

DEVELOPING A NEW STRUCTURE TO PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE DELIVERY MECHANISM FOR EDUCATION BUSINESS LINKS

A NEW AGENDA

Purpose of this paper

1. This paper sets out the DfEE's vision for promoting a step change in the level and quality of education business partnerships. There are a number of steps we will need to take to get us from where we are now to where we want to be by April 2001. And we want to work with local players to achieve this. That is why we very much want to know your views on how our proposals will impact in practice and any additional steps we should take to ensure we achieve what we want to achieve and that the transition is managed effectively. Please send your views to the address at the end of this paper.

Introduction

2. The economic success of this country depends on future generations' ability to compete successfully in a modern day knowledge economy. Fewer and fewer jobs will require unskilled labour. With this in mind, the Government has set schools and colleges tough targets to raise standards of education for all. It has never been more important that young people leave school with the right level of skills and qualifications, an understanding of business and employment and a commitment to lifelong learning.

3. This Government recognises the huge contribution business and industry can and do make to raising standards in education. We are committed to increasing the level of business involvement in educating our young people and want to make it easier and more worthwhile for schools, colleges and business to work in partnership.

4. The DfEE's consultation document, *Schools and Business - Sustaining Partnership*, set out what could be done to encourage such partnership. A working group, chaired by Peter Davies of Business in the Community, has since reported to Ministers on how to take forward this new agenda. A key recommendation was that if business engagement with schools is to be fully effective we need to adopt a more strategic approach at local level to targeting public resources at priority areas.

5. At the same time, the *Learning to Succeed* White Paper set out the Government's plans to reform the local management of Post-16 and adult education through the establishment of new Local Learning and Skills Councils (LLSCs). Although primarily responsible for post-16 learning, LLSCs will ensure that effective systems are in place to support work-related learning for those under 16. In practice, this will encompass a whole range of activities in schools which are supported by business and the wider community.

Key issues from *Schools and Business - Sustaining Partnerships* consultation

6. Overall, respondents agreed that school business partnerships add value, but that there is scope to improve them by being clearer about priorities and more effective in targeting resources. Businesses were generally very keen to support education, but did not always know how best to get involved. They were often confused, as were schools, by the myriad of local programmes, projects and delivery organisations.

7. Funding was an issue, particularly for organisations such as Education Business Partnerships (EBPs) and Science and Technology Regional Organisations (SATROs). Over the last four years many had relied on TEC discretionary funding. Too much of their time was spent seeking funding and the source of funding tended to influence the activities provided in a way which did not necessarily always accord with national or local priorities. There were wide variations across the country both in the range of activities on offer and the number of young people who were benefiting from education business links.

8. Local arrangements tended to work best when local delivery organisations worked closely together. This avoided duplication of effort, enabled all partners to concentrate on key priorities and made it easier for both schools and businesses to develop partnerships. It was helpful if one organisation could deliver a coherent package of activities which met schools' and young people's needs rather than those being met by a number of individual organisations working in isolation.

9. In recommending a new agenda for school business link activities, the Working Group's report to Ministers concluded that the current local system for organising school business partnerships required strengthening. The different brokerage and delivery organisations needed to be better co-ordinated to offer a one stop service to both business and schools.

10. Both the consultation and the Working Group report to Ministers have informed our thinking on the proposals which follow in this paper¹.

What we want to achieve - our vision for schools and business working together

11. The new LLSCs, working closely with Local Learning Partnerships, will be pivotal in ensuring that local plans and strategies are in place so that schools and businesses can work together.

12. We want to use the opportunity presented by the creation of LLSCs to strengthen and refocus education business link activity through local arrangements which encourage schools and businesses to form high quality partnerships. These will support local implementation of national initiatives and help local organisations to work in closer collaboration and to concentrate on those areas which add clear value.

13. We believe that there should be a single focus for all types of school/business partnership activity which draws together the different interested parties. This single focus should cover activity across a whole LLSC area.

14. Our aim is to provide all young people with a wide range of high quality, structured experiences of work throughout their school careers which will help raise standards of achievement, increase motivation and attendance, develop key skills and attitudes, and prepare young people more effectively for adult and working life. This will mean more schools, primary, secondary and special, and FE colleges developing quality links with business and the wider community across a wide range of activities.

15. We will enable headteachers, teachers and school governors to have a clearer understanding of how business can:

¹ The Government's intention to introduce legislation was announced in the Queen's Speech in November 1999. The LSC's powers in respect of school business links set out in this paper are subject to the passage of this legislation. The Learning and Skills Bill was introduced in the House of Lords on 16 December 1999 and had its second reading on 17 January 2000. The Bill and Explanatory Notes are available from The Stationery Office and on the Houses of Parliament website at www.parliament.uk/pa/pabills/hmt.

- contribute to the raising of standards, including basic skills, enhanced curriculum delivery and alternative learning opportunities;
- contribute to school management and teacher development;
- provide appropriate experiences and awareness of work for pupils at each key stage.

16. Equally we want to make it easier for businesses to understand how they can get involved locally, and appreciate the benefits to their company of working with young people - benefits such as recruitment, staff development opportunities and enhanced company profile.

17. To achieve our goal we propose to build on the many excellent examples of partnerships that currently exist. We know of at least one example where EBPs, Science and Technology Regional Organisations (SATROs), Trident, Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) and other organisations delivering specific programmes (such as Young Enterprise, Understanding Industry and Young Engineers) work closely together to provide a high quality one stop service to schools and business. This structure makes it easier to engage local players in national initiatives (such as business support for Maths Year 2000), and enables economies of scale as well as more effective targeting of resources at areas of most need.

