

ESA Implementation Team Update

Issue 1
March 2008

ESA central to area based planning

In her statement to the Northern Ireland Assembly on 4 March the Minister for Education, Caitríona Ruane, confirmed the central role ESA will play in implementing full area based planning, when it is established in April 2009.

The full text of the Minister's statement can be viewed via the ESA Implementation Team (ESAIT) home page – www.esani.org.uk

Making the case for change

ESAIT will shortly complete its input to the Department's Outline Business Case (OBC) for the establishment of ESA. The document sets out the educational and financial benefits of the RPA in education.

In particular, the OBC identifies the potential to provide greater support for teachers in improving educational outcomes for young people, through the redirection of resources into the classroom.

£20 million per annum savings are achievable by year 3 of ESA.

The detail of the OBC will be communicated in the near future

Designing ESA – your input needed

In the coming weeks and months a number of staff from across the education sector organisations will be involved in helping to shape the services and structures of the new Education and Skills Authority.

There will be an extensive programme of engagement entitled 'Preparing Together for the Education and Skills Authority'.

Invitations will soon be issued to more than 150 senior managers and heads of service delivery to attend a launch event for this process. This will be followed quickly during April and May by a series of service specific workshops, aimed at gathering ideas for how services can best be delivered in the new organisation.

Education Quality and Children's Services

The Minister for Education, Caitríona Ruane, has instructed DE Permanent Secretary Will Haire, and ESA Chief Executive (Designate) Gavin Boyd to move ahead with establishing working groups on Education Quality and Children's Services.

Drawing on expertise from within the sector and on best practice from elsewhere, the working groups will bring forward proposals on how services in these areas should be delivered and organised under ESA.

The groups will form a key part of ESAIT's engagement strategy and membership will be announced in the near future.

2nd tier structure

Work on finalising the director level structure is now at an advanced stage and will very soon be submitted for approval to the Department of Education.

Completing this phase of work will allow us to begin the process of recruiting for director level posts. It is hoped this will take place before the summer, with the successful applicants in place by autumn 2008, in line with the proposed legislative timescale.

Location of ESA

It is recognised that information on the location of jobs and services in the new organisation is of critical interest to all staff.

All decisions regarding the location of ESA HQ and sub-regional offices will be taken in accordance with the Northern Ireland Executive's published 'Framework to Underpin Decisions on the Location of Public Sector Jobs'. You can read the full document at - www.rpani.gov.uk/estates_framework.pdf

The framework has 5 guiding principles:

- improving service delivery;
- achieving value for money;
- maximising social and economic benefits;
- taking account of staff interests; and
- promoting equality and good relations.

A review of policy on the location of public sector jobs in Northern Ireland is also underway. The Framework will be examined as part of the policy review and therefore may change as a result of the final outcome.

The Executive has agreed that, in the interim, it should be applied to any decisions being made about the location of RPA related bodies.

Decisions on location will also be subject to equality screening and an Equality Impact Assessment with consultation where appropriate.

The process

ESAIT will soon begin preliminary work to gather information on the existing accommodation that ESA will inherit. This will provide the basis for taking forward work on location.

Work will also take place on: the development of service delivery models; determining the organisational structure required to deliver these models; and the required number of staff and skills.

At this stage we do not envisage a large central headquarters. It is likely functions will be grouped at separate locations which will as far as possible match the existing distribution of posts in the sector.

HR issues update

Recruitment of secondments to ESAIT

In early February secondment notices were issued for 9 additional posts within the ESAIT. The majority of interviews will take place during March with successful candidates starting work with the team from the beginning of May 2008, or earlier if possible.

Principles and Policies document

Work is ongoing in the development of the HR Principles and Policies document. This will outline the high-level principles and supporting policy statements to inform decision-making in all the key aspects of ESA implementation from an HR viewpoint.

There has already been internal consultation on this document within the education sector. Shortly we will seek the input of trade unions on further development.

Terms and conditions of employment

A project group has been established involving HR officers in the education sector to take forward the work to develop new terms and conditions of employment for the ESA.

Work has started collating all the current terms and conditions of employment from those organisations with staff transferring to ESA. The views of trade unions and other key stakeholders will play a crucial role in the development of the terms and conditions of employment for ESA.

Recruitment policy and procedure

Preliminary work is underway to prepare for the recruitment of 2nd tier officers to ESA. This includes the development of ESA recruitment policy and procedures, which will link closely to the *Competency Framework* launched in January.

We will consult with HR managers in the existing organisations and trade union side as this policy is developed.

Capacity building

Work is also ongoing in developing an employee capacity building strategy to support the implementation of the ESA. This strategy will include support in the various areas of change management, including the recruitment process to new posts in ESA. Further details will be forthcoming shortly.

Taking forward management of the schools estate

Following the announcement of the budget allocation of capital investment in the schools estate we have started our work to identify the scope, responsibilities, structure and organisation of the Education

Infrastructure Procurement Service (EIPS) within ESA.

We have agreed with DE that Bill Reid, from the Strategic Investment Board, who has been working with DE on the Schools Modernisation Programme, will advise us on the scope of this function and the work needed to establish EIPS within the ESA.

Bill will also help us identify any convergence activity required in this area ahead of ESA being established in April 2009.

Update on Financial and Accounting Systems project

Work has commenced across a wide range of areas to establish the business processes and how these will be supported by the Financial and Accounting System. The following work has been completed:

- establishing working groups in each area, consisting of representatives from all of the organisations involved in the creation of ESA and representatives from the project team and supplier;
- completion of business process questionnaires by members of the working groups;
- collation of all of the information to identify areas of differences and commonality; and
- meeting with working groups to clarify any issues and begin to discuss common processes.

Over the next month, the team will be working to produce the first draft of the future business processes for ESA and to document how they will be supported by the software.

Work is also underway to establish the Chart of Accounts for ESA. Getting this

right will enable the organisation to meet all of its future reporting obligations.

The Chart of Accounts determines how information can be extracted for budget-holders' reports, reports to funding bodies, statutory accounts and to answer ad hoc enquiries, such as Assembly questions.

Getting connected - ICT now has central governance

The ESA ICT Programme Board has been set up to oversee the governance, funding and development of all major current and planned ICT projects across the education sector and ensure they meet the requirements of the new organisation.

The full membership of the Programme Board is as follows:

Gavin Boyd, Chief Executive (Designate),
ESA - (Chairperson)
John McGrath, DE
Jimmy Stewart, WELB/C2k
Pat O'Connor, SEELB
Richard Hanna, CCEA
Gerry Byrne, ESAIT

Progress is being made on a range of projects including payroll, corporate services, finance and pensions.

Coming soon

You can stay up to speed on all the latest developments on ESA implementation via the team's website – www.esani.org.uk

In the coming months also look out for a new joint DE/ESAIT newsletter which will be widely distributed across the education sector.