



# What will Further Education mean in 2025?

## Background Paper for an Ideas-Building Event at St. George's House, Windsor Castle, 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> December 2006

### Welcome

I'm delighted to welcome you to this confidential ideas-building event.

The purpose of this event is to begin to draw a picture of the context of Further Education in 2025 and how this is likely to influence the purpose of FE, its design and delivery.

By anyone's standards this is a very broad agenda, and this event is not designed to produce a detailed action plan of how we ensure that FE is fit for purpose by 2025. Of course, this will need to be done, but first we need to think ahead and develop a view of what the UK and the world in 2025 might be like as a place to live, work and learn.

We only need to look back 20 years to get a feel for the speed and degree of change that is likely to happen. In 1986, the few mobile phones that were around were the size of bricks. The internet and email were cutting edge and certainly not everyday business tools. Global and domestic political maps were very different. Global warming was not a mainstream political issue. In short, change has been radical and swift.

There have been equally radical reforms in education over the last 20 years. Just to pick out a few: the increase in higher education places; reform of the school curriculum; the increasing 'personalisation' of learning – what it comprises, how and where it is delivered, major changes to the planning and funding infrastructure – the list is long.

Just as someone who last experienced school, further or higher education 20 years ago would find it very different now, so we can be confident that the children of school, further and higher education leavers in 2006 will experience something very different to their parents. This is illustrated by the Note emailed to you of focus group discussions with 18-19 year olds about their educational experiences carried out by Wilson Sherriff.

### Current policy thrusts

In part, what FE will mean in 2025 will be determined by the **end results** of policies that are being developed and put into practice now within the FE sector. In brief, headlines for key policy areas that will have significant impact on what FE means in 2025 include:

- Qualification reform
- A new quality framework for providers of learning including the Framework for Excellence and Self-Regulation
- A strong focus on public funding directed at meeting skills needs
- An individualised approach to learning to ensure inclusivity, social cohesion, and relevance to individuals and employers
- Far greater volumes of public funding following demand for specific types of learning

Together, the policies in these key areas will have a major impact on what FE will mean to learners and employers in 2025.

I am not going to attempt to summarise the elements included in these policy areas, as I'm sure that everyone joining the event has a broad grasp of their scope and objectives – and to go into detail would involve writing a short book!

For the purposes of our discussions we want to assume that each of the policies meets its objectives successfully within the timescales that are predicted for the changes to happen.

### Not an isolated piece of the jigsaw

One thing is for sure: we can't explore what FE will mean without having a feel for what schooling and Higher Education might mean in 2025.

Rather than yield to the temptation of exploring the wider canvas of what education will mean in 2025, I have sent you by email some research that has been commissioned by the Department for Education & Skills: Seamus Hegarty's Personal View of Schooling in 2025.

Prior to the event, we also hope to email to you a Paper of describing a view of what FE might mean.

The purpose of these Papers is to provide a starting point for our discussions. The Papers on Schooling and FE in 2025 are also intended to help transport us into the future. You may not agree with all the views expressed, but they take us into the territory of the future.

### External impacts

While the direction of policies being developed and put in place now help us to shape what FE in 2025 might look like, they are not happening in a controlled environment. Far from it: they are subject to external factors, the outcomes of which cannot all be predicted with certainty. They are familiar to us all:

- Global economics;
- International and national political changes;
- Demographic changes (including an aging workforce);
- Increased awareness of environmental issues and the need for us to sustain our planet;
- Information technology advances, and
- Changes in personal beliefs and values.

The Future of Further Education, The Wider Context, a Paper by the Tomorrow Project highlights the key external factors that will in part determine what FE will look like and mean in 2025. Long-term opportunities and challenges for the UK: analysis for the Comprehensive Spending Review, HM Treasury, that can be accessed at [http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/298/55/csr\\_longterm271106.pdf](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/298/55/csr_longterm271106.pdf) also provides immensely valuable background reading.

Our aim at the event is **not** to try and shape FE in a way that anticipates the impact of external factors, when it is difficult to determine with any confidence

what they might be. Instead, we need to plan for what is likely to happen using strategies and processes that will allow **quick response to unforeseen impacts**. It is about getting the balance right between moving in the direction to where we want to be, but not being too tunnel-visioned in a way that allows unexpected external impacts to drive us off course.

