



Conference Report
31st January, LABAN

Dear Participant,

Thank you for attending the SELLLN First Year Conference. At the Conference, we promised to contact all those who attended with a follow up report. This report contains the outcomes of the Speed Networking Event. We have also attached Professor Deian Hopkin's presentation and the outcomes of the conference evaluation to the email containing this report.

The SELLLN First Year Conference was attended by over 100 people from 46 different organisations who have a stake or interest in SELLLN. The delegates included education professionals from our partner institutions, members of sector skills councils, employers and many other organisations who are active in post-compulsory education.

I hope that you enjoyed the Conference, and that you will be able to attend future events that we organise. You are on our mailing list and will be sent our Newsletter and Event flyers as they become available. If for any reason you would not like to receive these, please let Tracy Holtham (tracy.holtham@kcl.ac.uk) know and she will flag this up on our system.

Best wishes

Karen

Karen Morse, Director SELLLN

Speed Networking

The Speed Networking session was organised around several key questions which are relevant to the lifelong learning and vocational learning agendas. The notes taken at the event have been analysed and are organised here into key themes. In each case, we have summarised the notes, and highlighted areas where we think SELLLN is already helping to address the issues you raise, or what we think we can work towards with your help.

The Speed Networking session drew out many of your concerns but also many of your ideas for the future. We are grateful for your time and contribution, and if you see anything here that you'd like to work with SELLLN on, please get in touch with Karen Morse (karen.morse@kcl.ac.uk)

The key themes emerging from the notes were focus on learners/research; staff development; additional support for learners; employer engagement; new curriculum development or existing curriculum modification; information, advice and guidance; progression agreements; 14-19 curriculum.

Focus on Learners and Research

Participants felt that there was insufficient research on what vocational learners need in order to access higher education. This might include

- Provision for childcare
- Bursaries/grants
- Tutor support
- What makes learners engage
- Researching parents' attitudes and perceptions

What SELLLN would like to do:

- conduct a survey of existing research on these issues
- provide links to existing information on our website

Staff Development

It was clear that a lot of participants perceived post-compulsory education to be in a state of constant change, and many felt the need for more continuing professional development (cpd) to keep abreast of change and draw benefits from new opportunities. Those mentioned were

- More information and training on careers for non-specialists
- Time and training to develop links with employers

- Shared opportunities for cpd for both FE and HE staff
- Sessions on 14-19 diploma for those who have no current contact with them
- Training and education on how to engage with employers
- 'Cultural change' development for those who want to provide a service
- Development sessions on how to use flexibility, credit and accreditation of prior learning
- Better links between staff and professional bodies/sector skills councils
- Promoting the sharing of knowledge about some practices that are not yet widely understood, e.g. work based learning, assessment for FE lecturers teaching on foundation degrees

What SELLLN has done:

- Organised a pan London conference for admissions tutors in HE on progressing vocational learners
- Developed a seminar series on some of the issues mentioned at the conference
 - Doing APEL on foundation degrees (28th May at Birkbeck College)
 - Qualifications and Credit Framework: Credit in HE (17th June at King's College London)
- Consulting with SELLLN's sector working groups to assess the shared needs of FE/HE for continuing professional development
- Worked with other London LLNs in a PanLondon IAG group
- Planning staff development sessions for FE staff to be able to better advise learners on UCAS applications
- Provided opportunities for FE and HE staff to network at the subject level as part of planning progression agreements

What SELLLN would like to do:

- Develop further staff development opportunities in line with the consultations we are undertaking currently

Additional Support for Learners

There was a perception from participants that some vocational learners need additional support to make the step from further to higher education. While SELLLN is not a provider of programmes, the Network is active in working with partners to provide additional support. Needs expressed here include:

- Supporting the smooth transition of learners from Level 3 to Level 4
- Supporting the 14-19 diplomas

- Developing postgraduate programmes and credit for more advanced vocational learners
- Embedding advanced work in the curriculum
- Develop flexible provision such as summer schools, online, evening courses, and bridging provision
- Working to introduce better understanding of accreditation of prior learning and experience
- Help partners to address learners' numeracy and literacy skills deficits

What SELLLN has done:

- Provided support for innovation projects which include summer school provision, a short course to introduce learners to creative computing, a programme to progress prisoners from Access to HE, a Facebook project to assist transition to Level 4 and Upstart, a creative enterprise programme
- Worked with 14-19 Partnerships in Wandsworth and Southwark to support 14-19 diplomas
- Supported the development of a Level 4, 10-credit University programme for 14-19 diploma students and others
- Worked with colleagues in partner institutions (initially in Design, Life Sciences, IT and Social Work) to look at curriculum alignment and identify opportunities to link Level 3 and Level 4
- Commissioned an audit of custom and practice of credit and APEL in our partner institutions
- Supported the development of a literacy and numeracy pilot programme to embed skills in context

What SELLLN would like to do:

- Embed the process of curriculum alignment between Level 3 and 4 to ensure good practice and retention
- Work more with postgraduate programmes, particularly where these recognise professional experience and learning
- Reflect and evaluate current projects to see if they can be transferred to other institutions and contexts
- Help partners to develop work based learning and accreditation tools to simplify the recognition process

Employer Engagement

Participants in all groups acknowledged the need to work more closely with employers, particularly with regard to increasing vocational progression. However access to employers and employees is seen as problematic, particularly with a prevalence of small and micro businesses in many of the SELLLN sector areas. Issues raised by participants included:

- Help partners to work with smaller employers
- Investigate government incentives to work with employers and fund employee education
- Examine better ways to provide IAG in the workplace
- Work with Sector Skills Councils to identify needs and provide solutions
- Develop more links with employers
- Provide training skills analysis to employers
- Provide forum for exchange of information between employers and providers of education
- Modify existing provision to meet employer needs
- Help to improve access to placements

