

Countdown

a weekly email briefing distributed
to work-based learning providers

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'One voice' representing the providers of quality workforce development skills

Working with government and employers to develop policies and deliver high quality, learner centred, employer focused, demand-led skills development, valued by all.

Larger contracts? Fewer providers? Would the provider infrastructure cope?

ALP chief looks into his crystal ball.

ALP Chief Executive, Graham Hoyle, has been collecting some disparate jigsaw pieces over the last few months and predicts a concerted threat to the plethora of small 'LSC' contracts that have resolutely refused to go away during the last decade.

The SFA is to be 'lean and mean,' heading up a new bureaucracy busting culture, with less staff to manage the mountainous provider base. Across the way, DWP is effectively reducing its multi-contract heritage by signing up a (very) few prime contractors, expecting them to manage the diverse provider base. The quality searchlight continues to shine on many of the smaller and newer providers that entered the market – against the trend – behind the open tendering initiative that heralded in Train to Gain. Indeed, ALP itself has criticised the ease with which many new, often unproven, providers were admitted a couple of years ago. This is now challenging the hard won quality standards that had been secured by the long established, high delivering independent providers that have operated for up to forty years.

Indeed, the last couple of years have seen an unpredicted increase in the number of providers holding contracts. The 4,000 or so in 1990 had been more than halved when the LSC started up in 2000, with a continuing reduction being maintained until 2006/07.

"In my view," says Graham, "the new regime will very quickly start to look at ways of reducing the numbers of contracts which have to be, in their view, expensively serviced and managed. This will undoubtedly lead to the development of plans to increase the minimum contract values, and it is vital that providers, large and small, start planning proactively to deal with such a scenario. A reduction in the number of contracts will immediately be interpreted by many as an attempt to reduce the number of providers. That is not necessarily correct, and indeed in many cases not desirable. It will mean, for many, a different way of working and different types of association/collaboration between providers."

"Under immediate threat from such a move would be small, high quality deliverers who are probably already struggling with the 'non-training' imperatives embodied in their contract. It would also threaten a large number of colleges of Further Education who have entered the Apprenticeship/Train to Gain arena over recent years, who are now operating very modestly sized contracts."

"Dealing with such a direction of travel will be critical to the effectiveness of the provider infrastructure and its capacity to cope with ever changing demands from both Government and employers. It must be got right!"

"Getting it right will not come from the well-meant planning of civil servants behind secretive, closed doors. They have tried this before and come up with totally unworkable consortia and types of collaboration driven by a theoretical design based on 'neatness' rather than collaborations based on

sound business planning, with an eye to real sustainability, both financial and in terms of high quality service to clients/customers.”

“I predict that there will be a major attempt to raise minimum contract values and so reduce the number of contracts in time for the 2011/12 contracting year, which means that a new infrastructure map needs to be in place by this time next year. Providers need to think through – strategically – the threats and opportunities for their organisation of such a shift, and start putting new delivery arrangements in place during 2010.”

To facilitate this ALP will be arranging several workshops around the country during the next three/four months, designed to get providers focusing on how they should manage such a development, and realise that they dare not simply wait to be forced into an unworkable scenario designed by policy makers and funding agencies.

Graham Hoyle is quite clear on what needs to be done, “Providers have got to come together very quickly to think through how **they** will manage this change agenda to ensure that everyone with a future contribution to make is in the right place at the right time. Providers must grasp this nettle and be given a reasonable time (it will never be enough time) to redesign the delivery infrastructure. There will undoubtedly be a smaller number of (larger) contracts. It must be for providers to determine whether there will be a smaller number of providers. The ball is in our court – or if it isn’t, it must be placed there.”

ALP publishes paper on youth pre-employment provision

Youth unemployment has had a high profile in recent months, and with this in mind ALP has been concerned at the relative lack of support and provision for 16 and 17 year olds who find themselves out of work. DWP welfare to work programmes do not cover this age group, whilst Entry to Employment, (e2e), widely recognised as one of the most successful programmes of its type, is due to be phased out and absorbed into Foundation Learning - which as a qualifications framework does not perform the same task and therefore cannot be seen as a suitable replacement.

ALP has therefore pulled a number of policy strands together across welfare to work, skills and learner financial support, and in consultation with members of its Foundation Group and Welfare to Work Forum, has published a position paper "Pre-Employment Provision for Unemployed 16/17 Year Olds". A copy has now been made available on the ALP website [here](#). Copies have been submitted at senior levels within DCSF, DWP and BIS and other stakeholders, and we hope to encourage a discussion that will help to ensure that the youngest elements of the working age workforce are not denied the pre-employment support that the rest of us may well take for granted.

