

Achieving Progression or Progressing Achievement?

Reflections on LLNs five years on

LLN National Forum

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Starting Point

- nested in widening participation agenda (50% target)
- contrasting the ease of the academic route with the difficulties of the vocational route
- the 'Newby agenda'
- not merger but 'learner journey'
- iterative & customised (not top-down)
- seeking: *coherence, clarity and certainty*

A hard journey for some...





Aspirations for LLNs

LLNs were intended to:

- develop **curricula to make progression easier** by removing barriers, promoting bridging provision, and involving employers
- offering learners appropriate **information, advice and guidance**, and tracking their progress
- producing **progression agreements** that define for learners what they can reasonably expect from universities and colleges and to which institutions will commit

A Major Initiative

- 30 fully-funded LLNs (inc two 'national')
- involving 120 HEIs and 300+ FECs
- £105 mill direct investment
- ...plus significant funding via ASNs

Diverse Landscape

No single model for LLNs, rather a mixture of:

- established relationships
- varied scale
- different sectors and learner constituencies
- average funding approx £3m
- fixed-term funding



Common Activities

Series of shared interventions:

- progression agreements between HEIs and FECs for vocational learners
- innovative curricula and flexible learning
- employer engagement
- appropriate and accessible IAG



Contextual Issues

- Policy domain
 - absence of agreed skills strategies in many areas
 - conflicting agendas (institutional and individual)
 - other initiatives (employer engagement and pathfinders)
 - Fd powers for FECs?
- Funding climate (ASNs and time span)
- Implementing Progression Agreements (autonomy & 'guarantees')
- Getting 'buy in' (changing processes or cultures?)

Measuring 'Hard' Outputs

- 700+ new or modified curricula
- 2,350 progression agreements implemented or in preparation
- 33,000 learners benefiting each year
- 250,000 accessing IAG
- 75% curriculum developments informed by employers

Source: Reports to HEFCE



Recognising 'Soft' Outcomes

- collaborating as well as competing (esp across FE/HE)
- sharing in respect of 'quality' and credit transfer' issues
- (for some) accommodating NVQ learners
- culture change, esp among more selective universities
- supporting other initiatives (eg ECIF)
- a focus for local educational priorities (eg LAA level 4 targets)
- building future platforms.....



Securing the Legacy

- intended as short-term initiative but with durable benefits
- preserving the 'offer' or the 'mechanism'?
- different routes to sustainability
- a difficult funding climate (ASNs) and prospect of changing attitudes to access and participation?
- will still need championing
-not a single trip but an unfinished journey



Travelling LLN Network Style

