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA), saving £10m in this financial year.

In more detail:

- £200m will be saved by refocusing the Train to Gain budget on apprenticeships and college buildings. This will provide £150m to fund 50,000 new apprenticeship places, focused on small and medium enterprises; and £50m for investment in Further Education colleges, which they will be able to leverage to create a £150m fund to provide capital investment for up to 50 individual schemes.
- £1.165bn of savings will be made in Local Government by reducing grants to Local Authorities. Ring-fences around over £1.7bn of grants to local authorities in 2010-11 will be removed, *'to give them greater flexibility to re-shape their budgets and find savings in the areas set out above, while maintaining the quality of services to their customers'*; and

[1] The remainder to be shared between CLG, DECC and DEFRA.

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- £320m will be saved from reducing and then stopping government contributions to the Child Trust Fund. The Government intends to introduce legislation to scale back payments from August this year and then stop payments from 1 Jan 2011.

Tomorrow in the Queen's Speech and later in the spending review, the Government *'will launch a programme of structural reform to raise productivity and permanently improve the quality of the key frontline services people receive'*.

May 20th – The coalition's programme for government

The Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government has published **'Our programme for government'** which puts forward the programme for partnership government. The 36 page document sets out the government plans to *'tackle'* the deficit, *'unlock'* social mobility and *'oversee a radical redistribution of power away from Westminster and Whitehall to councils, communities and homes across the nation'*.

Items of particular relevance to the learning and skills sector include:

- seeking ways to support the creation of apprenticeships, internships, work pairings, and college and workplace training places as part of our wider programme to get Britain working.
- reviewing support for part-time students in terms of loans and fees.
- improving the quality of vocational education, including increasing flexibility for 14–19 year olds and creating new Technical Academies as part of our plans to diversify schools provision.
- publishing performance data on educational providers, as well as past exam papers.
- setting colleges free from direct state control and abolish many of the further education quangos including a statement that *'Public funding should be fair and follow the choices of students'*.
- publishing more information about the costs, graduate earnings and student satisfaction of different university courses.
- drawing on a range of Service Academies to offer pre-employment training and work placements for unemployed people.

May 20th – David Willetts MP delivers first speech as Minister for Universities and Science

David Willetts MP has delivered his first **speech** as a minister in the Department for Business Innovation and Skills. David Willetts defended diverse provision, provided that it is of a high quality and provided that learners can make informed choice *'I'm not going to judge what people study or what colleges and universities offer. Diverse provision of a high quality can only be a good thing. My aim is to make sure that students have all the information they need to make a well-informed decision about the value of a course'*.

David Willetts acknowledged the breadth of purpose and benefits of learning *'there is enormous value in further and higher education which cannot just be captured by utilitarian calculation... I*

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recognise the importance of all those courses and degrees which – through their rigour – increase the intellectual capability of the nation and its skills base. Excellence and rigour were described as the *'watchwords'* of further education and the speech included a discussion on the need for academic and vocational education to be in balance. There was a strong focus on rigour and excellence in the learning and skills sector with the avoidance of *'clunky, bureaucratic controls'*. He also expressed concern about interventions by previous governments that have undermined vocational qualifications.

David Willets stressed the need for the provision of a wide range of routes into further and higher education, including through high-quality apprenticeships, particularly for young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). Apprenticeships were highlighted as a route to technician level skills, with the development of a technician class in Britain described as *'crucial to the national interest'*. In reference to the 837,000 NEETs, David Willetts said *'We cannot afford that waste of human potential – it is bad for our economy and blights the lives of individuals. That is why we must provide a wide range of routes into further and higher education'*.

May 19th – John Hayes MP speaks at NIACE policy conference

Minister for Further Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, John Hayes MP **addressed** attendees at a NIACE policy conference. Saying that *'Adult learning is not a luxury'* John Hayes described adult education as an essential component of the education system which could bring *'hope and the promise of a better society founded on social mobility, social justice and social cohesion'*.

John Hayes also said *'I know that some of you may have been concerned that adult education is not mentioned in the coalition agreement... But please bear in mind that the document clarifies areas of potential difference between my party and the Liberal Democrats, rather than those on which we agree. I want to offer a further assurance that in the conversations I've had so far with our new Secretary of State, Vince Cable, arguing the case for adult learning, as I am certainly prepared to do, I have found a kindred spirit... If we want to build a bigger society as the Prime Minister has missioned us to, then we must recognise the value of community learning to civil society'*.

