

Tuesday 18 August 2009

Dear 14-19 Partnership contacts,

Implementation of the Foundation Learning Tier – for 14-19 year olds at Entry level and Level 1: actions for 14-19 Partnerships in 2009/10

2009/10 is a crucial year in developing the Foundation Learning Tier (one of the four national suites of learning for 14-19s) as all areas should be gearing up for delivery on a 14-19 basis by 2010/11. Two guidance documents just published provide clarity on the Foundation Learning (FL) Tier, and the timeline/approach to implementation:

- LSC/QCDA guidance for 2009/10 for LAs, schools and other providers – including those who may be engaging with FL developments for the first time – on what is involved in planning and delivering FL provision. The short sharp overview of FL at the front of the guidance has been appended to this letter for your convenience. For the full guidance, see <http://qfr.lsc.gov.uk/flt/support/>.
- DCSF guidance on LAs' strategic role in driving FL developments, part of the wider guidance on submissions LAs will prepare for 'Gateway 4' in November 2009. Including FL in the Gateway process underlines its importance and anticipates LAs' responsibilities for the full range of 14-19 learning. It also reflects close links with Diplomas – not least the need to build on existing collaborative arrangements for delivery. Extracts on Foundation Learning from the guidance/submission template are annexed to this letter. We recommend you talk to your 14-19 Regional Advisor and access the LSIS support (see below) in preparing for your submission on FL. For the full guidance, see www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?go=site.home&sid=57&pid=498&lid=668&ctype=None&ptype=Contents.

Both documents underline the key expectation that all areas will deliver some FL provision on a 14-19 basis¹ by 2010/11. Through their 14-19 Partnerships, LAs will lead this process, increasing capacity, quality and access from 2010 by bringing in all schools, colleges and other relevant providers in 2011/12 and 2012/13. This trajectory is vital in preparing for Diploma/Apprenticeship entitlements in 2013 and increasing overall demand for learning ahead of the raising of the participation age to 17 in 2013.

With this overall timeframe in mind, especially the most immediate expectations for 2010, we need to work together in the forthcoming academic year to build on existing delivery of FL or related provision and to maximise readiness to deliver in every area. Working with the LSC/YPLA, QCDA and others, our support will include:

¹ i.e. moving beyond the current 'mixed economy' of 14-19 piloting in 22 LAs, alongside developmental delivery by 16+ providers in most LAs, to create a baseline of coherent 14-19 FL provision in all areas.

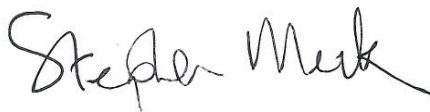
- The FL workforce support programme offered via the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), including bespoke consultancy for every LA in preparing for the Gateway submission and leading FL developments more widely. LSIS will get in touch with you in due course or you can contact them on 0207 492 5262, email foundationlearning@lsnlearning.org.uk or check the website for details of the programme: www.excellencegateway.org.uk/FLT
- Evaluating evidence from current pilot/developmental delivery, and a wider network of LAs developed by QCDA, and disseminating key lessons and examples of effective practice
- Developing guidance for 2010/11 including to facilitate the integration of the Key Stage 4 Engagement and Entry to Employment programmes into FL provision.

In this way, we believe FL developments in 2009/10 will strike a balance between support and challenge for all concerned.

Finally, on a practical note, we are disseminating some of these messages to LAs, schools, 16+ providers, consortia and, where relevant, those managing the 14-19 FL pilots. You will want to consider how best to follow this up in order to engage schools, 16+ providers and others in the planning work that needs to take place.

We look forward to working together on this shared endeavour.

