

Working Together for Better Social inclusion, Grassroot Voices, Social Inclusion Policy and 2010

Tuesday July 14th 2009 Leicester YMCA

Introduction

Good Morning Colleagues,

Thank you for today's invitation. We are delighted to join colleagues across the region and very much hope our contribution will assist CEFET in achieving improved social inclusion, in particular for those vulnerable groups of people whom we serve, work alongside and/or represent.

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is responsible for commissioning and funding post 16 education and training (other than higher education). We fund schools, colleges, adult and community learning services, work based learning and other providers to deliver education and training.

From the outset, promoting inclusion, equality and diversity has been at the heart of our responsibilities. The Learning & Skills Act 2000 includes a duty for us 'to encourage individuals to undergo post 16 education and training and to encourage employers to participate in the provision of post 16 education and training'. The Act requires us to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between people from different racial groups, between men and women and between people with a disability and people without, AND to report annually how we have done this.

Our vision is that by 2010, young people and adults in England will have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and be part of a truly competitive workforce.

Much of our work evolves around our national Single Equality Scheme. As we move towards the challenges set out in the Leitch review, our strategy is designed to place inclusion, equality and diversity at the heart of what we do so that we develop a system in which all can benefit and no-one is excluded. Implementation of the Single Equality Scheme has enabled us to:

- Promoting equality of opportunity by reaching out to groups of peoples with low skills who are not currently involved in learning, improving access to different types of learning and improving learners' experience of the education and training they undertake
- Ensure that all learners succeed and can progress in ways that match their abilities and aspirations.

The regional landscape *which we serve* is constantly changing; along with this change The Learning and Skills agenda faces many challenges.

In terms of SKILLS

The impact of the economic down turn continues to be felt across the region. The downward trend in confidence, recruitment and investment continues, although this is slowing: recent figures suggest a growing minority of employers are planning to recruit new staff (this is particularly evident within part of the retail sector)

As employers continue to reduce costs and the economy contracts, the number of notified vacancies continues in a downward trend. There has been a 27% drop in the number of notified vacancies compared to last years figures and the employment rate has decreased by 0.2% in the last 12 months. In volume terms, employment is down by 5,000 on the year.

Manufacturing, Food and Construction sectors have seen the highest number of redundancies last June

Regional Claimant Figures compared to last year suggest an increase : Since May 2008

- Leicestershire claimant count has increased by 96.8% (11,948)
- Northampton claimant count has increased by 130.3% (10,623).

In Northants, our most prosperous sub region, logistics is a key sector due to its central location, but local haulage companies continue to warn rising fuel prices will see many transport business struggling to survive spiralling costs.

Against these figures, Incapacity benefit claimants continues to fall, Figures show a 7% drop on the year; a trend driven by the introduction of new Employment and Support Allowances (ESA) benefit, Pathways to Work and initiatives such as skills for Jobs.

Economic migrant activity continues to demonstrate a downward trend. The combined effect of relatively weak sterling and a relatively strong Eurozone is seeing skilled migrants beginning to leave the UK. As the downward trend continues, the East Midlands, like the rest of the UK, is clearly a less attractive destination for economic migrants.

Impact Upon LSC Funded Programme Performance

The economic downturn is affecting provider performance with programmes such as Skills for Jobs where job outcomes are harder to deliver. Although focuses on ultimately moving individuals into work remains a priority, options other options such as including volunteering or work experience as an interim measure are being considered;

Train to Gain

Guidance for providers is being drawn to remind them of the need to prioritise support for the response to Redundancy and Six Month Offer programmes. The on going constraint on T2G starts also has implications for the Skills Pledge and LAA activity, where t2G funding has been the cornerstone of our engagement.

The Apprenticeship programme continues to be the LSC provision most severely affected by the economic downturn. Engineering/Manufacturing has been the main sector affected. NAS colleagues are working hard to find suitable alternatives for displaced trainees.

Provider responsiveness – Across the region the FE sector is responding well to requests of Pre-employment training, making good use of their adult responsive budgets. Similarly the infrastructure arrangements for the Response to redundancy and the 6 month offer are all in place. *The biggest IES challenge now facing the LSC and its partners in the region* is to ensure the JCP, Nextstep referral process operates effectively and that providers are sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of all prospective learners.

IMPACT ON LEARNING IS ALSO EVIDENT

We recognise affects upon The 14 – 19 landscape. We know Regional NEET figures have increased by 0.3% in line with national levels. It may be worth noting, in our region Leicester, Derby and Derbyshire have the highest figures of NEET

Regionally, there are Key challenges for Young People in learning.

