



Stuart Hollis



Colleges in their Community Inquiry

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Background

- **Purpose: “to investigate the role that FE colleges can & do play in their communities and the added public value that they bring to those communities”.**
- **Independent inquiry chaired by Baroness Margaret Sharp, sponsored by NIACE, 157 Group, Association of Colleges.**
- **15 commissioners from colleges, local authorities, unions & employers plus observers from stakeholders.**
- **Inquiry started in February 2011 and final report to be published in November 2011.**

Process of evidence gathering

- **Call for evidence – 75 responses received.**
- **Literature review including analysis of international comparisons.**
- **Expert seminars on 6 key themes determined by the Commissioners.**
- **4 Commissioners' meetings focused on particular themes.**

Final report Nov. 2011– key findings

- **Many colleges are already embedded in their communities.**
- **The funding system is unduly complex.**
- **Partnerships are beneficial but expensive to negotiate.**
- **Importance of local autonomy.**
- **Employer, learner and wider community engagement.**
- **Investing in colleges generates social returns**

Other findings

- **Not all colleges match up to best practice.**
- **There is a need for co-ordination of local skills planning.**
- **There is an general acceptance of the need for reform.**
- **Governance structures need to change alongside financial reform.**

Achieving the Inquiry's vision

- **Entrepreneurial college leadership**
- **Working with local employers to upgrade skills and create jobs**
- **Reaching out to smaller firms**
- **Joined-up government at a local level – new partnerships & alliances**
- **Making the college voice heard on local planning partnerships**
- **Developing a new curriculum**
- **More flexible funding system**
- **New approach to governance and accountability**

A shared agenda

- **Colleges**
- **Local partnerships and commissioning bodies**
- **Central government agencies**
- **Sector support bodies**

Potential areas for joint approaches

- **Engagement of multiple communities.**
- **New strategic partnerships and alliances at local level**
- **Stimulating, understanding & responding to changing learner motivation.**
- **Impact of increased financial contributions on employers & individuals expectations**
- **Increasing accountability to local communities.**

Implementation issues

- **What local learning infrastructure is needed? What would it look like to the learner?**
- **How can reductions in funding be managed so as to avoid organisational retrenchment and protectionism?**
- **How can accountability to local communities be increased? What are the implications for governance?**
- **How can colleges measure their impact on communities as well as individuals?**

Contact details

**For further information about the Inquiry
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For more on the work of the Inquiry go to

<http://www.niace.org.uk/current-work/colleges-inquiry>