Yours sincerely,



Stephen Meek
Director, Young People: Qualifications Strategy & Reform

Annexes

A: An overview of Foundation Learning – from the LSC/QCDA guidance for 2009/10

B: Foundation Learning – extracts from Gateway 4 guidance to LAs

An overview of the Foundation Learning Tier

Overall role/position: Foundation Learning is the national suite of learning for 14 to 19 year-old learners working predominantly at entry level or level 1. In practice, many providers should rightly see Foundation Learning as sitting alongside GCSEs, Foundation Diplomas, components of Higher Diplomas etc. This is especially for learners with 'spiky profiles' and particularly in schools where Foundation Learning will be delivered, for those pupils concerned aged 14 to 16, as part of the National Curriculum.

Delivery trajectory: All areas will deliver some Foundation Learning for 14 to 19 year-old learners by 2010 – with local authorities and 14-19 Partnerships leading this process, working collaboratively with consortia where appropriate and bringing in all schools, colleges and other relevant providers in 2011/12 and 2012/13. Foundation Learning will then align with the Diploma and Apprenticeship entitlements and the first step in the raising of the participation age in 2013. In particular, 2009/10 will be the last year of the Key Stage 4 Engagement and Entry to Employment programmes with future provision being offered through Foundation Learning. In November 2009, as part of the Gateway 4 process², local authorities will present their plans for developing Foundation Learning in 2009/10 and 2010/11.

Workforce support for these developments is provided by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS). A range of support services including bespoke consultancy, a mix of training, and on-line resources will be available during 2009/10³.

Personalised learning programmes: learners and practitioners will negotiate and agree an individual learning programme, reflecting both the learner's entry point and intended destination. Learning programmes should integrate vocational / subject learning, personal and social development, and functional skills. They must also comprise a wider 'wrap-around' of initial engagement and assessment; information advice and guidance (IAG); and on-going learner support.

Progression: Foundation Learning is all about progression, with learners and practitioners jointly agreeing an intended 'destination', wherever possible to level 2 (Diplomas, Apprenticeships, GCSEs) or for some learners, independent living or supported employment. With the right level of support all but a very small minority of learners will have the capacity to progress to positive outcomes. Qualifications that support Foundation Learning offer more flexible opportunities for learners to achieve and progress; this includes 'bite-sized' progression options within qualifications themselves.

Achievements: 'stepping stones' of learning throughout the personalised programmes are captured in qualifications drawn from the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). All QCF qualifications are based on units and are available in a range of different sizes. This provides flexibility to capture different themes / levels of learning and individual achievement within group learning contexts.

² Guidance to local authorities on the Gateway 4 process is available from <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?go=site.home&sid=57&pid=498&lid=668&ctype=None&ptype=Contents>

³ For more detail, see www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=FLT

Resourcing: in 2009/10 in schools pre-16, Foundation Learning is funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), including the DSG element earmarked for practical and applied learning at Key Stage 4 with, where appropriate, use of specific grants such as specialist schools grant, School Standards Grant and School Development Grant. In school sixth forms, colleges and other post-16 providers, funding comes through the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) Learner Responsive funding stream and includes 16-18 entitlement curriculum funding and Additional Learning Support where appropriate. Responsibility for commissioning education and training provision for 16 to 19 year-olds, subject to legislation, is to be transferred from the LSC to local authorities supported by the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA). This transfer will include a duty to secure sufficient provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities up to the age of 25.

So who stands to benefit from Foundation Learning and how?

- **Young people:** will gain from better opportunities to build confidence through positive achievements and to fulfil their potential through real progression in learning. A better experience pre-16 should feed and increase participation and achievements post-16, with the overarching Foundation Learning framework smoothing out the transition around age 16.

- **Schools, colleges and other providers:** At a basic level, successful delivery of Foundation Learning qualifications: attracts School and College Achievement and Attainment Table (SCAAT) points; for schools, counts towards pupil attainment indicators considered by Ofsted and proposed for the School Report Card; and, for post-16 providers, enhances their 'provider factor' in relation to future funding and reflects in the Framework for Excellence. More widely, the Foundation Learning model offers a framework for local collaboration and opportunities to drive up overall demand for learning ahead of the raising of the participation age in 2013.