May 19th – The Coalition's plan to build a 'Big Society'

As part of the new coalition agreement, the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister have announced their cross-government policy programme to *'create a climate that empowers local people and communities'*. **Building the Big Society** states *'We want to give citizens, communities and local government the power and information they need to come together, solve the problems they face and build the Britain they want'*.

The policies outlined include:

- piloting a new National Citizen Service which aims to give 16 year olds the opportunity to *'develop the skills needed to be active and responsible citizens, mix with people from different backgrounds, and start getting involved in their communities'*

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- supporting mutuals, co-operatives, charities and social enterprises and giving them greater involvement in the running of public services. Funds from dormant bank accounts will be used to establish a Big Society Bank, which will provide new finance for neighbourhood groups, charities, social enterprises and other non-governmental bodies
- increasing access to government-held data through a new *'right to data'* for citizens to ensure Government data is published. The Police will be obliged to publish monthly crime statistics
- extending powers for local government by giving a general power of competence to local councils and conducting a comprehensive review of local government finance *'in order to help remove restrictions that limit the work of local councils'*.

Nat Wei, one of Teach First's founding team, has been appointed advisor to the Government on Big Society and will be made a member of the House of Lords. He will work alongside the new Minister for Civil Society, Nick Hurd, to lead on the delivery of the programme.

David Cameron said *'Today is the start of a deep and serious reform agenda to take power away from politicians and give it to people'*.

Minister for the Cabinet Office The Rt Hon Francis Maude MP, said: *'Today heralds the end of Whitehall bureaucrats micro-managing public services – it's not efficient and it doesn't work. People know what is best for them and their community, and it is Government's job to make this happen as cost-effectively as possible'*.

May 17th – Chancellor announces emergency budget

The Chancellor, George Osborne MP has **announced** that the emergency Budget will be held on Tuesday 22 June. It is expected to contain measures to *'boost enterprise, create a fairer tax system, and demonstrate to the world that Britain is open for business'*.

In his speech, George Osborne announced the introduction of a new independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) which will initially work on a non-statutory basis to make *'independent forecasts for the economy and the public finances'*. The Office will be headed by Sir Alan Budd, who will be joined by Geoffrey Dicks and Graham Parker with a secretariat of civil servants. The initial forecasts are due to be produced ahead of the emergency budget and as such, this will be the first Budget of the new Government and will be the first Budget where the OBR will provide the forecasts for the economy and public finances. For each Budget and Pre-Budget Report, the OBR will confirm whether the Government's policy is consistent with a *'better than 50 per cent chance'* of achieving that objective.

George Osborne also confirmed that the Conservative – Liberal Democrat coalition has agreed that £6bn of savings to non-front line public services should be made this financial year and that *'the great majority'* of these savings will be allocated to reduce the deficit. It is anticipated that these savings will be achievable *'without affecting the quality of key public services'*. The specific allocations of in-year savings will be announced on 24 May, *'These will include significant reductions to the cost of quangos'*.

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May 17th – Government ministers and their responsibilities

The Cabinet Office has published details of government ministers and their responsibilities. In the main, they are as follows:

- Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service: The Rt Hon David Cameron MP;
- Deputy Prime Minister, Lord President of the Council: The Rt Hon Nick Clegg MP;
- Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills: Dr Vincent Cable MP;
- Secretary of State for Work and Pensions: The Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP;
- Secretary of State for Education: Michael Gove MP; and
- Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government: Eric Pickles MP.

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

Minister of State (Minister for Universities and Science) – David Willetts MP

Minister of State – Mark Prisk MP

Minister of State – John Hayes MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State – Edward Davey MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State – John Penrose MP (jointly with the Department for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sports)

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State – Baroness Wilcox

A full list of **appointments** is available on the cabinet office website. The **BIS ministerial responsibilities** are as follows:

Rt Hon Vince Cable MP will have overall responsibility for the department strategy and all policies, overall responsibility for BIS budget, particular focus on business and banking issues, and will be the lead Cabinet Minister for reducing regulatory burdens across Government.