E-learning Content Creation (ECC) providers notified

All 22 ECC providers have received letters from ALP informing them of the outcome of their ECC bids. 3 work based learning providers have been successful in sharing the £1.1m available. The projects will be developing e-learning content over the next 6 months which will be made available to the WBL sector.

David Rowe, RSC WBL adviser working with the ALP ECC team said “The ECC programme represents a unique opportunity to pump prime the development of wide ranging but class leading and high learning value e-learning materials. I have been working closely with the core ALP team and I look forward to establishing similar working relationships with other agencies to provide an effective support process for the lead providers and consortium members during the life of their projects.”

ALP will keep you posted on the progress of the ECC projects via Countdown and the [ALP e-learning website](#).

LLUK Impact of Standards and Qualifications Survey 2010

Professional standards for teachers, tutors, trainers and the associated qualifications

Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) is conducting research into the impact of standards and qualifications (developed since 2007) on Work-Based Learning (WBL) Providers, FE College, and Adult and Community Learning (ACL) workforce. The aims of the research are to:

- *Identify strengths and weaknesses of the standards and qualifications*
- *Explore the use of the standards and qualifications by practitioners and employers*
- *Identify any issues to be addressed related to awareness and utilisation of the standards and qualifications.*

The work includes exploring the impact of the professional standards for teachers, tutors, trainers and the associated qualifications (PTLLS/CTLLS/DTLLS) as well as other standards and qualifications associated with *Learner Involvement and Learning Support Practitioner*. The formal research began on the 1st February with the launch of an on-line survey for practitioners/organisations to respond to.

It's very important for all **ALP Members** with WBL provision to participate in the LLUK Standards & Qualification survey. To take part in the survey, please click [here](#). The survey closes on the **19th February 2010**.

Work Based Learning Providers and 14-19 Diploma Delivery Seminar

11th March – London

The [Learning and Skills Network](#) (LSN) commissioned by Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) recently conducted research into the roles, functions and training and development needs of staff that support Diploma delivery. *LSN would like to thank those members of ALP who helped them by completing their survey – they really appreciate your invaluable contribution!*

LSN are keen to include the perspective of WBL Providers in the next and final step of this research and would like to invite any independent WBL Providers involved in the Diplomas to a discussion on the findings from this research. This seminar will provide an opportunity to learn about current practices in this research area, and discussion of the roles, responsibilities and training and development needs of 14-19 Diploma support staff in FECs and WBLPs. There will also be an opportunity to network and discuss with colleagues from various levels of the system. This seminar is taking place on **11th March** from **10.00am-12.30pm** at the LSN offices in London and Paul Eeles, ALP's Director of Sector Reforms & 14-19 will be a guest speaker. As places are limited, please make sure to confirm your attendance in advance by contacting [Mary Dennison](#)

QCF Final Evaluation

QCDA is currently undertaking a final evaluation of the QCF Readiness Programme and Employer Engagement Programme to measure the effectiveness of the programme up until March 2010. The evaluation aims to measure the effectiveness of the programmes in terms of disseminating information, raising knowledge and building capacity amongst SSC/Bs, Awarding Organisations and Providers within the context of QCF. The surveys for the final QCF evaluation will close on **19th February 2010**. This will be your last chance to participate in the evaluation project. To take part in the online survey click [here](#)

Providers of the Future - Showcase Event

22nd April 2010 - Birmingham

As recently announced in Countdown (#453) ALP will be holding a Provider of the Future showcase event in April to promote successful Learning Innovation Grant (LIG) projects from independent learning providers within further education; further details about registering your interest and how to book delegate places are now available, click [here](#) to view. If you wish to support the showcase event by highlighting your winning LIG project, please email [Kate Simmons](#)

ALP Member Events



ALP Member Events are internal meetings organised by ALP and restricted to **Members**. If you want to attend and participate at one of these meetings then please register your interest by clicking on the meeting link below.

If any **Member** experiences difficulty registering online, please contact [Marilyn Harper](mailto:marilyn.harper@alp.org.uk) via email.

The following ALP Special Interest Groups are available for you to register:

[Train to Gain](#) 22nd February 2010 1.30pm – 3.30pm with tea/coffee on arrival. London

[Business Administration](#) 3rd March 2010 10.00am – 1.00pm followed by lunch. London

[Hospitality](#) 11th March 2010 10.00am (coffee) 10.30am – 1.00pm followed by lunch. London

[Engineering](#) 19th March 2010 10.00am (coffee) 10.30am – 1.00pm meeting concluding with lunch. Nottingham

[Land Based](#) 25th March 2010 10.00am (Coffee) 10.30am – 1.00pm Lunch provided. Coventry

*And don't forget **The ALP Conference 2010** which will be held on July 14th/15th 2010 at the Plaza Riverbank, Central London - make a date in your diaries!*

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