

**Further Education Commissioner  
Lancashire Adult Learning  
Stock-take Assessment  
June 2015**

**Background**

1. Following the inadequate inspection result in November 2014, the Minister for Skills and Enterprise decided that the FE Commissioner should assess the position of the service in line with the government's intervention policy set out in *Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills*.
2. The FE Commissioner conducted his assessment between 19 January and 23rd January 2014. He considered; the capacity and capability of the service's leadership and governance to deliver quality improvement within an agreed timeframe; any action that should be taken by the Minister and/or the Chief Executive of the funding agencies to ensure the delivery of quality improvement (considering the suite of interventions set out in 'Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills'; and how progress should be monitored and reviewed taking into account the Agency's regular monitoring arrangements and Ofsted's monitoring visits.
3. Two FE Advisers contributed to the assessment. In summary the Commissioner made seven recommendations – namely:
  - i. The Lancashire Adult Learning Service should restrict its activities to Adult and Community Learning.
  - ii. The SFA should consider more appropriate ways of delivering the skills programmes currently being offered through the Lancashire Adult Learning Service by using colleges and providers with greater experience and success in the delivery of the provision.
  - iii. Governance arrangements for the Adult Learning Service should be introduced that involve both council and non-council representatives to determine the strategy for the service going forward and to provide suitable monitoring and challenge of the executive.
  - iv. The Council should ensure that there is sufficient management time and an appropriate structure to deliver a high quality Adult and Community Service.
  - v. New arrangements for quality assurance should be introduced as a matter of urgency that prioritise the improvement of teaching and learning and the production of an appropriate self-assessment report and quality improvement plan.

- vi. The post Inspection Action Plan should be revised by aligning it more closely with the weaknesses identified by Ofsted and with clear responsibilities, actions, milestones and monitoring arrangements.
  - vii. The FE Commissioner should undertake a monitoring visit at the end of the summer term to review progress.
4. A monitoring visit was carried out by a Further Education Adviser over the period 23<sup>rd</sup>/24<sup>th</sup> June 2015 to consider the progress that had been made in line with these recommendations.

## **Response to the FE Commissioner's Recommendations**

### **The Lancashire Adult Learning Service should restrict its activities to Adult and Community Learning.**

Lancashire Adult Learning Service and Lancashire County Council has confirmed its commitment to restrict its focus to Adult and Community Learning following a review of the current skills programme. As a matter of pragmatism, a few ASB learners will complete their courses in early 15/16.

### **The SFA should consider more appropriate ways of delivering the skills programmes currently being offered through Lancashire Adult Learning Service by using colleges and providers with greater experience and success in the delivery of this provision.**

This has been successfully managed with the process being handled through the appointment of the Principal of Nelson and Colne College as interim Principal working with the Skills Funding Agency. The process has included identifying providers in the region who are best placed to support existing learners, communicating to pre-start learners their options with other providers and developing new and extending existing partnerships across the County to meet the needs of ACL learners.

### **Governance arrangements for the Adult Learning Service should be introduced that involve both council and non-council representatives to determine the strategy for the service going forward and to provide suitable monitoring and challenge of the executive.**

The initial assessment of governance arrangements concluded that these were poor, offering little or no challenge or scrutiny of what the service offers, and staff felt that the need to save money had taken precedence over the need to serve learners. This situation has been transformed.

The new Board of Governors is strongly constituted. It comprises 9 members drawn from the local authority, further education and the private sector and includes members with significant financial, legal and human resource expertise. It has met four times since March, including a strategic visioning event in April. The new Senior Leadership Team has presented it with a data dashboard which enables the Board to effectively support and challenge progress. The minutes of meetings reflect an inexorable focus on quality improvement and a strategy for the future. In a relatively short time it has developed a cohesion of purpose which matches the best.

Moving forward, the Board, initially set up for one year, is considering how best to engage in a permanent arrangement, including a scheme of delegation which clearly identifies the responsibilities of the board and its delegated authority from Lancashire County Council, in a similar way to the delegation to the local governing bodies of schools and academies in local authority control.

**The Council should ensure that there is sufficient management time and an appropriate structure to deliver a high quality Adult and Community Service.**

The service is undergoing a radical restructure. The appointment of the Principal and Deputy Principal (Quality) of Nelson and Colne College in an interim capacity has resulted in significant improvement and, in consultation with the Board, they have undertaken a 'root and branch' review of the service.

New Heads of Curriculum have recently been appointed and they evidence a new determination to refocus the service on a curriculum planning process which is reflective of community needs. They are relatively new to post but have been given the appropriate tools and time to enable them to manage. This includes significant investment in monitoring systems and staff development

The new structure, which has also resulted in more permanent teaching appointments, has clear lines of accountability and, coupled with a clear vision, bodes well for the future.

The Board is engaged in the appointment of a new Principal although there is a commitment to continue support from the interim senior leadership team during 2015/16.

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**New arrangements for quality assurance should be introduced as a matter of urgency that prioritise the improvement of teaching and learning and the production of an appropriate self-assessment report and quality improvement.**

Quality assurance has been transformed. Self-assessment is rigorous, with a new template to reflect the revised common inspection framework. SAR writing surgeries are planned following the leadership and management recruitment process.

The Post Inspection Action Plan is now a comprehensive working document with clear milestones and outcomes. It remains a key focus for governors, managers and tutors.

The new management structure has a Quality team headed by an Assistant Principal, Quality, Resources and Learning Support Services.

The use of data in quality assurance processes has improved significantly. Investment in new data systems coupled with much staff development has ensured that managers can use data more effectively.

Teaching, learning and assessment has improved considerably and was judged to have made **significant** progress following the latest Ofsted monitoring visit on 18<sup>th</sup> June.

Teaching and learning observation has been rigorous and almost all teachers have had at least one observation. Good or outstanding observations currently stand at 83%.

Retention has increased and the decline in success rates has been arrested with an expectation of significantly improved success rates

A significant investment in continuing professional development in teaching and learning has produced demonstrable results. This has included ILT training.

**The Post Inspection Action Plan should be revised by aligning it more closely with the weaknesses identified by Ofsted and with clear responsibilities, actions, milestones and monitoring arrangements.**

This has been successfully achieved.

## **Overall View**

5. Lancashire Adult and Community Learning is being transformed, and the practical partnership between the local authority and the Board of Nelson and Colne College in introducing interim arrangements is to be applauded. There is clear evidence of a changing culture. A strong Governing Body with appropriate experience and autonomy has been complemented by an equally strong Senior Leadership Team which has maintained an inexorable focus on quality improvement. It is hoped that these arrangements can translate into a permanent arrangement.

## **Recommendation**

6. In the light of the service's performance, the service should no longer be subject to a review by the FE Commissioner but be included in the normal SFA monitoring procedures.

## **Report prepared by**

**John Hogg FE Adviser**

## **Meetings held**

Amanda Melton            Interim Principal

Tracey Baron             Interim Deputy Principal

## Board Members

Antoinette Lythgoe      Chair

Ian Clinton               Board member

Councillor Tony Martin   Board member

## Curriculum Heads

Nicola Hall

Karen Wignall

Leyanne Fitzmaurice

Linda Carter

## Teachers

Will Oldham              Personal Social Development

Sarah Haworth          Family Learning

Lyn Butcher              Health and Wellbeing

Helene Purcell          Languages

Chris Speight            English and mathematics