David Willetts MP will look across all departmental business at strategic priorities, higher education (including HEFCE and Student Loans Company), science and research (including Research Councils), life sciences, innovation, also responsible for the Technology Strategy Board, National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA), Energy Technologies Institute, the National Measurement Office, the Design Council, the UK Accreditation Service and the British Standards Institute and Space. He is also a member of cabinet.

John Hayes MP will work across Further education, adult skills, Skills Funding Agency, skills strategy, lifelong learning, informal adult learning, apprenticeships, UK Commission for Employment and Skills, Sector Skills Councils, Workplace Training reforms and the qualifications reform programme.

May 14th – Prime minister addresses BIS staff

In his first departmental visit, the Prime Minister, with Secretary of State Vince Cable and Universities and Science Minister David Willetts, **addressed** BIS staff in London. David Cameron said *'We face huge economic challenges and I think it is so important we demonstrate that this economy is open for business, that we want to promote trade overseas, we want to get our economy moving, we want to get banks lending... I see this as a big*

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economic department with a huge task in front of it and want all of you to work together to deliver that.'

He listed the key challenges as being:

- Making difficult choices to reduce the deficit;
- Providing assistance on jobs; and
- Creating a longer term vision for the UK economy.

May 18th - Vince Cable Establishes Advisory Group on Business and Economic Policy

Business Secretary Vince Cable has **announced** the creation of a new group of experts to advise him on business and economic policy.

The Business Advisory Group will act as a sounding board for the Secretary of State and will be chaired by Lord Oakeshott of Seagrove Bay who will report directly to him. The panel will take the form of an ad hoc advisory board and its advice will be private and informal.

Secretary of State for Business Vince Cable said *'Tackling the challenges facing business requires new ideas from a range of experts. Economic knowledge and commercial experience are essential to developing policy and this new panel will be critical to finding new ways to move the economy forward'*.

May 12th – LLUK produces guide to developing learner's employability skills

Lifelong Learning UK have produced an application guide ***Developing learner's Employability Skills*** which aims to define the skills, knowledge and understanding that teachers, tutors or trainers will need to support the development of employability skills in their learners.

The application guide focuses on the four personal skills required of learners to progress in the world of work – self-management; thinking and problem solving; working together and communicating; and understanding the business.

The guide is an application of *The New Overarching Professional Standards for Teachers, Tutors and Trainers in the Lifelong Learning Sector* and provides detail for the standards relating to employability.

May 17th – CBI reports on demand for highly-skilled staff during the recovery

The Confederation of British Industry's has published ***Ready to grow: business priorities for education and skills***, sponsored by qualifications awarding body EDI. The report publishes

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the results of an employer survey of 694 employers. Their study found that 63% of companies saw investment in skills as very important to their strategic objectives and future growth and 72% planned to maintain or increase spending on training and development, 28% planned to cut training budgets.

The report found that employers are concerned about the basic skills of their current workforce. The biggest problem is with IT skills, where two-thirds (66%) of employers report concern. However, half of employers are also concerned by employees' basic literacy (52%) and numeracy (49%) skills. The report also finds that companies need more people with STEM qualifications.

May 15th – Adult Learners' Week

Now in its 19th year, **Adult Learners' Week**, *'the UK's largest and longest running learning campaign'* took place from 15-21 May. The event is designed to encourage adults, whatever their age and background, to engage in learning. The campaign promotes the benefits of all kinds of learning, whether it is for fun or leading to a qualification. Thousands of events and taster activities took place. The event is founded and co-ordinated by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE).

During Adult Learners Week 2009, 53% of the people who attended an event and 70% of people who called the Careers Advice helpline took up some kind of learning activity because of the campaign.

NIACE has **published** the results of a survey showing that adult participation in learning has risen to its highest level in a decade, with the largest increases in groups under-represented in formal education. Key findings include:

- Current participation, having fallen to its lowest levels for a decade in 2009, rose by three percentage points to 21%;
- People reporting no learning since leaving school have fallen dramatically from 37% in 2009 to 31% in 2010;
- Overall, 47% of adults expect to take up learning in the next three years;
- Younger adults are much more likely to take up learning than older adults, and for those between 17 and 54, the younger the age group, the larger the increase in participation; and
- Current participation among adults from minority ethnic groups totals 36% - a 10 percentage point increase on 2009. Current participation for white groups is 19% (2009: 17 percent).
- Participation from adults from social class DE (comprising the unemployed, semi-skilled and unskilled adults and retired people) increased to 30%, a 6 percentage point increase on 2009.