What SELLLN has done:

- Employed four Lifelong Learning Co-ordinators with responsibility for each sector identified in our Delivery Plan
- Set up working groups in each sector which include employers, academic staff and other stakeholders
- Secured employer representation in each Sector Working Group
- Worked with Sector Skills Councils and secured representation on Sector Working Groups
- Worked with Chambers of Commerce to develop work with small employers
- Developed links with several representing organisations in each sector
- Produced an Employer Engagement Strategy
- Supported several Innovation Projects which engage with employers
- Linked with Train to Gain brokers to identify Level 3 and Level 4 requirements, and set up a system to follow these up
- Joined Universities UK's CPD Network, to join up employer requirements with our partners' expertise
- Secured £50,000 funding from Skills for Health and NHS London for two major projects for employee education
- Developed a working relationship with Unionlearn to improve access to education for employees
- Worked with a Sector Skills Council to progress Level 3 apprentices

What SELLLN would like to do:

- Further develop links with Sector Skills Councils and the range of work we undertake with them
- Work with more employers to provide progression to HE
- Develop a work-based progression agreement
- Complete an audit of independent training providers
- Secure more work-based placements where this has a bearing on progression to HE
- Develop foundation degrees and Level 4 CPD opportunities in partnership with employers
- Increase the use of accreditation of prior experience and learning
- Promote work-based learning

Participants were keen to work on new curriculum developments, with FE practitioners particularly keen to develop Foundation degree programmes in response to local needs. There was also recognition of the need to increase recruitment by adapting current provision. Suggestions for improving the range of the SE London offer included:

- Making programmes more flexible in terms of delivery methods, places and times
- Building in more relevant assessment, particularly with regard to relevance to the workplace
- Making the quality process more responsive, while retaining rigour
- Resolving tensions between academic and vocational aims of programmes
- Recognising the value of 'exit' awards at HE certificate and diploma level

What SELLLN has done:

- Supported the development of 3 foundation degrees offered by partner institutions
- Embedded a curriculum alignment process within its progression agreement process
- Invested in several projects to support the needs of the Level 4 curriculum
- Secured funding for two CPD projects

What SELLLN would like to do:

- Help partners to build up their foundation degree portfolios
- Audit the modes of delivery amongst our partners and identify good practice in flexible delivery
- Help partners to develop more continuing professional development and short course provision
- Support the development of new programmes where there is an identified need
- Assist partners with the 14-19 curriculum, e.g. we have funded a project to develop a Level 4 module for Level 3 diploma students

Information, advice and guidance

Comments from participants on IAG reflected the need to deliver at many different levels and to a wider constituency of learners than ever before. One of the problems identified was an overload of information, with insufficiently resourced advice and guidance. While SELLLN does not directly

offer IAG, there were many areas in which the Network could make a contribution. Issues raised include:

- Information requirements of parents of younger learners, employers and educators about vocational routes, not just learners themselves
- Information needs of employers about the benefits of staff development
- More information needed on what is expected of the learner in HE
- Mentoring and buddying schemes before, during and after the learning experience
- Provision of IAG in different formats
- Clear IAG about progression routes
- Information about referral to specialist advice
- Staff development needs of IAG staff
- Recognising travel-to-study patterns in service provision

What SELLLN has done:

- Commissioned an audit of IAG provision across the SE London area
- Worked with partners to develop specialist information to parents
- Worked with Unionlearn to discuss provision of IAG to workers
- Designed a leaflet explaining progression agreements
- Supported an innovation fund project to provide information and links on Facebook
- Worked with other LLNs to deliver a conference for Admissions tutors on progressing vocational learners
- Formed a pan London IAG group with other LLNs
- Discussed ways of working together with Sector Skills Council IAG providers

What SELLLN would like to do:

- Develop further work with Unionlearn and other LLNs
- Develop a resource pack for employers accepting placement students
- Enhance service provision to cover identified gaps in the SE London IAG offer
- Monitor students who progress under SELLLN progression agreements to enhance retention
- Work with 14-19 partnerships to help them to provide information
- Assist our partners with continuing professional development in their IAG roles

Progression agreements

Our work on progression agreements provided some lively debate, especially when discussing local v. regional and national focus. Some rather mixed messages emerged here, with advantages and disadvantages from all the different types of agreement. It was felt by some participants that much of the focus is on changing FE practices rather than HE. Issues emerging included:

- The need for a common set of processes across London
- More flexibility from HE
- Importance of communication between FE and HE to develop working understandings
- The need to identify local priorities for development
- The variability of progression from different vocational qualifications, and the need to address this
- Multi entry and exit points v. bilateral agreements
- Customising agreements to meet specific sector needs
- Harmonisation of entry requirements
- Mainstreaming agreements as part of Quality Assurance processes

What SELLLN has done:

- Devised a progression accord setting out our principles of progression agreement
- Facilitated several meetings of FE and HE staff to discuss desirable outcomes and potential barriers
- Mapping of Level 3 curriculum to identify priorities for progression agreements
- Negotiated a network wide progression agreement, with more in discussion
- Worked on a variety of multi- and bi-lateral agreements as local circumstances dictate
- Identified the need for bridging provision and helped to support it
- Worked on Level 3 Apprenticeship progression agreements
- Working with 14-19 diploma partnerships to secure progression agreements to a range of programmes

What SELLLN would like to do:

- Increase the range and number of progression agreements in its sector areas
- Continue the dialogue between FE and HE staff
- Provide CPD for staff in Progression and Credit
- Increase the expertise in the partnership for working on progression agreements