What is really exciting about this event is that no one has a fully formed detailed picture of what FE will mean in 2025. This is why I hope everyone joining the event will be as open minded as possible, and accept that we are engaging in areas of debate in which **no one is certain of the answers or the best way ahead**. This can sound risky to some – and feel even riskier as we go through the process – but the great pay-off is that it really does give us the opportunity to break new ground in our thinking.

### St. George's House

The reason that we are holding this event at St. George's House is that the aim of the House is to create an atmosphere of trust in which well-informed people can bring fresh thinking to key issues that will have impact on our future. It is **NOT** the sort of place where delegates with badges listen to speeches. It **IS** a place where free spirits can try out new ideas without fearing the consequences.

We are conscious that we're welcoming some to St. George's House for the first time, which is why we'd like to forewarn those booked you that when you arrive, you will find that you are not offered a key to your room. Those who haven't been for quite a while, will be delighted I'm sure with the improvements that have been made to the House, not least the en-suite bedrooms.

### Key Timings and Contact Numbers

On pages 3 - 4 are outlined our key timings for the two days. If anyone needs to contact you urgently whilst you're attending the event, the 'phone number for St. George's House is **01753 848848** and the fax number is **01753 848849**.

When you arrive, you will find your name badge on a table in the Patricia Hotung Room, on the ground floor of St. George's House.

We just put first names on badges to make it easier to see each other's names, and also to spare us what can be the 'creeping death' of introductions.

We are very keen to create an informal atmosphere during our time together, and we have found that making a point of using each other's names – instead of saying "*I agree or disagree with the person over there, who's name I can't remember!*" really does help people to relax and spark creative discussion. Please don't think we're being over familiar!

## Agenda

<p><b>Thursday, 7<sup>th</sup> December</b></p> <p><b>From 3.30 pm</b></p>	<p><b>Arrival</b> at St. George's House</p>
<p><b>4.15 pm</b></p>	<p>Tea (sandwiches and cakes) in St. George's House</p>
<p><b>5.05 pm</b></p>	<p><b>Sung Evensong</b> (optional) A rare opportunity to attend evensong in St. George's Chapel and listen to the Chapel's choir. You are seated in the Knights of the Garter Stalls. Evensong lasts approximately 45 minutes.</p>
<p><b>6.00 pm sharp</b></p>	<p><b>Opening Session</b> In the Vicars' Hall. Welcome and confirmation of our goals for this event and ground rules for discussions. Begin our discussions by considering:</p> <p><i>In the wider world, what we feel are the really big changes that will alter the way in which we live, work and learn in 2025?</i></p> <p><i>How do we think these changes will impact on the value that is placed on further education by employers and individuals?</i></p>
<p><b>7.45pm</b></p>	<p><b>Pre-dinner drinks in the Warden's House at 25, The Cloisters</b> We will be joined by Bill Rammell MP, Minister for State for Lifelong Learning, Further &amp; Higher Education and Phil Hope MP, Minister of State for Skills</p>
<p><b>8.15 pm</b></p>	<p><b>Dinner in St George's House Dining Room</b> Building on our earlier discussions, we want to continue our debate over dinner by exploring what we see as:</p> <p><i>the big issues that are likely to affect what further education means in 2025, and the ways in which we can keep abreast of trends and respond to changes quickly.</i></p>
<p><b>9.45 pm</b></p>	<p><b>Private Tour of the Chapel</b> led by Patsy Knight, a Fellow of St. George's House</p>