May 15th – Economic fears get more adults learning

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) has published its adult participation survey. ***A Change for the Better*** reports that economic uncertainty appears to

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have had a huge impact on the number of adults who are in learning or who are thinking about learning in the future.

The report presents a number of findings including, that:

- current participation, having fallen to its lowest levels for a decade in 2009, rose by three percentage points to 21 per cent - lower than the highs experienced between 1996 and 2003, but reversing recent trends;
- women (23 per cent current and 44 per cent current/recent learners) continue to take part in larger numbers than men (20 per cent and 41 per cent respectively); and
- three in five (60 per cent) full-time workers plan to take up learning - a rise of 13 percentage points since 2009; 58 per cent of part-time workers plan to study - a rise of nine percentage points on 2009; and for people seeking work there is a jump of 17 percentage points, with 67 per cent planning to study.

This survey continues the series documenting adult participation in learning in the UK. Using responses of around 5,000 adults, it offers key findings, breaking down trends in participation and future intentions to learn by gender, socio-economic class, age, employment and the regions. It provides up-to-date data as well as a valuable means for comparison over time.

May 11th – 157 Group publishes two papers on colleges and their localities

The 157 Group has published two papers which look at colleges and their roles in their localities. ***‘Learning and skills Needs Local Leadership’*** and ***‘Strong Colleges build strong communities’***.

The first report makes the case for the decentralisation of the planning arrangements for FE including the need to reduce the cost and complexity of the current structure and the need to take more notice of local priorities and circumstances when shaping provision. The report also argues that improving the performance of public services requires the active engagement of those at the front line, not just as providers but in the process of policymaking.

The second report states that large urban colleges play a unique role in helping to build stronger communities. The case for this includes that no other educational organisations bring together the diverse mix of learners that is represented in a typical FE college and that no other organisations have the reach that enables colleges to engage with all sectors of the community, from the voluntary sector to private employers. As such, colleges can play this role most effectively when they are given maximum scope to *‘tailor their programmes to local needs and aspirations’*. The report argues that arrangements for planning and funding FE should give greater weight to local articulation of need and less weight to nationally set targets.

May 14th – DWP letter to Welfare to Work providers

DWP had issued an early **letter** to all Welfare to Work providers acknowledging the need for answers to the *‘many and pressing’* questions on contracted employment provision thrown up by the election of a Conservative – Liberal Democrat coalition government.

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The subsequent coalition document issued by HM Government does however state:

- We will end all existing welfare to work programmes and create a single welfare to work programme to help all unemployed people get back into work.
- We will realign contracts with welfare to work service providers to reflect more closely the results they achieve in getting people back into work.
- We will reform the funding mechanism used by government to finance Welfare to Work programmes to reflect the fact that initial investment delivers later savings through lower benefit expenditure, including creating an integrated work programme with outcome funding based upon the DEL/AME¹ switch.

May 18th – Big Lottery Fund announces £4m funding for young people

The Big Lottery Fund (BIG) has **announced** that more than £4 million in ‘*Lottery good cause money*’ will support marginalised young people, including investment in training and job opportunities. The grants come from BIG’s Reaching Communities programme which aims ‘*to help those most in need and build stronger communities*’.

As an example of the projects that are being supported, Tees Valley YMCA has received £407,199 for its Options project. 16-25 year olds affected by issues such as low literacy, substance misuse and mental health or emotional issues will have the opportunity to take up one of 24 paid trainee posts as fitness instructors, housing support workers or youth workers. This will involve accredited training up to NVQ level two and on the job training.

Sanjay Dighe, Chair of the Big Lottery Fund’s England Committee, said ‘*Today’s funding will help strengthen some fantastic organisations providing young people with services that steer them onto a positive route in life or support them with challenges they face*’.

14-19 and Schools

May 18th – DfE comment on spending commitments

The Department for Education, formerly, the Department for Children Schools and Families has made a statement on departmental spending commitments. A DfE spokesperson said ‘*The Department for Education has not yet made a decision on Building Schools for the Future (BSF) funding or any other capital programmes. The Government is committed to a full comprehensive spending review in the autumn and ministers will shortly be considering their spending priorities, which will take into account all areas of spending including school capital*’.

