Policy Review

Second Annual Conference
Young People not in Education, Employment or Training

Local Authorities and FE Colleges – a new relationship

John Freeman CBE

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The national 14-19 transformation agenda

The 14-19 transformation agenda is about much more than the technicalities of funding:

- new curriculum entitlement

  (GCSE/A, Diplomas, FL, apprenticeships)

- RPA (17 by 2013, 18 by 2015)

- local authority commissioning

- information, advice and guidance

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Commissioning

At the highest level, commissioning is concerned with:

- working out what 16-19 learners and the economy need;
- deciding how best to meet those needs;
- making the arrangements to meet those needs;
- assessing whether the needs have been met.

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The thesis

The LGA / ADCS / AoC Protocol sets out the distinct roles of local authorities and colleges; local authorities have a democratically-accountable local leadership role; while colleges are independent publicly-funded corporations with a specific mission.

So local authorities and FE colleges are both key players in every area and need to work together.

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The thesis

Local authorities and FE colleges share common goals:

-improving educational outcomes

-supporting local employers and the economy

-supporting regeneration

-developing social cohesion and wellbeing

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The thesis

Statutory duties:

‘Duty to cooperate’ – Children’s Trusts

Promote economic well-being

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The thesis

Commissioning is not an activity that should take place in a darkened room in the basement of the town hall; it needs to be open and transparent, and to engage delivery partners so that decisions are understood by all.

Commissioning should be '*done with*' not '*done to*'

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Commissioning

There is an apparent dilemma here; on the one hand, learner demand is at the heart of the system; on the other hand, commissioning plans would seem to indicate a more top-down approach.

Two observations:

-High-quality IAG is at the heart of the commissioning process – putting the learner first.
-Commissioning plans must be developed as a truly collaborative activity.

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Commissioning for every young person to succeed

At age 19, all young people should be ready for higher education or a skilled job, with the best outcomes for those with additional needs.

The new curriculum should provide appropriate opportunities for every young person.

Raising the age of participation means that we have to motivate and excite those at risk of disengagement, finding opportunities for them to succeed.

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Diversity of needs

Young people exhibit a huge diversity of need; high-quality IAG is critical in helping identify and meet those needs.

The needs of **the economy** are also diverse; both geographically and over time; at present, for example, we should be focusing on the needs of the local economy as the country comes out of recession.

14-19 transformation is therefore about very much more than children's services; there is an impact on the whole council - and the whole area.

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The key strategic issue

What is it that local authorities will commission from providers to ensure that every young person aged up to 17 is engaged in education, training or work with training by 2013? (and up to 18 in 2015?)

This is a non-trivial and urgent question – and we have not yet found the answer.

And while it will be expensive – the cost to society will be far greater if we don't succeed.

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The way forward …

Legislation is necessary but not sufficient.

What will make the new system work, and work to the benefit of all learners and the economy, is the quality of the relationships between local authorities and FE colleges (and, of course, other providers).

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