

Young people's learning and skills for adults



New roles for local authorities

From September 2010, local authorities will be expected to contribute to young people's learning and adult skills in more significant ways. They will need to work within new funding, planning and partnership arrangements to increase participation in learning and deliver better outcomes for children and young people, and to support more responsive and flexible adult skills provision.

Inside we outline the challenges faced by local authorities and the solutions offered by SQW Consulting.

Challenge and change

As the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill 2008-09 (February 2009) makes its way through Parliament, local authorities are preparing to take on significant new roles and responsibilities supporting the delivery of young people's learning and adult skills from September 2010. Bringing into law the changes presented in the "Raising Expectations: enabling the system to deliver" (March 2008) White Paper, the Bill sets out in detail the transfer of £7 billion from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to local authorities and £4 billion to a new agency to fund training and skills for adults. The scale of the associated institutional and service delivery changes combined with a rapid implementation timetable present considerable challenges for local authorities.

Principles

The underpinning principles behind these institutional changes are twofold. With regard to young people, they focus on a desire to raise the education participation age and deliver better outcomes for all (in line with the achievement of the Every Child Matters outcomes and 2007 Children's Plan objectives), by bringing together in one place (i.e. local government) responsibility for the outcomes and achievement of all children and young people aged 0-19. With regard to adult skills, the new arrangements respond to the step change required to deliver the Government's "World Class Skills" (July 2007) ambitions and targets, in response to the 2006 Leitch review. The advent of Skills Accounts and the expansion of Train to Gain signal the creation of a radically different model for skills supply, one in which the needs of service users (learners and employers) are paramount. Rather than plan supply, the role of government centrally and locally is to ensure these customers are empowered, informed and supported, so that demand can lead the more responsive and flexible supply within a simplified qualifications and progression landscape.

Partnership

From September 2010, LSC functions will be inherited by the Young Peoples Learning Agency (YPLA) and the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). The YPLA will have an independent board, whereas the SFA will be an agency that forms part of the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills. Local authorities will be given the main role in planning and funding 16-19 education, but must work within a national set of rules and in sub-regional partnerships with their neighbours. Effective partnerships will be given budgetary responsibility to commission 16-19 provision from further education (FE) colleges; where partnerships are deemed to be less effective, the YPLA will handle FE college commissioning. Sub-regional groupings of local authorities approved by Government Offices and the Department will receive capacity-building support before September 2010.

Purpose

In addition to the headline roll-out of 14-19 Diplomas by 2013, local authorities are expected to make significant contributions to the wider ten-year 14-19 reform programme. This aims to transform the services and opportunities available to young people by reforming qualifications, broadening the curriculum offer, and ensuring that the right support is in place locally to entitle every young person to learn in a way that engages and motivates them. The entitlement comprises a simplified qualifications offer of four overarching learning and progression pathways (Apprenticeships, Diplomas, the Foundation Learning Tier, and General Qualifications) underpinned by functional skills and personal learning and thinking skills, supplemented by qualifications outside these pathways. It also includes a strengthened learner support offer to access learning. Local authorities will be responsible for ensuring that by 2013 all 14-19 year olds can access suitable provision delivered in appropriate settings, by implementing an offer for young people that encourages more of them to participate in learning until 17 (by 2013) and 18 (by 2015).



Examples of experience

Learning and Skills Council - Review of local authorities' transport policies for 16-18 year olds: investigating transport services and support arrangements for young people, informing the Learning and Skills Council's guidance to local authorities, and also local authority debate on transport issues linked to 14-19 diplomas.

Commission for Rural Communities - Working in 21st century rural England: investigating the effectiveness of national programmes of employment and skills support for vulnerable groups in rural areas of deprivation.

London Borough of Newham – Evaluation of the Mayor's Employment Pilot: evaluating intensive support to the economically inactive and longer-term unemployed to find and keep work.

Learning and Skills Development - Triggers for re-engagement: understanding the factors that stimulate the adult learner re-engagement since acquiring a level 2 qualification
<https://www.lsneducation.org.uk/user/order.aspx?code=062511&src=XOWEB>.

Learning and Skills Council - Evaluation of the EQUAL London Workforce Futures programme: evaluating a programme aiming to promote the re-integration and retention of disabled employees in small & medium sized enterprises.

Department of Children, Schools, and Families - Evaluation of the Childcare Affordability programme: evaluating different approaches to making childcare affordable for lower-income families, in order to increase parents and carers' employment.
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RR057.pdf>

Department for Work and Pensions - National Employment Panel Events evaluation: evaluating 'Able to Work: Realising Potential' pilot events provided by the National Employment Panel to promote the business benefits of disability confidence among employers and JobCentre Plus staff:
http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/report_abstracts/rr_abstracts/rra_517.asp.

Our services and expertise

Our services and expertise include the following:

- analysing learning and skills needs in different sectors, sub-regions and localities
- assessing the adequacy of education and training supply to meet these needs
- supporting policy development and practice improvements linked to worklessness
- developing regional and local strategies and action plans for skills investments
- investigating local barriers and solutions for young people's learning
- evaluating the efficacy of school/college collaboration for the delivery of 14-19 learning
- working with individual providers to improve provision for young people and adults

Our clients

Our clients include the following:

- county, district and unitary councils and their partnerships, and their regional representative bodies
- Improvement and Development Agency
- Local Government Association
- Whitehall Departments, including CLG, BERR, DCSF, DIUS, DWP and DEFRA
- devolved administrations
- Regional Development Agencies
- Homes and Communities Agency and predecessor bodies
- funding bodies
- Sector Skills Councils

About SQW Consulting

SQW Consulting is a leading independent consultancy in the area of sustainable economic and social development. Founded in Cambridge in 1983 by Nick Segal, Roger Quince and Bill Wicksteed, the firm now employs over 80 staff at its offices in Cambridge, Edinburgh, Leeds, London and Manchester.

Our consultants bring extensive experience to their assignments, with backgrounds in academia, national and local government, industry, and development agencies. In all of our work we employ the principles of rigorous analysis, collaborative working, commitment to quality and independence of thought.

We have a strong track record of analytical research across the various tiers of government and governance. The firm's geographic spread of experience across the UK and beyond, and our ability to join up between tiers / sectors, give us a unique market position. We have strong collaborative relationships and can complement our own specialist skills by drawing on a network of collaborators and associates.

We offer flexible and multi-disciplinary support, drawing on experience and expertise from across the firm. Whilst always providing a perspective that is rigorous and independent, we also work closely with our clients, recognising that they and their partners will be responsible for taking forward the analyses, strategies, and action plans that we have catalysed. Engagement is key to the way we work, as is our commitment to sharing and transferring knowledge and learning.

SQW Group

SQW Consulting is part of SQW Group. Other divisions include: SQW Asia, which provides consultancy services to government organisations in Hong Kong and China and foreign firms investing in China; SQW Energy, which provides consultancy services in energy and carbon management; and Oxford Innovation, which manages innovation centres and investment networks. For more information: www.sqwgroup.com.

Contact us

To discuss how we can help, please contact

Michael Frearson, Associate Director

T: +44 (0) 1223 209400

E: mfearson@sqw.co.uk

www.sqw.co.uk