¹ A funding mechanism that would allow the DWP to fund welfare-to-work programmes out of the benefits savings created, rather than solely from the department’s discretionary budget.

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Higher Education

May 19th – OFFA report on widening access to universities

Sir Martin Harris, Director of the Office for Fair Access has **published** *What more can be done to widen access to highly selective universities?* The report was commissioned by the Government in November 2009. In his report, Sir Martin Harris states that it is both socially unacceptable and economically wasteful that too few talented people from disadvantaged backgrounds realise their full potential.

The report acknowledges that highly selective universities are already making ‘*considerable efforts to widen participation*’ among disadvantaged young people and contends that widening participation as a whole has been very successful, particularly over the last five years. The report also confirms that the single most important factor determining the probability of a student obtaining a place on one of the most academically demanding degree courses is the strength of the student’s own A level (or equivalent) results.

The report argues that closer collaboration between selective universities, schools and colleges is needed to identify talented young people from poorer families who are ‘most able but least likely to apply to highly selective universities and courses, and recommends that selective universities should increase the coverage and volume of successful extended outreach programme targeted at the most able students.

The report also identifies the importance of giving comprehensive and impartial advice and guidance over a period of years in order to increase aspiration and attainment and guide students in choosing the right subjects to meet the entry requirements of highly selective universities and courses.

‘Right at the heart of the matter is the need to ensure that those young people with the potential to succeed in a research-intensive university, but who do not currently choose to apply, are identified as early as possible. This must certainly not be later than the end of year 9,’ says Sir Martin.

Sir Martin also recommends that selective universities should:

- employ peripatetic staff to raise aspirations and encourage pupils to consider applying to highly selective universities, supplementing the academic and financial advice and guidance provided by schools and further education colleges, particularly at the ages of 14 and 16 when GCSE and A level subject choices are made;
- provide summer schools targeted at the ‘most able least likely’ students, along the lines of Sutton Trust summer schools;
- review and evaluate their expenditure on bursaries, scholarships and additional outreach to improve the way they target talented disadvantaged students and ensure money is spent on the most effective methods of widening access to highly selective universities; and
- make public how well they have met their own widening participation targets in respect of actual entrants as well as applications to their particular university.

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Devolved administrations

May 12th – Scottish learning support scheme extended

The Scottish government has extended the **ILA500 scheme**, a scheme of financial support which has provided partial fees support of £500 to more than 400 part-time students on low incomes or benefits during the past academic year. It is hoped the scheme will provide *'immediate, short-term benefit'* to people to take up further study and either retrain or enhance their career prospects as they are affected by the downturn, whether in the workforce, facing redundancy or unemployed.

ILA (Individual Learner Account) funding can be used with approximately 390 approved learning providers across Scotland, offering around 22,000 courses. This includes colleges, universities, private training providers, voluntary and community-based providers and distance-learning providers. Changes made last year have opened up the level of qualifications available. The scheme now supports people with higher level qualifications including graduates who may find themselves temporarily unemployed - or on reduced incomes – to retrain on a part-time basis at a similar or higher level during the economic downturn.

Courses supported by the funding include counselling, HR management, law, legal practice, teaching qualifications, business studies, maths, sciences and IT. ILAs are available to part-time students on incomes of £22,000 per year or less. This academic year 422 people used ILA500 funding for postgraduate support.

May 18th – Education funding report unveiled by Welsh Education Minister

A **report** suggesting how more money can reach education front line services has been published by Education Minister Leighton Andrews. The report analyses £4.1 billion of the annual expenditure on the education system in Wales, of which direct funding for learning and teaching and other education expenditure accounts for 68 per cent of the total. The remaining 32 per cent is made up of support services, such as service management and financial administration.

It considers the numbers working in education administration, and identifies opportunities to move resources from administration to the delivery of front line services. The key opportunities for exploration are grouped under two key themes:

- simplifying governance – which includes continuing to look for opportunities to simplify the structure of grant schemes; and
- standardising and sharing provision – which includes exploring the opportunity for further development of more regional consortia sharing educational support. There may also be more scope for schools to form clusters to share resources and facilities.

