

Countdown

a weekly email briefing distributed
to work-based learning providers

Issue 457 26th February 2010

'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.

34 days to go to transfer to Local Authorities.....and independent providers still have many concerns!

Being so close to the Machinery of Government changes taking place you would expect providers to be confident concerning the changes that are about to take place. A recent member survey (the second of its type - the first was completed in September 2009) identifies some significant concern on the part of ALP members about the transfer from LSC to local authorities in particular. The main issues that fall out of the survey are the concern on the part of members about the lack of visibility they have within local authorities, and LAs' knowledge about the provider base. In addition, the vast majority of respondents to our survey are concerned about independent provider representation on 14-19 partnerships and regional planning groups. There is also a concern over the lack of detail of what is going to happen post 1st April. All of these concerns have been raised by ALP in our response to the national commissioning framework.

ALP understands that the LSC will be informing providers in a letter due to be sent to providers on Friday 5th March which LA/LAs they have been allocated to. This will be an important step for providers as they can then begin to forge the relationships they need to have with LA staff. Commenting on the survey Paul Eeles, ALP's Director of Sector Reforms, said "This close to the transfer of responsibilities, it is disappointing that despite some notable exceptions ALP members still feel that LAs don't understand either their contribution or the way in which they deliver their provision. I am hoping that the formal allocation of providers to LAs will begin to break down these concerns as providers forge what we hope will be valuable working relationships with LA officials." In terms of resolving member concerns over the representation of providers on the 14-19 Partnership Boards and Regional Planning Groups both ALP and AoC are going to be holding a meeting with React, the team supporting LAs as they take on their new responsibilities, to identify a plan of action.

ALP members can access the survey results [here](#).

In addition, members have the opportunity to speak directly to senior officials from local authorities, YPLA, SFA & NAS about the transition and the impact it will have on providers at a series of events in March in Manchester, London, Birmingham and Taunton. For further information please click [here](#)

Clarification on Functional Skills in Apprenticeships

At a meeting in London yesterday, organised by QCDA and attended by representatives from both BIS and DCSF, it was confirmed that learners starting an apprenticeship from September 2010 will be **exempt** from Functional Skills qualifications, if they have achieved;

- Key Skills Communication at the equivalent level or GCSE English (Grades A* - C) or A level or AS Level English Language, English Literature, or English Language and Literature (Grades A – E)
- Key Skills Application of Number at the equivalent level or GCSE Mathematics (Grades A* - C) or A level or AS level Mathematics, Pure Mathematics, or Further Mathematics (Grades A - E)
- Key Skills ICT at the equivalent level or GCSE ICT (Grades A* - C) or A level or AS level ICT

This ruling is laid out in the document 'Functional Skills Transition Arrangements Update' which can be accessed [here](#)

The Quality Assurance System for post-16 Learning

A Guide for Work Based Learning Providers

Plans are underway to introduce a new operating arrangement through the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) and local authorities (LAs), which will see the introduction of a new *Quality Assurance System*, (QAS) drawing together all the work that goes into ensuring learners and employers receive a quality experience from post-16 learning providers.

The details of the QAS are due to be published in April 2010. It has been written to help all providers understand what QAS is; how the individual aspects that support quality assurance will be brought together into a single, consistent and coherent system; and what this all means for all independent providers and further education colleges.

The primary purpose of QAS is to support the continual improvement of the whole of the post-16 learning and skills sector. LSC currently use Minimum Levels of Performance (MLPs) to set the baseline for quality standards, but although these are expected to continue for at least another year, in due course the *Framework for Excellence* (FfE) will be used as the primary measure of quality and outcomes. Although QAS builds on the well established and proven systems and processes with which post-16 learning providers will already be familiar, nevertheless some new elements will be introduced to reflect the new operating arrangements that come into force from 1st April 2010.

It is anticipated there will be a much clearer definition about how the elements of QAS will fit together with the Ofsted *Common Inspection Framework and Framework for Excellence* (FfE). ALP is therefore very pleased to announce and to confirm that *Mark Kaczmarek*, Deputy Director, FE Performance and Quality at the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) has agreed to participate in all four ALP Regional [MOG events](#) to offer valuable input about the implications of QAS in the new landscape, providing an opportunity for all **ALP Members** to learn more about the baseline for the new quality standard. There are still a few places available - to book your place click [here](#)

Also, make sure you have reserved your place for the [Brave New World: the new Ofsted Inspection Framework](#) event on 24th March which will also address the impact of new QAS standard with the common inspection framework.

Course Labelling

Skills for Growth published in October 2009 included a proposal aimed at encouraging providers in the skills sector to take ownership of reporting on their own performance. This was termed 'food labelling' incorporating a 'traffic light' methodology to indicate comparative quality.

ALP, AoC and Hoxley have been asked by the Department of Business, Innovation & Skills to explore the feasibility of this concept and recommend further action. We have therefore put together a short survey and are inviting members, through our different networks, to respond. The survey will only take a few minutes to complete and is available by clicking [CourseLabellingProviderSurveyALPFEB2010](#)

We would be grateful if you would submit your response by 5pm on Friday 5th March 2010. If you have any queries about the content of this survey, please contact David Tofts on 07795 333699 or at david.tofts@ntlworld.com

E-learning for providers– Your views count

Following the successful launch of the ILR e-learning module, and feedback gauged from providers on e-learning, The Data Service is now in the process of commissioning further e-learning modules.

The Training Needs Analysis conducted in November 2009 identified a provider need to develop new e-learning modules on Learning Aims Database (LAD) and Learner Information Suite (LIS) These modules are now to be developed to assist both new and more experienced users.

If you are working with the LAD/LIS and would like to shape the content of the new e-learning modules please take a few minutes to complete the [online questionnaire](#), and give us your feedback.

ALP's Machinery of Government Regional Meetings

-Manchester - Birmingham - London - Taunton 1-15 March

With just **one month** away before Local Authorities (LA) take full responsibility for the commissioning role for 16-19 funding. ALP is hosting a series of *Machinery of Government* regional meetings in March. This is an important event for all independent training providers with LSC contracts, to learn and grasp the impact of funding transfers and the ensuing changes this will bring from 1st April.

With key input from senior influential speakers from NAS, YPLA, SFA, LA and senior personnel from the [React Programme](#) (Raising Expectation Action Programme), these regional MoG meetings, chaired by Paul Eeles, ALP Director of Sector Reforms & 14-19, are an essential 'must attend' event.

We do hope you will be able to join us, but if you are unable to attend in person, please pass the information on within your organisation. There are still a few places left - to attend click [here](#).



ALP Member Events are internal meetings organised by ALP and restricted to **members only**. To attend, please register your interest by clicking on the meeting link below.

If any Member experiences difficulty registering online, please contact [Marilyn Harper](#) via email.

The following ALP Special Interest Groups (SIG) & Sector Strategic Issues Meetings (SIM) are now open for registration:

[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

[Welfare to Work](#) 15th March 2010, 1.30pm – 3.30pm Tea/coffee and biscuits on arrival. London

[Engineering](#) 19th March 2010, 10.00am (Coffee) 10.30am – 1.00pm followed by lunch. Nottingham

[Care Sector](#) 24th March 2010, 9.30am (Coffee) 10.00am – 3.30pm, lunch provided. Sheffield

[Land Based](#) 25th March 2010, 10.00am (Coffee) 10.30am – 1.00pm followed by lunch. 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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