

**DEPARTMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING**  
**SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM MEETING**  
**Thursday 25 June 2009**  
**Board Room, Adelaide House**

**Present:** Dr. Aideen McGinley (Chair)  
Greg McConnell  
Nuala Kerr  
Patricia McAuley  
John Baird  
Beverley Harrison  
Trevor Connolly  
Mary McIvor  
Richard Kenny  
June Ingram

**Apologies:** Catherine Bell  
Lucy Marten  
Fergus Devitt

**In Attendance:** Marie Boyd (Item 1)  
Daryl Young (Item 3.1)  
Mervyn Langtry (Item 3.2 & 3.5)  
Michael Gould (Item 3.3 & 3.4)

**1. Benevolent Fund Presentation**

- 1.1 Dr. McGinley introduced Mrs. Boyd and thanked her for the contribution she makes to the work of the Benevolent Fund.
- 1.2 Mrs. Boyd delivered a presentation on the Benevolent Fund giving an overview of the work carried out and the fund raising which takes place.

- 1.3 Dr. McGinley asked Mrs. Boyd to confirm that volunteers can participate during working hours and are offered training by the Benevolent Fund. Marie confirmed this and stated that they are always looking for more volunteers.
- 1.4 Ms. Harrison added that the Benevolent Fund was a very useful tool from a Personnel perspective and furthermore, her experience to date indicated that DEL staff had a high level of awareness about the fund.
- 1.5 Dr. McGinley concluded this item thanking Mrs. Boyd for her presentation and committing the ongoing support of the SMT.

## **2. Minutes & Summary Action Sheet from the SMT Meeting on 28 May 2009**

- 2.1 Minutes agreed subject to the following revision at paragraph 6.2:

National Minimum Wage – Mrs. Ingram informed the meeting that BERR had circulated the draft remit for the Low Pay Commission for 09/10 seeking urgent comments. The key issue for us was the proposal to look at a minimum wage for apprentices on which she would liaise with Mrs. Kerr to establish the nature of DEL's interest. She wanted to make SMT aware at this stage in case others had an interest or could comment. The participation age in England was a factor which needed to be taken into account.

- 2.2 In relation to paragraph 6.3 of the minutes Mrs Ingram made the point that she had discussed with Mrs McAuley and it would be important to keep the situation under review in the context of pressures on other frontline services such as OITFET and Redundancy Payments. This was agreed.

### **3. Policy**

#### **3.1 Reform of Vocational Qualifications in NI (Presentation)**

- 3.1.1 Daryl Young gave a presentation on various elements of the reforms which were being put in place and illustrated how these would impact on the Department's work.
- 3.1.2 There was discussion on how this would affect organisations which the Department fund to deliver education and training and what level of awareness these organisations had at present.
- 3.1.3 Mrs. McAuley raised concerns over the current level of knowledge amongst Steps to Work Providers and the impact these reforms would have with regard to existing contracts. Mr. Young informed the SMT that a Communications Group had been established to work towards a strategy for communicating the reforms to all stakeholders and noted that existing contracts was an issue which would be considered.
- 3.1.4 Mrs Kerr highlighted that Invest NI had reservations in relation to the possibility that employers may seek specific units of qualification rather than complete qualifications; which could mean that skills are less transferable.
- 3.1.5 Mr. Kenny highlighted some MLAs concern that as 95% of government funded, college based qualifications will be recognised on the new framework only 5% funding will be available for hobby and leisure courses which do not have a qualification attached. However, current figures indicate that 5% funding would exceed the requirement for the provision of hobby and leisure courses.
- 3.1.6 Dr. McGinley thanked Mr. Young for his presentation and the work he and his team had undertaken and suggested it would be of interest at PSG in the future.

## **3.2 Central Policy Function**

- 3.2.1 Mrs. Ingram introduced Mervyn Langtry to provide an overview of the progress to date on inter-Departmental and inter-Divisional working and asked the SMT to discuss and make suggestions on the way forward.
- 3.2.2 Dr. McGinley noted that this was an area of increasing importance for the Department due to the growing number of cross Divisional / Departmental issues coming from the Executive. Furthermore, co-ordination is an important function in giving a timely response to Minister's cases.
- 3.2.3 Mr. Langtry highlighted the various roles his branch fills and through this, illustrated the importance of each Division communicating developments to staff in his branch on a regular basis.
- 3.2.4 Mrs. Ingram and Mr. Langtry informed the SMT that there was a general lack of understanding regarding the Department's responsibilities and they were working with Communications Branch on how to inform people about the work of this Department and how this feeds in to Government strategy.
- 3.2.5 Mr. Kenny identified specific areas on which the Department are questioned on a regular basis and suggested there could be internal experts appointed to co-ordinate policy in these areas, e.g. on disability. Ms. Harrison and Mrs. Ingram will continue to work on the issue of a co-ordination function within the Department. SMT also discussed the possibility of establishing a Policy Makers Forum which Mrs. Ingram and Mr. Langtry will consider further.