<p><b>Friday, 8<sup>th</sup> December</b> 9.15 am</p>	<p><b>Second session</b> Look forward, and invite participants to <i>describe a view of what FE could mean in 2025 from different perspectives: for example what an employer running a small business, an international company, a 17 year old, an older person might each be looking for from further education</i></p> <p>In this session we want to develop a sense of the value of FE to different groups of people, and what this could mean in terms of funding, curriculum planning and styles of delivery.</p>
<p>10.45 am</p>	<p><b>Short break</b></p>
<p>11.00 am</p>	<p><b>Third session</b> Begin to sharpen up how we need to interpret our vision for 2025 in terms of <i>priorities for moving forward?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>What do we need to drive forward?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What do we need to introduce?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What do we need to leave behind?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Where do we need to build capacity to be fit for purpose in 2025?</i></li> </ul>
<p>12.15 pm</p>	<p><b>Buffet Lunch</b></p>
<p>1.00 pm</p>	<p><b>Final session</b> In this final session, there are two key issues that we want to tackle before leaving St. George's House:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Where do we need to put most energy now? How?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How should we best continue this debate?</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>No later than 2.30 pm</b></p>	<p><b>End of event</b></p>

## Our approach to the opening session

Starting at 6.00 pm, we have about an hour and a half to really get stuck into our debate on what FE in 2025 will mean before the Bill Rammell and Phil Hope join us.

Important key notes of our approach to these events are informality and confidentiality. So we dispense with the usual 'round robin' of introductions and format of opening presentations. However good, opening speeches encourage the 'us and them' habit, with one or two people being expected to produce all the answers, and the rest of us lobbing in questions and indulging in the sport of picking holes in their arguments! We want to begin this event as we mean to continue – with a fast flowing informal discussion, in which we **all** feel that we have a responsibility to put forward ideas and, in doing so, **take risks** in breaking new ground.

So, following a brief welcome and confirmation of the ground rules for the event, we want to move straight into discussions by sharing what we feel *are the really big changes that will alter the way in which we live, work and learn in 2025.*

Once we've got a feel for what these changes will be, we want to ask how they might *impact on the value that is placed on Further Education by employers and individuals.*

Let's be clear though: we're not talking about Further Education as it is now. We're looking ahead to what Further Education will be in 2025. A landscape that is different from that of today, but shaped by policies that we're developing and putting into practice today.

By the time we break for pre-dinner drinks, our aim will be to have moved some way in identifying what we see as the major factors that will impact on what FE means to different groups of people in 2025.

We want to continue the thread of our discussions over dinner, when we'll have the opportunity to draw on both Ministers' thoughts and ideas. Our focus will be to build on our earlier debate and explore in greater depth **issues that are likely to affect what further education means in 2025, and, ways in which we can keep abreast of trends and respond to changes quickly.**

We will organise dinner in a way that enables general group discussion, as well as round table debate, and provides as much opportunity as possible for the Ministers to put forward their views and ideas and listen to others.

### **We determine the agenda**

One of the key principles of Open Agenda events is that we determine the agenda as we go, in order to get the most from our time together. This means that, at any stage of our discussions, we can change the structure of a session, if we feel that it will help us achieve stronger outputs from the event. I say this, with one important proviso.

We find that groups go away far more satisfied with what we have accomplished by the end of an event, if we start off with a commitment to achieving **as much clarity as possible** in our discussions, and really push ourselves in **breaking new ground and moving ideas forward.**

On Friday morning, we want to build on our discussions from the day before by sharing what FE might mean to different groups of people. The idea will be to develop a sense of what people in different circumstances and for different reasons will want from FE and how.

We then want to move back in time to 2006 and begin to sharpen up how we need to interpret our vision for 2025 in terms of priorities for moving forward. The sort of questions we want to tackle will include:

- What do we need to drive forward?
- What do we need to introduce?
- What do we need to leave behind?
- Where do we need to build capacity to be fit for purpose in 2025?

In our final session after lunch, we want to identify where we feel we need to put most energy now. For example, is it in developing relationships between key players that have key roles to play in ensuring that FE is fit for purpose in 2025? Or perhaps nurturing and bringing on the next generation of leaders in the sector? Maybe you feel more energy needs to be given to driving forward specific policy areas. Our intent will be to draw on a range of views, and agree how we should continue the debate we have now begun.

### **Working in idea-generating groups**

As an important part of the ideas-building process, we will break into '**idea-generating**' groups during the event to tackle key questions raised through our discussions.

The purpose of these groups is to focus on sharpening up the issues and developing ideas that we want to pick up and run with. Please use your time in groups to sound out your ideas and do **not** be tempted into trying to develop a group view.

