

May 2009



Young London Matters



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR LONDON

The London Quality Assurance Framework for Alternative
Provision (14-16 year olds) - A Coordinated Approach

Memorandum of Understanding



ALDCS

Association of London
Directors of Children's
Services



Making Every
London Child Matter

Foreword

We are delighted to present this London Quality Assurance Framework for Alternative Provision for 14-16 year olds

This is one of four protocols that will support cross-borough working in London, helping to improve the service provided for children and young people needing help and support in more than one place in the capital.

The framework has been developed in response to the *Mobility and Young London* report (GOL, 2007), which highlighted the need for children's services to take responsibility for identifying and addressing the needs of children and young people cooperatively to offer the best possible support.

The aim of this framework is to establish methods of working that will bring coordination and better quality to alternative education provision for 14-16 year olds, making sure all London boroughs are working to the same standard and understanding the most effective ways of helping to commission services for children and young people whose needs are met in more than one local area.

It establishes a set of principles that respond to Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) guidance on commissioning alternative providers. When put into practice, it will support many more 14-16 year olds to stay in education, including those who are vulnerable and those without a suitable school place.

The Mobility and Young London Steering Group has developed this protocol in partnership with ALDCS, London's local authorities, and the Government Office for London. Our sincere thanks go to the group and to the many agencies who continue to work together on this important theme. Particular thanks go to colleagues from the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Haringey, Ealing and Wandsworth who have provided valuable expertise and learning for this framework.

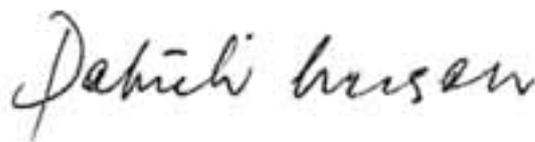
Now, looking forward, we are relying on professionals across London to implement this framework and to ensure it makes a difference.

This means commissioners must be as rigorous as they can, making sure only the highest quality suppliers are contracted to provide this key education service. Colleagues must support each other by providing the information needed to make sound commissioning decisions. Those offering alternative provision have to make sure their service is exceptional in its ability to meet young people's needs. Through work such as this, we hope we can help more young Londoners to achieve their potential and develop the skills that are central to London's future and their own.



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Patrick Leeson

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The London Quality Assurance Framework for Alternative Provision (14-16 year olds) - Context

This London Quality Assurance Framework for Alternative Provision (14-16 year olds) is one of a series of guidance documents produced as a response to the London-specific problems outlined in *Mobility and Young London* (GOL, 2007). The framework aims to establish common working methods across London's boroughs to the quality assurance of alternative education provision.

Mobility and Young London showed that for children and young people in London, mobility between boroughs causes significant and complex challenges not replicated to the same extent across the country. It also highlighted the impact of mobility on those delivering services in the capital. The report set about improving London's service response to those who receive services in more than one area by asking local areas to work together to tackle the challenges this can present. It asked services to take responsibility for making sure the needs of this group are addressed, cooperating across boundaries to give the best support possible.

This framework is one part of that approach – a set of guidance that covers specific issues relating to mobility in London, providing practical solutions to issues that practitioners, children, young people and families face on a day to day basis. Other titles include:

- Mobility and Young London (GOL, 2007)
- Attendance, Exclusions and Off-Rolling Passport (GOL, 2008)
- Children in Care Health Passport: Promoting the emotional health and well being of London's children in care (GOL, 2009)
- Integrated Working Without Boundaries – The London Common Assessment Framework Protocol (GOL, 2009).

These reports can be downloaded at www.younglondonmatters.org



Memorandum of Understanding

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the London Directors of Children's Services (on behalf of London local authorities and schools within the authorities) in relation to the quality assurance of alternative provision for pupils of compulsory school age educated in London.¹

Purpose of the MoU

The responsibility for quality assuring alternative providers usually rests with the local authority or local commissioners in the area where the provision is based – referred to in this MoU as the 'host authority'. However, due to inadequate numbers of alternative providers in some areas, more commissioners are commissioning services from within another authority – referred to here as 'external commissioners'. All commissioners must have robust processes in place for quality assuring alternative provision they commission, wherever the provision is based.

The purpose of this MoU is to support local authorities to develop a coherent and coordinated approach to the quality assurance of alternative provision. It aims to do this by establishing:

- A set of principles and obligations relating to cross-authority working – this has been developed in line with Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) guidance on commissioning alternative providers
- A protocol for operating across authorities in London.

