

# RPA NEWS

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## EXPECT 'BUSINESS AS USUAL' IN JANUARY 2010

It is clear from both formal and informal feedback that schools and colleges believe it is vitally important that the services they rely on will not suffer during the transition to the new organisation.

The creation of ESA will bring significant changes to the education sector. But those changes will be introduced in a phased manner over a number of years. Service continuity is top of our agenda.

On Day One of ESA schools should expect 'business as usual'. When changes to the services are being made they will be informed well in advance.

We continue to work closely with the Department and the existing Chief Executives to ensure change is carefully managed and we have a smooth transition to the new organisation.

In this issue:

- Pg 1 Expect 'Business As Usual' in January 2010
- Pg 1 The Benefits of Creating the ESA
- Pg 2 DE Transformation - New Directorates
- Pg 2 Legislation Update
- Pg 3 Setting Out the Journey to ESA
- Pg 3 Appointment of Chair and Members to the New Authority
- Pg 4 Sectoral Support Bodies
- Pg 4 School Library Services will be Part of ESA

## THE BENEFITS OF CREATING THE ESA

**The business case for the creation of the Education and Skills Authority was approved by the Department of Finance and Personnel in October 2008.**

The business case sets out the strategic case for education reform in the wider context of the changes to public administration across the public sector, including local government. It considers alternative options (to creating a unitary authority) and both the educational and financial benefits of the proposed changes.

Amongst the non-monetary benefits, the business case assesses six criteria:

- To provide the optimum platform for future design/delivery of consistent and effective education and support services;
- To provide a fit for purpose school estate;
- To support professional development of the workforce;
- To provide a clear and effective planning, governance and accountability framework across all organisations;
- To maintain service continuity during transition;
- To rationalise existing organisation structures.

The creation of the Education and Skills Authority was seen to offer the best prospect of achieving these goals. Several other options

were considered and assessed but deemed to offer less prospect of generating as successful an outcome.

When the monetary benefits were assessed, the business case considered how to optimise the use of £680m of resources currently disbursed by DE and falling within the scope of the RPA in education. (£1.3 billion allocated directly to schools was deemed outside the scope of the review.) Within this total £545m was identified as available for 'radical re-shaping of provision'. However, such was the scale and complexity of the possibilities it was decided not to attempt to calculate the possible financial benefits. Within the more limited assessment of the remaining £135m, it was calculated that the option of establishing the ESA would generate almost £22m of savings each year.

In conclusion the business case approved by DFP confirmed that the establishment of the ESA would generate an initial saving of £22m per year, would optimise prospects for both the education estate and its workforce and that, in objective business terms, offers the optimum solution to the issues raised by the review of education administrative structures. A copy of the full business case is available on the ESA website at [www.esani.org.uk](http://www.esani.org.uk)



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

## DE TRANSFORMATION – NEW DIRECTORATES

Transformation took effect in the Department of Education on 6 May 2009. A revised Directorate structure was established to pave the way for a new way of doing business.

In a memo to staff, Will Haire, the Department's most senior official, wrote:

*"We will be focusing on resourcing, policy development and ensuring the public accountability of the performance of the education and youth sectors."*

In the new structure one Directorate will focus on the Education Workforce and another on Education Infrastructure. Directorates responsible for Finance, Curriculum, Qualifications and Standards and RPA will provide leadership in areas that are largely self-explanatory. New Directorates will be created to consider Inclusion, Access and Well-Being and another on Families and Communities.

Two Directorates will have responsibility for Equality and All Ireland issues and Planning and Performance Management.

Whilst it may take a short while for staff to adjust to the new structure, colleagues in the wider education sector will find that their regular contacts will be unaffected though they may find a wider range of contacts contributing to the consideration of issues and the development of new policies to address the issues they raise. The new structure promotes collegiate working with staff working across the Department even more than had previously been the case.

It has been decided that these arrangements needed to be in

place now, in advance of the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority in January 2010. Whilst it will be recognised that further changes will have to be managed at that time, it is expected that the new Directorates will have bedded down sufficiently to assist the new structures in the smooth transition of the wider sector. A significant number of DE staff will also transfer to the ESA in January and the new structure accommodates the needs of DE post-January taking account of the transfer of these staff and the functions they perform.

## LEGISLATION UPDATE

**The first RPA Education Bill continues its passage through the legislative making machinery at the Assembly.**

After receiving strong support at Second Stage in December (the Assembly voted 72/12 in favour of having the legislation) the Bill moved to Committee Stage. Ordinarily this Stage lasts 30 calendar days but the Committee sought and was granted an extension up to 30 September to allow a more detailed analysis of the policy and the evidence submitted by a wide range of interested commentators.

As the summer recess approaches, it is expected that the Committee will complete its scrutiny of the Bill, including a consideration of the amendments that the Minister herself will propose at the next Stage of the process. The Committee will then prepare and submit a report including possible amendments that will be proposed in plenary session when the Bill moves back to the Assembly in early October.

The Committee's main focus is likely to cover its views on area-based planning, the employing arrangements for staff, especially teaching staff in non-controlled schools and membership of the ESA itself.