We use these groups because it gives everyone an opportunity to think through different points of view and have their say, when this would be impossible as one large group because of time constraints. As a result, a number of different – even opposing – ideas can emerge from small group discussions.

This is what we're after: ideas and not a group view. For those who haven't been in on a Windsor event before, it's worth saying that it really helps us to leave the groups behind, if you make a point of **not** sitting with members of your group afterwards, and agree to outlaw the phrases "we think" or "my group thought that".

"We think" makes it difficult for group members to change their minds without feeling disloyal to their group. Also, "we think" has more authority than "I think" and, completely unintentionally, can make it less easy for others to challenge or discard ideas.

We will also break into groups for longer periods of time to '**build ideas**'. In this instance, it is more likely (but not certain!) that there will be agreement amongst members of the group. What we ask is that when you come to share your thinking with the rest of us, you **just give us the idea**. Please don't feel you need to share the journey your group has travelled in developing this idea! If we are not clear about its rationale, we can always ask questions.

## Going with the flow

We need to manage our time together carefully as one large group, if we're going to develop the momentum we need to move our discussions forward.

Developing ideas needs careful listening. Let's try and stick to the rule that when someone comes in on the discussion, they **follow on** from what the person before them has said, before moving on and starting a fresh train of thought. Please also resist the temptation of making more than one point! As soon as someone says "*I'd just like to make two or three points at this stage in our discussions*" the ideas stop flowing, as we are drawn to recap on what's gone before.

Of course, when we're together as one large group we want **as many people as possible to participate**: brainstorming is not a spectator event! So I'll try and ensure that the more confident, natural talkers amongst us don't squeeze others out.

## Meeting everyone's expectations

We are bound to arrive at Windsor with very different views about what FE will mean in 2025. This is why we should give ourselves some time early on to work through **as a group** the issues we feel are most important for us to explore during our time together.

Developing ideas is always a messy process, especially during the opening stages! It can be frustrating for those who like to focus quickly on what they feel is **the** key issue that needs to be tackled, and want to get on with sorting it out. The difficulty with this approach is that one person's key issue is another's back burner!

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So, I would like to ask that we all try to be as relaxed as possible in the opening session, and let as many as possible have their say, so that we can build up a head of steam **as a group** in identifying the issues we want to explore in greater depth.

Overleaf are the Conventions of St. George's House for consultations and ideas building events held here at Windsor Castle. At the beginning of the event, I will ask you if you are happy to adopt them as ground rules for our discussions.

I very much hope that you'll be open to giving them a go, as experience has shown that their application can make an enormous difference to both the quality of debate and the ideas that emerge.

Krycia Hudek  
Open Agenda  
30<sup>th</sup> November 2006

## St. George's House Conventions

### 1. *Please be open to changing your mind*

We hope that during your time at the House you will see yourself as a “free spirit”, open to the possibility that the opinions you hold most dearly, on the topic under discussion, might actually be wrong. Once we each take that step, we find that it is much easier to persuade others to question their own assumptions, as well.

### 2. *Please do not attribute remarks to individuals after the event*

At all House events, we ask groups to agree at the outset that comments made in plenary or small group sessions will not be attributed to individuals afterwards. We have a firm convention that people should not be quoted without their permission, and commend this to you most strongly.

### 3. *Please take risks with ideas*

The most successful Consultations at the House have been those where individuals feel sufficiently relaxed, and supported by others, to be able to take risks with ideas. This requires a high degree of trust among a group, and we hope that from the outset you will seek to build that trust.

### 4. *Please try and avoid any false consensus*

We hope that if you find a consensus emerging in your discussions, you will check to ensure that it is soundly based. It can sometimes be very difficult for individuals to resist the pressure to agree with their peers, and we hope that healthy debate will not be stifled by a false consensus.

### 5. *Please use “plain English”*

At just about every event, one of the biggest struggles is with the weight of technical language that some speakers tend to use, and others leave unchallenged for fear of displaying ignorance. We ask **everyone** joining a Consultation at the House to avoid using acronyms, and to be ready to intervene in debate to ask colleagues to use “plain English”.

*Andrew Carter*  
Warden of St. George's House