

Summary of the new system

Introduction

From April 2010, responsibility for securing sufficient education and training provision for all young people, including those aged 16-19, and 19-25 year olds being assessed for a learning difficulty and/or disability, as well as juveniles in custody will pass from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to local authorities. In addition, the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) will be established as a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) to support local authorities discharge their planning and commissioning functions and to ensure funding and budgetary control within the system.

Context for the changes

The Government's long term strategy for children is to make the UK the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up. The changes in the current delivery arrangements that we are making will:

- place 0-19 commissioning under the leadership of local authorities enabling local decision-making at the right level;
- more fully integrate the commissioning of services and provision for young people to support delivery of raising the participation age and access to the 14-19 entitlements;
- provide greater focus on strengthening the role of local authorities and Children's Trusts as champions of young people; and
- provide greater impetus for implementing the Common Application Process.

These changes need to be set alongside initiatives to improve learning routes and support to integrate services for young people, and are crucial to the successful delivery of the historic raising of the participation age to 17 by 2013 and 18 by 2015. The 16-19 transfer will put in place the infrastructure to enable every young person to access the most individually appropriate, engaging and high quality provision - and will give local authorities the tools they need to deliver the best outcomes for young people.

Further information on the shape of the young people's learning network, which you may already be familiar with, is attached at Annex A.

The role of local authorities

Local authorities are at the heart of the new network. They are best placed to secure services for their communities - they are close to their communities, have experience of strategic local leadership and are democratically accountable to local people. Collaborative groupings at sub-regional and regional level will be crucial to ensure that strategic planning and effective commissioning decision making across areas is aligned and comprehensive.

Local authorities' role as Strategic Planners will encompass:

- planning to meet local resident learning needs;
- planning to meet collective learning needs across travel to learn patterns (this includes advocating for young people who travel across boundaries to learn to drive up quality, retention and achievement);
- planning to take account of multi-stakeholder requirements – parents and carers, employer, communities and partner agencies; and
- convening and supporting collaborative working through the Local Area Agreements, Children's Trusts and 14-19 Partnerships.

Their role as Lead Commissioners within sub-regional groupings (SRGs) will comprise:

- meeting the needs of all who learn in local authority areas through a sustainable provider base (this includes learners with specific needs – e.g. Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LLDD) and young offenders);
- collaboratively agreeing learning required across travel to learn patterns by working sub-regionally and regionally; and
- working with colleges and other providers as strategic planning partners and by agreeing high quality provision through negotiation and dialogue.

In addition to the above they will have a crucial role to raise aspirations through:

- delivering raising the participation age, improving attainment targets for Level 2 and 3, and reducing the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) cohort;
- effectively delivering Every Child Matters outcomes for all young people by joining up services and leveraging the strategic commissioning role within Children's Trusts;
- managing the environment to enable transition throughout a learner's journey; and
- managing the market and ensuring provider quality is maintained and raised for 16-19 learning provision.

Local authorities already have considerable expertise and capacity in relation to their wider commissioning role – for example in commissioning childcare places and targeted youth support services. To enable local authorities to take on their new duties we intend to transfer staff with the appropriate expertise, knowledge and skills to deliver. We will also ensure that local authorities are supported through the developing role of the YPLA.

The staff transferring to each local authority will have been identified by the LSC as discharging those functions which are transferring to the local authorities under the Machinery of Government changes. Those functions are described in the draft local authority Framework document which DCSF have developed with partners. The LSC have used a set of role descriptions to identify those staff who match to those functions.

When staff transfer to the local authority, they will be there to enable the local authority to discharge those new functions. LSC staff will be working alongside local authority staff during the transition year 2009-10, and transfer formally on 1 April 2010.

The precise organisation, structure and roles within local authorities from April 2010 is a matter for the individual local authority, and so during this period we expect them to clarify how individuals will be integrated into their existing teams. We would anticipate that this will include discussion with the individuals involved. Contractual terms and conditions are, of course, protected under the terms of the transfer.

We anticipate that local authorities will want to use this opportunity to strengthen and develop their operations, while ensuring they effectively take on the new functions transferring from the LSC.

The role of the YPLA

The YPLA will be a 'behind the scenes' slimline NDPB, with a fundamentally different remit to the LSC. It will be principally a supporting and enabling body, designed to support local authorities in fulfilling their new duties, individually and in SRGs and Regional Planning Groups (RPGs). In particular the small number of YPLA staff based in each region will provide regional planning and commissioning support, information, advice, analysis and specialist expertise. The YPLA Board will have significant local authority membership.

The YPLA's responsibilities will be to:

- ensure budgetary control of the £7 billion being transferred to local authorities to enable them to carry out their new functions;
- provide a national commissioning framework to help local authorities commission provision;
- promote consistency and simplicity in planning by providing a national statement of priorities and developing and operating the national funding formula;
- provide strategic analysis services to support the planning and commissioning process;
- provide data on participation, attainment and economic development in local, sub-regional and regional areas;
- work with the RDAs and other regional partners to provide information on future skills needs in an area for both young people and adults, as well as any other economic and labour market intelligence;
- co-ordinate the support and provide secretariat services for the RPG;
- work with local authorities to support and facilitate the production of commissioning plans at local, sub-regional and regional levels to ensure their coherence and fit within the national budget.
- fund and performance manage open Academies on behalf of the Secretary of State. Posts will transfer to the YPLA from the DCSF to undertake this work. Whilst the precise arrangements are still to be worked through, it is clear that the YPLA will be the best-placed organisation to bring that support and challenge linked to the overall funding and commissioning process.