The Committee has also indicated that it wishes to see the text of the second RPA Education Bill before it completes its consideration. Officials from DE have discussed the policies underlying the second Bill and are striving to complete the drafting of the Bill for Introduction before the summer recess. The second Bill will provide statutory basis for the proposed Education Advisory Forum, area-based planning arrangements and arrangements for ownership of the education estate that is currently controlled by education and library boards. Ownership arrangements are seen as important to underscore the responsibility of the ESA to provide for all schools on the basis of equality.

The Minister remains committed to RPA reform as part of her agenda to raise standards, close the attainment gap and to promote equality throughout the education sector.

## SETTING OUT THE JOURNEY TO ESA

<b>May 2009</b>	DE Transformation - New director structures operational
<b>June 2009</b>	Appointment process for ESA Directors begins
<b>September 2009</b>	Legislation - Bill 2 Introduced and debated in Assembly Structures for service delivery models ESA Chairperson appointed ESA Board Members appointed ESA's first Directors appointed Day 1 ESA Locations identified
<b>October 2009</b>	Sectoral support bodies established ESA's first Assistant Directors appointed Staff Transfer Scheme published
<b>November 2009</b>	Location transition plan created ESA corporate network installed
<b>December 2009</b>	Legislation receives Royal Assent Pay, Terms and Conditions and Pensions for new ESA staff agreed
<b>January 2010</b>	Education and Skills Authority operational

## APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND MEMBERS TO THE NEW AUTHORITY

Advertisements to attract candidates for the position of Chairperson of the new Education and Skills Authority were placed in local newspapers in late April with a closing date of 18 May.

A further invitation to applicants to sit as members of the Authority is expected to be published in the coming weeks.

Speculation on the membership of the Authority gained wider public attention when the Committee for Education raised issues about the number and balance of elected members who would sit on the Authority. With no agreed position yet established by the Committee, it is likely that the Minister will await the Committee's report before moving forward with the process to populate the Authority.

In the meantime, applicants for the position of Chairperson will be sharpening their wits to compete for the key position which is expected to require a time commitment of 3 days per week.

The position attracts a remuneration of £33,000 per year. Perhaps surprisingly for a job heading an education authority, no formal qualifications are required. The process of choosing a Chairperson will focus on testing applicants' skills in key areas including corporate governance, leadership and strategic and analytical thinking. The process will follow best practice guidelines as recommended by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Interviews are expected to be held during June with the successful candidate being announced early in the new school term.

The ESA will formally not come into operation until 1 January 2010 but an early appointment will allow the successful appointee to:

- oversee the winding down of the legacy bodies
- the early construction of both the new Authority's senior management tiers and its launch; and
- the early creation of a culture of working that will have widespread impact on the Authority's staff and the wider community that it will serve.

## SECTORAL SUPPORT BODIES

Working is continuing within DE on consideration of the business cases for the sectoral support bodies that will come into operation in tandem with the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority in January 2010. The Minister, Caitríona Ruane, has agreed that DE will fund a number of bodies that will offer support to schools which wish to maintain a distinctive ethos.

With the transfer of a number of operational functions from the NI Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta and the proposed dissolution of Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), it is anticipated that support bodies will be established for schools in each of these areas. A further support body for voluntary grammar schools is also being considered. Finally work is in hand to consider how the distinctive flavour of schools that are currently controlled might be sustained. A meeting of interested parties will be convened at which a proposal to set up a small working group to consider the needs of the sector will be proposed. The working group will be expected to propose the establishment of a sectoral

support body to advise and support those schools, initially at least, that do not readily subscribe to the ideals of the other bodies. It will be a matter for school Boards of Governors to determine with which body to align. It will be possible that some schools may seek advice and support from more than one body. For example, a school could seek to support both Irish-medium and Catholic or it could be a voluntary grammar and supportive of the ideals of integrated education.

Sectoral support bodies will offer a valuable focal point around which the concerns of specific interest groups will convene. It is hoped that these support bodies will be better placed to articulate common concerns to both DE and the ESA. Support bodies will also be able to advise schools on how to develop their particular identity, how to optimise the relationship with similar schools and also how to manage and develop the relationship with schools which subscribe to a different ethos.

Decisions about the funding of sectoral support bodies are expected to be announced in September.

## SCHOOL LIBRARY SERVICES WILL BE PART OF ESA

*In April 2009, Libraries NI took over the running of public libraries creating a single body responsible for delivering the service across the region.*

School Library Services have remained within the existing Education and Library Boards and will become part of the new Education and Skills Authority (ESA) in January 2010.

It is well recognised that school libraries have the potential to play an increasingly integral part in

the success of both schools and their pupils. The ESA Implementation Team (ESAIT) has been working with service providers, service users and the Departments of Education, and Culture, Arts and Leisure to develop a service delivery model for this area within the new organisation.

Work is also ongoing to develop a close working relationship with Libraries NI to ensure the transfer of expertise to ESA and to make sure there is continuity of provision for schools as this important service moves in to the new organisation.