In this framework, the terms alternative provision and alternative education refer to full or part-time provision for 14-16 year olds that has been commissioned to support specific groups of, or individual, young people to stay in education. Examples of those who attend alternative education include young people without a school place, those who are pre or post exclusion, or those for whom alternative education is deemed to be a more appropriate option than mainstream education.

Alternative education is usually purchased from Further Education (FE) colleges, work-based learning providers, or third-sector organisations that do not have their 14-16 provision quality assured by OFSTED. This guidance does not refer to Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) as these are subject to OFSTED quality assurance procedures.



This MoU and associated framework can be downloaded from:

Young London Matters:
www.younglondonmatters.org

Association London Directors
Childrens' Services:
www.lgfl.net/lgfl/sections/aldcs

¹ A child ceases to be of compulsory school age at the school leaving date (the last Friday in June) of the school year in which he or she attains the age of 16. (DCSF April 09 Registration of Independent Schools).

Principles and obligations relating to cross-authority working in London, in accordance with this MoU.

In this MoU the term '**provider**' always refers to **providers of alternative provision**.

1. Local authorities will ensure that the local quality assurance and commissioning framework used to assess providers of alternative education is consistent with the principles identified in this framework.
2. If local authorities do not currently have a quality assurance process they must commit to implementing this London Quality Assurance Framework for Alternative Provision (14-16 year olds).
3. Local authorities will ensure that a named officer, responsible for the quality assurance and commissioning of providers within their authority, is listed on their local authority website. They must also ensure that this role is consistent with the DCSF guidance on the role of the named officer.
4. Local authorities will inform all commissioners and providers based within their local authority area about this MoU, fielding any questions appropriately.
5. Local authorities will maintain a database of approved providers. Supporting evidence should include quality assurance and verification results as well as supporting, monitoring and outcomes for each provider listed.
6. Local authorities will require those who commission alternative provision for young people to forward any documentation relating to providers to the named officer for alternative provision within the local authority where the providers are based. This ensures that each local authority can maintain comprehensive data on approved providers including outcomes, achievement and destinations of pupils placed.
7. Local authorities should have begun the process for introducing quality assurance systems and procedures from 1st January 2009 and these should be in place **by no later than September 2009**.
8. This MoU will be reviewed in line with the 14-19 curriculum, changes in the machinery of government or any developments in 14-19 quality assurance frameworks or kitemarks in London.



Protocol for operating across authorities

1. Prior to commissioning providers in other authorities, the external commissioner will contact the named officer for alternative provision in the host authority to request information about the provider.
2. In the spirit of cooperation, host authorities will provide external commissioners with information relating to providers where they have been approved against quality criteria, or where they have a verification award or reassessment pending. Information will also be provided on any evaluations undertaken and timescales for award verification.
3. Where a verification award is not in place (or pending) the host authority will also provide external commissioners with any intelligence drawn from formal investigations, inspections, or feedback from previous outcome or output-based contracts so that informed choices can be made.
4. If a provider fails to comply with the terms and conditions of a contract the provider will be suspended from the database subject to investigation. The same applies if a serious problem/query arises e.g. if there are safeguarding or child protection concerns. External commissioners will also be informed of any suspension or investigation so that informed choices can be made.
5. Depending upon the outcome of any investigation, providers may be reinstated on the database in which case external commissioners will be informed of the decision and the removal of the provider's suspension.
6. Where a provider has no formal track record in the field it is recommended that they approach the local authority in which they are based for an assessment.
7. If an external commissioner contacts a host local authority regarding a provider and no quality assurance has taken place, it is recommended that the host authority and external commissioner jointly assess the provider, therefore enabling the host authority to maintain comprehensive data on providers in their area.
8. Before placing individuals or groups of young people in provision it is recommended that a risk assessment be undertaken in accordance with the needs of the young person or group concerned. Commissioners should always be satisfied that provision is 'fit for purpose' (see Part 2, Annex 1).
9. External commissioners will supply host authorities with monitoring or outcome data on individual or groups of young people placed in provision within their authority so that host authorities can maintain comprehensive data on providers in their area.

This MoU was agreed for implementation at the December 2008 ALDCS meeting.

Local authorities have agreed to commission alternative providers according to the obligations and principles in this Memorandum of Understanding. These principles reflect the minimum standards expected when assuring quality and commissioning alternative provision for all young people aged 16 years, or under.



