



Iain Wright MP

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To:
All Chief Executives
All Directors of Children's Services

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I have been Minister for 14-19 Reform and Apprenticeships since June. In that time, I have met with many people who are working hard to deliver the best possible education for our country's young people. I am impressed by their dedication and professionalism in driving the 14-19 reforms. This September, as schools and colleges return for the academic year, marks an especially critical time for our 14-19 reform policy.

The 14-19 reforms are central to the ambition we set out in the Children's Plan to make this country the best place in the world for young people to grow up. It has never been more important for us to work together to equip young people with the skills and attributes that will enable them to thrive throughout their lives and careers. We need not only to ensure that all our young people are able to respond to the challenges of the current economic climate, but also to support them to develop the skills valued by employers in order that they are able to grasp the opportunities that the economic recovery will bring.

Realising our ambitions will require strong partnerships, working together to deliver an offer that is responsive, integrated and coherent to all young people. This is particularly important for the most vulnerable, for example, for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, for young people in care, or for young offenders.

The Government is investing over £6.8 billion this year and next in the education and training of young people, with the number of places available increased to an all-time high of more than 1.55 million. Attached to this letter is a table setting out the allocations for 16-18 participation by local authorities in England for 2009/10. It provides an indication of the budgets that will become available to local authorities with the transfer, in April 2010, of the responsibility for 16-19 education and training. It will be crucial through local authority leadership working in partnership with providers deliver high quality learning to ensure that we maximise the opportunities presented by this unprecedented investment in the skills of our young people.



department for
children, schools and families

This September's Year 7 students will be the first cohort to be part of our historic commitment to raise the participation age, first to the age of 17 in 2013 and then to 18 by 2015. The offer to young people must be tailored to their interests and ambitions, whether it is a move to an Apprenticeship place, Diploma or Foundation learning Tier, as well as the traditional GCSE and A levels.

I am pleased to confirm that a further cohort of pupils will have the opportunity to benefit from the Young Apprenticeship pilot in 2010/11. The £32.75m budget will fund an additional 1000 places bringing the total places for 2010/11 to 10,000 places. I welcome the continued support of Local Authorities and their partners to build and maintain a programme which both benefits young people taking part and attracts significant employer support.

The attached diagram is, I hope, a helpful illustration of the learning routes we wish to see available to young people. Local authorities have a central leadership role in leading this transformation. They are uniquely placed to draw together all services for young people and their families and to ensure that all young people have access to high quality learning opportunities that enable them to participate, progress and achieve. The changes we are making to the responsibility for planning, commissioning and funding 16-19 provision are in recognition of this.

These changes will create a much clearer and stronger link between outcomes for children and young people and economic development within localities and regions. Local authorities are well used to making such links, and I am encouraged by what I have heard during my first few weeks in this role about how local leaders are using the opportunity presented by the changes to think strategically about the positioning of 16-19 education and training within a wider agenda for economic regeneration.

It has been very good to work with the React programme, very ably led by John Freeman. It has helped us move a long way in this transfer. We are approaching a critical phase of the activity to prepare for the transfer of responsibilities. From September, we will start to establish and test the structures, systems and processes that we expect to operate from April 2010, subject of course, to the passage of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill through Parliament. You will, I know, be anxious to receive confirmation of the staff who will transfer to your local authority from the Learning and Skills Council; this will be available to you in September. Then, in October, we intend to publish, for open consultation, a draft National Commissioning Framework. As we continue to work with local authorities to support their preparation for the transfer, we will ensure that you have the information you need – including the development of the National Commissioning Framework - which we intend to publish in October for open consultation. We will also provide full details of the staffing transfer. This will be supported by a programme of training and development, which will be offered to officers and members in all local authorities.

More immediately, we have this week published guidance for Regional Planning Groups (RPGs). This is available on the 14-19 website (<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?go=site.home&sid=57&pid=505&lid=643&ctype=None&ptype=Contents>). It sets out, using examples of emerging practice, models for the structure and make-up of RPGs, and details our expectations of the functions they will perform, including ensuring plans are affordable within regional indicative budgets and meet regional skills needs, and making the necessary links with provision for adult learners.

I have been impressed by what I have heard about the work local authorities are doing to prepare for the transfer, and by reports of the generally high level of local authority capacity and readiness. I want to encourage you to continue these preparations, developing staffing structures that will enable links to be made across Children's Services and beyond, building effective relationships with local providers, individually and through 14-19 Partnerships, and strengthening planning and delivery arrangements for sub-regional groupings. We will continue to work with the React programme to ensure that local authorities are supported appropriately in the run-up to April 2010.

I look forward, over the coming months, to hearing and seeing much more of the good work local authorities are doing to ensure that all our young people have access to the opportunities they need to be able to realise their – and our – ambitions.

I have written in similar terms to Council Leaders and to Lead Members for Children's Services.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Iain Wright', written in a cursive style.

IAIN WRIGHT MP

Cc: Directors of Children and Learners, Government Offices