- **Local areas:** Foundation Learning should motivate and enable more young people, including many who are vulnerable or at risk of drop-out, to achieve greater economic and social well-being. In doing so, successful Foundation Learning provision should reduce the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) or in jobs without training (JWT) – in line with the aims of the raising of the participation age agenda.

- **Employers:** with a strong emphasis on destinations and capturing achievements along the way, employers should find it easier to identify and recognise the skills they need, including candidates for Apprenticeships. Foundation Learning will benefit employers by providing an overall framework to recognise learning at entry level and level 1 and increasing the flow into level 2 learning.

ANNEX B FOUNDATION LEARNING – EXTRACTS FROM DCSF GATEWAY 4 GUIDANCE TO LAs, 31 JULY 2009

4 FOUNDATION LEARNING TIER

4.1 Strategic planning and collaborative infrastructure – ensuring delivery in 2010 and beyond

Describe how you are:

- Securing strategic leadership and collaboration on FL through the 14-19 Partnership
- Scoping supply and demand for FL, including plans/schedules for involving all schools/relevant providers in due course
- Preparing for collaborative delivery of FL, building on the 14-19 consortia arrangements where appropriate and ensuring coherence and continuity across the 14-19 age range
- Working with LSIS to make the most of available support on an area-wide basis

Green	Green/Amber	Amber/Red	Red
<p>14-19 Partnership with appropriate membership to cover FL as part of wider 14-19 reforms and a clear FL policy/project lead</p> <p>FL implementation group in place – where appropriate, building on 14-19 consortia arrangements. LSIS support offer is planned and coordinated on an area basis</p> <p>FL implementation plan in place, with emphasis on 14-19 coherence, including forecast demand levels/trends; and an agreed schedule for increasing supply</p>	<p>Agreed actions in hand to develop 14-19 Partnership and consortia to encompass FL and a clear FL policy/project lead identified</p> <p>Ongoing work to establish FL implementation group – in particular to develop coherence across 14-19 and to coordinate participation in the LSIS support offer</p> <p>Work underway to develop FL implementation plan; working towards agreeing demand forecasts and schedule for increasing supply</p>	<p>Work underway between schools and 16+ providers to coordinate on Entry level/Level 1 learning with a view to implementing FL</p> <p>An FL lead for the area is sharing policy developments and engaging with the LSIS support offer</p> <p>Initial FL implementation planning started, with work underway to establish rough data on demand and some supply scheduling</p>	<p>Little awareness of FL developments or available support, with no clear FL lead</p> <p>Very limited consideration of implications for 14-19 Partnerships or consortia</p> <p>FL implementation planning not started, no awareness or attempt to join up pre-16 and 16+, little data or evidence identified</p>

4.2 Data on Supply and Demand: please use online MI form accessible through [<http://gateway.camb-ed.com>] available from early/mid Sept

Using the Gateway Management Information portal, once live, and with the support of LSIS and your Regional Adviser, you will provide headline quantitative data for your area on:

- Demand – the number of 14-19s in your area for whom FL might be suitable
- Supply – in each case for both 2009/10 and 2010/11:
 - the number of learners expected to participate in FL
 - the number of learners expected to participate in other non-FL provision at Entry level and Level 1
 - the approximate proportion of schools offering FL
 - the approximate proportion of FE colleges/other relevant providers offering FL

If wished: in your written submission, using the box below, please feel able to expand on the quantitative data, to let us know, for example:

- any expected trends/changes in demand or supply beyond the years covered by the MI data
- how you've defined the potential FL cohort or determined which schools/other providers are in/out of scope
- any further data breakdowns you think might be helpful, such as 14-16 and 16+

4.3 Further Information on Foundation Learning

This is not assessed, but will help us to ensure that effective support is available.

Barriers and risks

Please identify the top three risks to FL delivery in your area, with a very brief explanation of your management of those risks

Support

Tell us briefly whether LSIS and other support on FL is meeting needs in your area, focusing on suggestions for improvement