Roles and responsibilities

18. **The Learning and Skills Council** - will set out the national framework for education business partnership activities. It will also, in consultation with Regional Development Agencies, be responsible for approving plans drawn up by its local arms. These plans will describe how the local network will support education business links.

19. **Local Learning and Skills Councils (LLSCs)** - from April 2001 LLSCs will ensure high quality education business partnerships are in place, including:

- delivery of the Work Experience Programme and the Teacher Placement Scheme.²
- drawing up strategic plans to encourage more schools and more businesses to work in partnership;
- determining what the delivery priorities are, for example by setting targets on level and type of activity and linking these to the funding criteria;
- agreeing which organisations are best placed to deliver the objectives, targets and outputs and ensuring that they work in collaboration;
- ensuring coherence with other key organisations, particularly regional organisations - Business in the Community, British Chambers of Commerce, Small Business Service, LEAs, Learning Partnerships, Regional Development Agencies, Government Offices; and
- assessing performance.

20. LLSCs will need to work with the new **Connexions Service**, which will also start in April 2001. Connexions will provide guidance and support to young people from 13-19 to enable them to continue and succeed in learning. The Connexions Service and education business link organisations will need to work closely together to ensure joint planning and coherent delivery of related activities.

² These programmes are being separately reviewed and we aim to relaunch them in April 2001.

21. **Local Learning Partnerships** - will provide LLSCs with information on youth, adult and community learning needs and on employer skill needs. They will also ensure that local partners work closely together to provide high quality opportunities for all young people. Many education business link organisations are already part of, or working closely with, Local Learning Partnerships. We want these vital relationships to continue and be strengthened.

22. **Education business link organisations** - will deliver programmes and/or work with individual schools and business to build successful partnerships. It is essential that local organisations in a single LLSC work closely together. We will also need a stronger emphasis on outputs and targets. For some organisations this will require a change in priorities and different ways of working.

23. We believe that the best structure is likely to be one where there is a lead education business link organisation or consortium in each of the 47 LSC areas. This consortium would comprise all or most of the key local players such as the EBPs, SATROs, local business representatives etc.; would organise education business link activities to meet the targets set by the LSC; would act as a channel for funding; and would work closely with organisations which deliver specific programmes such as Understanding Industry and Young Enterprise.

24. **Business** - Our new agenda will only be developed and delivered effectively if it draws heavily on the advice of the business community. Business will be represented on both the LLSCs and the Local Learning Partnerships and is already closely engaged with school business link delivery organisations and other relevant local players. LLSCs and the Small Business Service (SBS) franchises will have the same boundaries in almost all cases. This link will be important in drawing more local businesses into education activity.

Funding

25. From April 2001 we intend to channel funding for work experience and teacher placements through the LSC. No decisions have been made yet on any other funding levels from April 2001. We expect local school business link organisations to continue to raise funds from various sources. Future central funding will only be made available on the basis that activities provide clear outcomes supporting one or more of the following national criteria:

- raising standards of achievement in schools;
- improving pupil motivation and attendance;
- supporting management and leadership in schools;
- preparing young people for the world of work;
- enhancing the delivery of the National Curriculum;
- developing key skills, including wider skills such as creativity and enterprise.

26. The national funding criteria will allow for local diversity of need and resources. Criteria for local organisations receiving funding will include clear evidence of working in collaboration with others. We do not want LLSCs to fund lots of fragmented projects and programmes. Instead we want there to be a lead "agent" within a LLSC boundary for delivering the range of education business link activities and forging partnerships between business and schools. The role of the 'lead agent' could be managed in several ways. Current local partners could decide to group together in a single organisation to offer a complete package of activities. Or one organisation, with a proven track record, might act as a lead through which funding is routed to other satellite organisations.

Managing the transition 2000-2001

27. To prepare for the advent of LLSCs it is vital that we start work now to build the foundations for our new approach and to ensure that the transition from TECs to LLSCs does not impact adversely on current activities.

28. We are aware that many of you have concerns about funding from April 2000, especially where activity has been supported by TECs in the past. TECs face many additional pressures on their resources in the coming months because of the transition to the new structures we are introducing. However, we attach considerable importance to the support that TECs have given to education business link organisations and activities in the past and want to continue to support these as far as they can. Government Offices will be working closely with TECs to help them find ways to make best use of their discretionary resources to do this.

29. We announced in the Pre-Budget Report of November 1999 that we are making £5m available to ensure the new strategy is ready to be launched from April 2001. The £5m will be made available from May 2000 to a consortium or lead organisation in each LSC area to fund work on Initial Development Plans. We expect these to be finalised by December 2000 to feed into the planning and operations of the LLSCs. These plans will set out how education business link organisations will work together in each LLSC area, how they will raise the scale and quality of education business link activity, how they will encourage businesses to help improve education standards and address key learning issues in their area, and how they will begin work on implementation.

30. We expect that the process of working together locally to produce these Initial Development Plans will form the basis of the closer and more strategic working relationships that will need to underpin this work in the future. This initial funding can also cover work needed locally to begin to bring the various interested parties together.

31. Bids for this funding will be invited in Spring/Summer 2000. They will be assessed by Government Offices working closely with TECs, DfEE and senior local business representatives.

Conclusion

32. This is an exciting opportunity to make education business links and activities an even more powerful force in helping young people succeed and to ensure that more schools, more young people and more businesses benefit. We want to help with the transition to the new structures that will be in place from April 2001. We very much welcome your views, please can you respond in writing to the address given overleaf. **Your responses may be made public unless you indicate otherwise.**

Department for Education and Employment
February 2000

Responses should be sent to:

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Runcorn

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Responses should reach the Department by 14 April 2000.