The role of Government Offices (GOs)

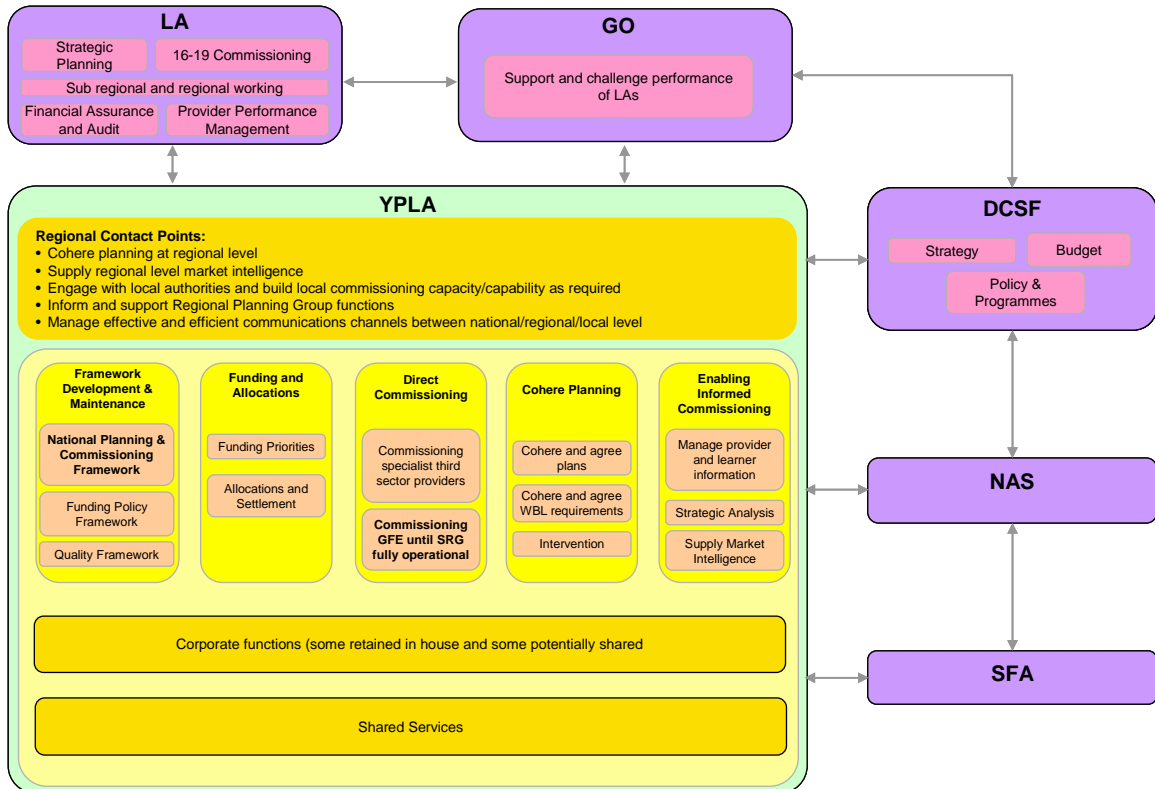
The transfer of funding from the LSC to local authorities means that there will be no single line of accountability for the achievement of key participation, attainment and Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets from provider through local, regional and national structures.

The GOs already have a key role carrying out progress checks and supporting and challenging local authority performance. These roles will become even more important to ensure the new delivery arrangements achieve the range of improved outcomes envisaged for young people. LSC staff already play an important part in supporting the GO network. Additional posts in GOs will provide the necessary 16-19 learning and commissioning expertise to ensure the best interests of young learners are at the heart of the new performance management arrangements and that these arrangements support local authorities in the delivery of the entitlement and attainment and NEET PSA targets.

The challenges ahead are significant, but without doubt our best asset in overcoming them - and realising our vision for young people - will be the retention of the expertise and commitment of LSC staff in the young people's network.

Annex A. The young people's learning network

The diagram below describes the core elements of the young people's learning network that will continue to drive improvements in participation and attainment.



The new system has been designed to achieve the following outcomes for learners and delivery partners:

- informed needs of young people and employers drive commissioning decisions;
- strategic partnerships, local authorities and 14-19 partnerships anticipate, shape and plan young people's learning;
- YPLA, working with sector partners, sets out the national priorities (including the budget) and overarching frameworks that are equitable, fair and transparent to all in the system and support local authorities to deliver;
- local authorities and providers are funded in a timely fashion and with resource to deliver the agreed identified demand;
- local authorities and providers ensure the mix of provision delivers the entitlement, regional skills needs, and ensure young people are supported to attend high quality, relevant provision;
- local authorities drive a sustainable, high quality provider base and confidence through iterating plans, and maintaining provider and other partnership dialogues to forecast with as much accuracy as possible; and
- local authorities (working with YPLA and as a part of SRGs and RPGs) ensure that the aggregate of their commissioning decisions fit within local, regional and national budgets.