**Action: Ms. Harrison & Mrs. Ingram to continue work on the issue of co-ordination**

**Action: Mrs. Ingram and Mr. Langtry to consider the benefits of a Policy Makers Forum.**

### **3.5 Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland (PPANI)<sup>1</sup>**

- 3.5.1 Mrs. McAuley introduced the paper highlighting that Preparation for Work Division (PfW) was given lead responsibility for this issue and currently represents DEL on the PPANI Strategic Management Board. Through participation on this Board, it has become clear that the Department's obligations under PPANI will extend beyond PfW to any division which has a customer facing role. In light of this, Mrs. McAuley proposed that responsibility for PPANI should be transferred to Strategy and Employment Rights Division.
- 3.5.2 Mrs. Ingram informed the SMT that she and Mrs. McAuley had already discussed this issue and agreed in principle, however the details of the handover needed to be finalised.
- 3.5.3 SMT agreed to this transfer of responsibility on the basis that a suitable handover point could be identified. However, there was considerable discussion and concern regarding the implications of the introduction of PPANI. Mrs. McAuley suggested that the SMT should discuss this at greater length at a future meeting.

**Action: Mrs. McAuley to bring PPANI back as an item for further discussion.**

### **3.3 Deloitte Review of Construction Industry Training Board**

- 3.3.1 Mrs. Kerr highlighted the key points of the report which the Minister had approved.
- 3.3.2 The SMT discussed the various elements of the report and noted the resultant changes.

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<sup>1</sup> This was moved up the agenda to enable Mr. Langtry to be present for discussion.

### **3.4 Progress of Success through Skills**

- 3.4.1 Mrs. Kerr introduced Michael Gould who highlighted the key areas of progress to date.
- 3.4.2 Dr. McGinley congratulated Michael and his team and other divisions for a good example of inter-Departmental work.
- 3.4.3 The SMT discussed the timeline for the implementation of Success through Skills and the financial implications attached. It was agreed that the implementation plan would be published with the individual projects prioritised and with the proviso that DEL needs to receive adequate funding to deliver each project in the next CSR bidding round.
- 3.4.4 Mrs. Ingram noted that there were several areas of work in the Strategy and Employment Rights Division which could be incorporated into the implementation plan and suggested she could meet Mr. Gould to discuss this in more detail. Dr. McGinley supported on this and highlighted several DEL strategies & cross-Departmental themes could be integrated in the final report.
- 3.4.5 Dr. McGinley concluded this item, reiterating her thanks to Mr. Gould and his team.

**Action: June Ingram and Michael Gould to consider the integrated nature of the strategy.**

## **4. Finance and Corporate Services Reports**

### **4.1 Risk Register**

- 4.1.1 The position on the current risk register was discussed by the SMT.
- 4.1.2 It was agreed that the item regarding HR Connect should be removed from the risk register as it is an issue.

**Action: Ms. Harrison to update the risk register**

**4.2 Issues Log**

- 4.2.1 Mr. Connolly highlighted that HR Connect was the only issue at present and invited Ms. Harrison to provide an update.
- 4.2.2 Ms. Harrison informed the meeting that arrangements were being made for the collection of feedback and she would issue a document to the SMT in the near future.

**4.3 Update re PfG / PSA Performance 2008/09**

- 4.3.1 Mr. Connolly informed the SMT that he understood a response had been received from OFMdfM / DFP which superceded the paper presented to SMT.
- 4.3.2 Mr. McConnell updated the SMT on the content of the response; this was discussed by the SMT.

**4.4 June 2009/10 Monitoring**

- 4.4.1 Mr. McConnell gave an update on the June monitoring position. This was discussed by the SMT.

**4.5 May Management Accounts**

- 4.5.1 Mr. Connolly gave an update on the May management accounts and stressed the importance of phasing to ensure accurate accounts. Mr. Connolly asked Directors (G5s) to consider phasing and ensure they are content with it. Furthermore, Mr. Connolly asked G5s to consider transfers

which would take place under 'Structured to Deliver' and ensure these were accounted for.

- 4.5.2 Mr. McConnell asked G5s to note that there may be a requirement to review staffing levels in line with budget requirements in the near future.

**Action: G5s to review phasing and transfers planned under 'Structured to Deliver' and liaise with Mr. Connolly on any actions arising.**

#### **4.6 Absence Management**

- 4.6.1 Ms. Harrison noted that the Department had performed well against absence targets in the year to date. Ms. Harrison also highlighted that the target for 2009/10 remained a challenge. To achieve this target, and in line with the Managing Attendance Action Plan, Directors would receive divisional absence targets in the near future.

**The following papers were noted without further discussion:**

**4.7 June Update;**

**4.8 Media and Marketing and Marketing Calendar of Events;**

**4.9 Communications Branch Board; and**

**4.10 May Media Analysis**

#### **5. Draft Training Scorecard and IIP Action Plan (Verbal Update)**

- 5.1 Ms. Harrison informed the SMT that further refinement is being undertaken and these will be presented next month.

#### **6. Proposal for DIGI.TV Business Case (Verbal Update)**

6.1 Ms. Harrison informed the SMT that this will be considered by IS/IT Programme Board initially and referred to the SMT as appropriate.

## **7. Formal Notings**

7.1 No issues were raised on these papers.

## **8. AoB**

8.1 Mrs. McAuley advised SMT that some operational changes would be introduced by the Employment Service to manage the increasing numbers of unemployed people over the summer months. These will come into place on 1 July and last for 3 months. Mrs. McAuley confirmed that the Minister would be advised and that none of the proposed changes contravened any legal obligations