



NEXT STEPS ON THE RPA POLICY PROPOSALS

Work on developing detailed proposals to implement the Review of Public Administration changes announced in November 2005 is gathering pace. Following a series of meetings with stakeholder organisations over the spring and summer, a series of initial policy proposals were submitted to the Minister for Education, Maria Eagle, on 18 September for her consideration. These papers covered a range of topics, including:

- A vision highlighting the improvements in education that will be achieved through the RPA.
- The working relationships between:
 - (i) the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) and schools;
 - (ii) DE and the ESA; and
 - (iii) DE and stakeholders.
- Governance and accountability;
- the employing authority and employer roles of the ESA and boards of governors;

- procurement and the schools estate; and
- youth services.

The Minister is anxious to share emerging thinking on the policy proposals and she has agreed, once she has had an opportunity to consider the updated papers, to circulate copies of the policy papers to stakeholders. This will be followed by a further series of meetings with stakeholders in the coming weeks, with a view to finalising the proposals.

A further step in the process will involve screening all the policy proposals to determine

potential equality impacts as well as other screenings to cover areas such as rural impact. If the screening identifies the possibility of an adverse impact a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

The final step will be the drafting of the main RPA legislation, which will be subject to public consultation, and which the Minister aims to have ready by July 2007. It remains the intention to have the RPA implemented from 1 April 2008.

ANY QUESTIONS

As always, RPA Moving Forward is not only about keeping you updated, it is also about giving you the opportunity to ask questions and find out what is happening. Send your questions to the following e-mail address:

rpa@deni.gov.uk

WHAT DOES RPA MEAN FOR DEL?

What does RPA mean for DEL?

DEL's interests in the RPA are:

- ☑ the creation of an Education and Skills Authority (ESA);
- ☑ the abolition of Enterprise Ulster (EU); and
- ☑ the amalgamation of the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) into the Construction Sector Skills Council.

Enterprise Ulster and the Construction Industry Training Board

The rundown of Enterprise Ulster (EU) is moving ahead rapidly. Recruitment to the Training for Work programme ceased in April 2006 and trainee numbers are reducing weekly. Job reductions have also commenced. EU is scheduled to close in March 2007 making it one of the first RPA decisions to be fully implemented. Significant progress has also been made on the amalgamation of the CITB with the Construction Skills Council which is to take effect from April 2007.

For further information on the DEL RPA project work please contact Juliet Whitford or Angela McAllister on 90257685.



DEL

Department for
Employment and Learning
www.delni.gov.uk

Creation of the Education and Skills Authority

The creation of the new Education and Skills Authority will mean major changes in terms of what DEL does. As the ESA will be responsible for the planning, implementation and monitoring of training and educational policy for young people aged 14-19, the functions which DEL currently performs for those in the 16-19 age group will transfer to ESA.

This work will be carried out in line with the joint strategy being taken forward by the Department of Education (DE) and DEL. This will include:

- ☑ the delivery of the shared vision and set of common objectives defined in the 14-19 strategy;
- ☑ the implementation of the Entitlement Framework, as contained in the Education Order 2006;
- ☑ the implementation of decisions on the supporting qualifications framework for 14-19; and the funding of the provision across the schools, FE and training sectors.

The creation of the ESA is very much a joint project involving DE and DEL. This is reflective of the fact that the ESA will support the operational delivery of education across the education sectors.

DEL is working very closely with DE on policy and implementation issues to ensure that the new structure enables effective working and accountability arrangements between all key stakeholders, particularly DE, DEL, ESA, Training Organisations and the FE and School sectors.

Next Steps

The focus for the DEL project over the next month is to establish the policy basis for the legislation to create the ESA. The Department looks forward to working with all stakeholders to ensure that this restructuring of education improves the quality of provision and opportunities available for all young people.

UPDATE ON HUMAN RESOURCES

Draft Policies and Procedures

The Education Sector RPA HR Project Board met on 10 October and the following papers were signed off:

- Equality Plan
- Policy on the Control of Vacancies
- HR Communication Plan

The papers have been endorsed by the Programme Management Board in advance of consultation taking place with TUS.

Due to the urgency in implementing the Vacancy Control Policy across the Education Sector in order to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to safeguard and secure the employment of existing staff within the Education Sector, TUS has agreed that the draft Vacancy Control Policy can be issued to employers on a without prejudice basis to inform their approach to the

issues it addresses. Consultation on the policy will take place with TUS at the first meeting, on 8 November, of the Education Sector Joint Forum for HR issues.

Information for Consultees on the Policies and/or procedures being developed by the HR Project Board was also signed off and has been issued to consultees.

This will allow the HR Project to seek early views as to whether consultees think any of the policy proposals being taken forward by the HR Project are likely to have an adverse impact on any of the nine equality categories specified at Section 75 of the NI Act 1998.

The Information for Consultees document is available on the DE Website: www.deni.gov.uk

RPA AFFECTED GROUP

A sub group of the Stakeholders Group met on 16 October. The purpose of the meeting was to consult with Stakeholders and explore the implications for Education Sector staff to allow DE to make an informed decision on the staff who should be included in the Education Sector RPA Affected Group.

Formal agreement from TUS is still awaited, but TUS has advised that the official view of Congress is that school based staff (including teachers) should not be included in the RPA Affected Group. This is in line with the view taken by employers.

TRAINING

Training Managers from across the education sector met on 17 October to explore a number of issues relating to training and development. A small sub-group was tasked with looking at Terms of Reference.

NEW TEAM TAKES FORWARD EDUCATION & SKILLS AUTHORITY

It is now only a year and a half until the new ESA becomes operational and work has been taking place to ensure that this target date is met. A new team has now been set up to progress the work on establishing ESA and to support the Chief Executive (Designate) when appointed.

The Education and Skills Authority Implementation Team (ESAIT) is headed up by Dr Mark Browne, and a key focus of the team will be to ensure that education services carry on as normal during the transition period.

The team's overall objective is:

"To establish, by April 2008, an Education and Skills Authority which operates effectively and is positioned to secure the expected efficiencies and improvements in the delivery of education services."

Key areas of work will include:

- Overseeing the appointment of the Governing Board and the Senior Management Team of ESA;
- Working with the Chief Executive designate and Senior Management Team to identify

suitable accommodation for the ESA Headquarters;

- Identifying the steps needed to ensure the necessary financial, accounting and administrative systems are in place to support the effective functioning of the ESA from 1 April 2008;
- Identifying best practice and models of organisation and service delivery to inform the development of ESA;
- Scoping the potential for the development of regional services;
- Contributing to the identification of the level of efficiency gains expected over the Comprehensive Spending Review period; and
- Working with the Chief Executive designate to draw up and implement a change management strategy across the affected organisations in preparation for the establishment of ESA.

ESAIT will be arranging meetings with key stakeholders over the next few weeks to discuss the new Education and Skills Authority and how affected organisations can contribute to its successful implementation.

Contacts & Comments



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Do you have any further questions about RPA? Would you like us to answer them in the next issue of our newsletter? Please

email: rpa@deni.gov.uk

call: 028 91 279853

or

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