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I am writing to inform you of the Government's view of the position of Wakefield District Council's Adult and Community Education Service (ACES) 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 ACES in November 2015, I asked the FE Commissioner, Sir David Collins, to carry out an assessment of ACES and this was conducted between 23 and 25 February 2016.

The FE Commissioner's team found that while the council has begun to act decisively to correct the shortcomings identified by Ofsted, particularly in terms of improving governance with the creation of a new Board of Governors, the deficiencies are longstanding and may take some time to remedy.

The team found some undoubted strengths within the ACES curriculum, notably in apprenticeships, though it also concluded that performance was generally poor and still declining. Weaknesses are not confined to levels of governance and management above ACES itself and while some good work has been done to reform strategy, curriculum, data and staffing within ACES, there is no proof that the changes have so far been felt by learners.

The FE Commissioner has made a number of recommendations, relating both to improving the governance of ACES and to improving ACES itself. He also recommends that the council consider its long term aspirations for the future structure of ACES, including reviewing other possible delivery models.

The FE Commissioner plans to carry out a stocktake assessment of ACES when the 2015-16 results are finalised and the new governance arrangements are in place. It will be open to him to make further recommendations in the light of the position at that stage.

I have 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 Paul Williamson (Paul.Williamson@education.gsi.gov.uk) at the Skills Funding Agency in the first instance.



NICK BOLES MP