- Nottingham and Leicester have low rates of attainment of 5 GCSE's (including English and Maths).
- The region has the poorest performance of learners achieving level 2 by 19.

Causes of educational disengagement resulting in learners declining attainment between KS3 and KS4 are wide ranging, often multiple and inter-related and encompassed:

Curriculum, workload and coursework; relationships with teaching staff; school and classroom environments; peer relationships; aspirations and future plans; family context and life events may have bearing.

What ever the reason; Compared to total cohorts, post 16 underachiever destinations' seem distinctive: These cohorts are:

- Less likely to be in schools
- Slightly less likely to be in FE or WBL
- More likely to be NEET or JWT

Key issues on Quality Outcomes also need to be considered; for example in 2007 Lincolnshire and Rutland had the highest level 2 16-18 achievement rates in the region, but had the lowest success rates when combined with 19+ achievement.

ON a positive note, FE inspections between April 2008 and 2009 showed 91% of all colleges were satisfactory or better in leadership and management, whilst 64% were awarded outstanding or good in their overall effectiveness grades.

Key Issues Between Deprivation and Education

Deprivation is strongly associated with poor performance on average at every key stage. A gap opens at KS1 and increases overtime so that by KS4 a non FSM pupil has three times the odds of achieving five good GCSEs compared to a FSM pupil. Factors inducing deprivation include:

Income and material deprivation; poor health; family stress; low levels of parental education, parental involvement in their children's education; low levels of culture and social capital; low aspiration, poor literacy and exposure to multiple factors....

How Can We Improve?

A number of elements of the existing 14-19 reform programme are identified as key drivers to future improvement including:

- Raising the Participation Age
- Qualification reforms including the Foundation Learning Tier, Functional Skills and Diploma Roll outs
- September Guarantee
- Review of financial support due to be published in 2010
- Introduction of the IAG quality standards and forthcoming strategy for information, advice and guidance

Further to these 14 - 19 reforms

The new Ofsted common inspection framework (august 2009) will introduce changes raising Equality & diversity expectation (potentially limiting overall grading)

And of course we have immanent changes to existing legislation. The proposed Single Equality Bill proposes to: stream line, support and strengthen existing legislation.. implications included:

- A new duty to consider what action we can take to reduce socio-economic inequalities
- A law banning age discrimination in the provision of goods and services (over 18 – being contested)
- A new equality duty which will extend duties for race, disability and gender to cover age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity; and gender reassignment
- Commissioning and procurement levers influencing equality (particularly among private sectors) is also expected.

Finally, there is an opportunity to continue building upon LSC involved regional progress against the Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets.

Regionally we actively contribute to addressing PSA targets, for example PSA 15 and 16.

- PSA 16 - The socially excluded adults Public Service Agreement aims to ensure that the most socially excluded adults are offered the chance to get back on the path to a more successful life, by increasing the proportion of at-risk individuals in settled accommodation and employment, education and training. Client groups include care leavers, offenders, those receiving secondary mental health services and those with a learning disability.

In its support for reaching PSA 16 targets LSC are actively involved with 2 integrating Employment and Skills Groups, namely the Regional Implementation Board (a strategic group, and the IES Co-ordination Group which consists of representatives from a range of partnership organisations with the intention of picking up the wider IES agenda.

- PSA 15 – Addressing the disadvantage that individuals experience because of their gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief.

LSC has facilitated the development of Emshed, East Midlands Strategic Hub for Equality & Diversity is an autonomous, regional strategic hub that links with relevant government and non government agencies and organisations. It enables strategic dialogue and advice on the development and implementation of inclusion, equality and diversity policies and procedures across East Midlands, ensuring the engagement of key influencers, commissioners and funding sources all of which influence local, regional and national policy and delivery.

All of this, alongside an era demanding efficiency in public spending ensures that we do (and must continue to) recognise; to successfully promote and strengthen inclusion, Equality & Diversity a collective approach is required.

We want to and need to do more than comply with present and forthcoming legislation. Particularly, in light of our own changes which will see the introduction of new agencies overseeing learning and Skills delivery.

We do not underestimate the challenges ahead.

We intend to continue our commitment in our current form to support the new agencies to *go beyond legislative compliance; to make our policies and practice fully inclusive, eliminating discrimination, promoting equality and embracing diversity in all its aspects*. In doing this we look forward to working with CEFET to make sure that the learning and skills sector contributes to fulfilling today's aims and objectives.

