



Department
for Education

Gill Steward
Chief Operating Officer
West Sussex County Council
County Hall
West Street
Chichester
PO19 1RF



Department
for Business
Innovation & Skills

Nick Boles MP
Minister of State for Skills

1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

T +44 (0) 20 7215 5000
E enquiries@bis.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/bis

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I am writing to inform you of the Government's view of the position of West Sussex County Council's Adult and Community Learning service following the recent review by the Further Education (FE) Commissioner's team and the steps that will need to be taken to secure improvement.

As you are aware, in light of the inadequate grading following the Ofsted inspection of West Sussex Adult and Community Learning service in November 2015, I asked the FE Commissioner, Sir David Collins, to carry out an assessment of the service and this was conducted between 2nd and 4th February 2015.

The assessment found that prior to the Ofsted inspection West Sussex County Council had failed to recognise that, while subcontracting its Adult and Community Learning (ACL) provision to Aspire Sussex Limited, the responsibility for the standards of governance and strategic direction of the service and for Safeguarding and risk management of a large cohort of potentially vulnerable adults remained fully with the Council. As such, Governance arrangements by the Council have been inadequate with insufficient challenge of its subcontractor.

I understand the Council now accepts it has responsibility for its ACL provision and is now demonstrating a willingness and commitment to support Aspire Sussex Limited appropriately to rectify the problems highlighted by Ofsted.

The FE Commissioner recommends the Council refresh its Adult and Community Learning strategy and cascade it in an appropriate form into: a Post Inspection Action Plan and Quality Improvement Plan to be prepared in collaboration with Aspire; an agreed annex to its service contract with Aspire and a brief for the Council trustee on the Aspire board which will assist in aligning Aspire Sussex Limited's operations with Council policy.

He also makes a number of detailed recommendations, including that the Council re-establishes the earlier connection between its own Safeguarding staff and ACL providers, including Aspire Sussex Limited across the County, developing a full programme of training and support in Safeguarding to Aspire Sussex Limited and in particular, Enquiry Officer training for all Aspire Sussex Limited senior managers.

The FE Commissioner also plans to monitor and review progress on a regular basis and carry out a stocktake assessment of the provision later in the year at a time to be set in consultation with the Council, Funding Agencies and Ofsted. It will be open to him to make further recommendations in the light of the position at that stage.

I have carefully considered the FE Commissioner's assessment, and accept all the recommendations he makes. I shall be looking to the Council to implement the recommendations fully and promptly.

A summary of the Commissioner's assessment report and recommendations are provided with this letter. This summary and my letter to you will be published on www.gov.uk two weeks following the date on which this letter was sent.

If you have any questions about the FE Commissioner's assessment, or this letter, please contact Hannah Caldwell Hannah.caldwell@sfa.bis.gov.uk in the Skills Funding Agency in the first instance.

Yours sincerely,



NICK BOLES MP