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Education Minister Leighton Andrews said *'Much has already been done across the public sector in Wales, specifically within education to deliver efficiencies and improve services to achieve the highest possible standards of education and training... The review is not about cuts in funding, but freeing up resources by changing the balance in funding between front line and support services... This review suggests some practical ideas and opportunities, laying strong foundations for action'*.

May 14th – British Gas opens UK's first Green Skills Training Centre in Wales

The British Gas Green Skills Training Centre in Tredegar, South Wales, has been officially opened by Carwyn Jones, First Minister of Wales.

The centre *'is a first for the UK'* and aims to train over 1,300 people each year, including local long term unemployed people. The Heads of the Valleys has the lowest employment rate in Wales – 64 per cent, compared with 71 per cent nationally. Developed in partnership with the Welsh Assembly Government, JobMatch, Jobcentre Plus, SummitSkills² and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, the centre will offer training and qualifications for would-be energy efficiency assessors, installers of new green technologies as well as upskilling opportunities for British Gas engineers.

The Centre aims to provide the best possible hands-on practice and experience which reflect the challenges trainees could encounter as qualified energy assessors or installation engineers.

Local Government and Public Sector

May 16th – Will Hutton to lead public sector pay review

The Government has **announced** a review to look at public sector pay. The review will be led by Will Hutton, a decision that has been welcomed by the FDA (formerly the First Division Association), the senior public servants' union.

May 21st – NHS service change to be led by clinicians and patients

Health Secretary Andrew Lansley has said that the NHS must make sure that patient outcomes and clinical evidence are at the heart of any changes to health services and not be driven from the top down. He stated that NHS services must: focus on improving patient outcomes; consider patient choice; have support from GP commissioners; and be based on sound clinical evidence.

² SummitSkills is the Sector Skills Council for the building services engineering sector.

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It is anticipated that this change will provide an opportunity for GPs to work with community leaders and their local authorities to take the reins and steer their local services to improve quality standards and outcomes

Health Secretary Andrew Lansley said *'We are committed to devolving power to local communities – to the people, patients, GPs and councils who are best placed to determine the nature of their local NHS services... Local decision-making is essential to improve outcomes for patients and drive up quality'*.

Third Sector

May 18th – Nick Hurd appointed Minister for Civil Society

Nick Hurd has been **appointed** as the Minister for Civil Society, responsible for charities, social enterprises and voluntary organisations in the Cabinet Office, following an announcement by the Prime Minister's office.

Speaking to Cabinet Office staff, Nick Hurd, alongside the Minister for the Cabinet Office, Francis Maude, has announced that Government policy will focus on three fundamental issues:

- Making it easier to run a charity, social enterprise or voluntary organisation
- Getting more resources into the sector: strengthening its independence and resilience
- Making it easier for sector organisations to work with the State

Nick Hurd, Minister for Civil Society, said *'It is the sector's commitment and ability to support and mobilise people across the country that puts it at the very centre of our mission to deliver better public services and build the Big Society... We are committed to bringing a clear vision to the sector that will mean charities, social enterprises and voluntary organisations are easier to run and not overwhelmed by interference and bureaucracy'*.

The government's coalition document states *'The Government believes that the innovation and enthusiasm of civil society is essential in tackling the social, economic and political challenges that the UK faces today. We will take action to support and encourage social responsibility, volunteering and philanthropy, and make it easier for people to come together to improve their communities and help one another'*.

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Equality and Diversity

May 11th – Government Equalities Office ministers

The Prime Minister has appointed **The Rt Hon Theresa May MP** as Minister for Women and Equalities in addition to her appointment as Home Secretary. **Lynne Featherstone MP** is the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Equalities).

New Faces and Awards

May 21st – IfL elects a new Board

The Institute for Learning (IfL) has elected a new **non-executive board** completing the organisation's overhaul of governance. The board will provide strategic direction for the IfL and comprises Govind Bharadia, Anne Brookes, John Chorley, Sue Crowley (Chair), Lisette D'Cruz, Rania Hafez, Jacki Hughes, Ed Sallis and Mick Smith. The three stakeholder representatives are Association of Colleges chief executive Martin Doel, Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers executive director James Noble- Rogers, and University and College Union national official Dan Taubman.

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Contact the LSIS policy team

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