The London Quality Assurance Framework for Alternative Provision

Part 1: Quality assurance and verification

The principles identified here are based on procedures and documentation shared by Ealing, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth and Haringey. While these authorities are not alone in having developed quality assurance frameworks, the principles and examples of practice cited here offer local authorities examples of good practice² from which they can draw directly or assess their own authority's procedures against.

Part 1 is based on the following 4 principles which offer local authorities standards to ensure the education provided for their young people is appropriate to their needs.

Annex 1: Guidance

All local authorities should produce a 'quality handbook' outlining assurance and verification processes that providers must complete as well as evidence required to support learner achievement. The Tower Hamlets publication - **Quality Handbook for Work Based and Community Learning Providers** offers a clear programme of expected delivery standards to alternative providers. This is available for download via the following websites: www.thelearninghub.org and www.younglondonmatters.org

Annex 2: The Offer

The offer should provide clarity on which type of learning is commissioned for different groups of young people or individual pupils. This should be clear enough to prevent any misunderstandings by providers about expectations about curriculum or quality, and should state any evidence of outcomes data required.

The Ealing Quality Assurance Framework clearly identifies through schedules 1-4 the different type of learning that Ealing Children's Services and Ealing schools are likely to commission, indicating the needs of the young people concerned and the expectations that Ealing has of providers. A provider should clearly evidence the curriculum, support provided and the approach to teaching and learning of any offer prior to any verification procedure.



² Good practice, as agreed by London local authorities leading the development of this MoU. Local authorities can forward other examples of good practice to the Mobility and Young London lead at GOL for inclusion. However, all examples of good practice used or added to the website must be in line with the DCSF guidance *Commissioning Alternative Providers* October 2008.



Annex 3: Verification/Validation

Commissioners (including schools) should ensure that quality assurance checks are carried out prior to recommending providers or placing a young person in alternative provision.

The verification and validation process should take account both of the setting and the curriculum offer. A provider should undergo separate assessments for each learning package they are offering. Some providers operate or have centres in more than one local authority or region. It is advised that each centre/site offering commissioned provision should be independently verified.

The self assessment and verification process outlined in the *Wandsworth Quality Assurance Framework* offers a clear set of procedures directly relating to OfSTED standards.

Annex 4: Cycle of Approval

How long will the approval of the provider last?

It is recommended that validation of an alternative provider lasts for up to 3 years, subject to:

- An annual review of information drawn from contract monitoring
- External bodies, such as OfSTED, assessing the quality of the provider
- Consideration of complaints or feedback from staff (authority, school and provider), parents or young people during the 3 year period
- Change in ownership of the provider
- Change of site.

After a 3-year period the provider should undertake a new verification process.



Part 2: Contracting principles for alternative provision

Once the host authority or commissioning organisation has completed the quality assurance and verification process they will need to ensure that the following procedures are in place.

The principles identified here are based on procedures and documentation shared by Ealing, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth and Haringey. While these authorities are not alone in having developed quality assurance and contracting procedures, the examples of practice cited here offer local authorities examples of good practice³ from which they can draw directly or assess their own authority's procedures against.

Annex 1: Contracting Principles for Alternative Provision

Is this provision appropriate for each pupil? Local authorities should clearly outline to schools and other commissioners of alternative provision, the steps to be taken before placing a young person with an alternative provider.

The Haringey guidance for commissioning alternative provision clearly outlines the steps that need to be taken prior to placing a young person in alternative provision. This guidance defines roles and responsibilities and ensures the continued safety and appropriateness of a provider throughout the placement.

As identified in the Haringey guidance, each individual or group placement should be considered independently before commissioning a placement. In all cases, each placing organisation/department needs has the responsibility for ensuring the appropriateness of the placement/s prior to the placement.

Annex 2: The Contract

Once a provider has completed the quality assurance process and the commissioners have identified, through individual checks, that the provider is appropriate for the pupil or group, the commissioner should establish a service level agreement (SLA) with the provider.

The checklist for providers identified in the Haringey guidance and the service level agreement detailed in the Ealing framework ensures clarity about any details or measures against which the provider will be monitored over the lifetime of the contract and on completion of the contract for both commissioner and provider.

Procuring services: Commissioners are advised to be mindful of financial and procurement regulations within their authority.

³ Good practice, as agreed by London local authorities leading the development of this MoU. Local authorities can forward other examples of good practice to the Mobility and Young London lead at GOL for inclusion. However, all examples of good practice used or added to the website must be in line with the DCSF guidance *Commissioning Alternative Providers* October 2008.



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Our Partners

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