

# **Education Authority (EA)**

## **Transition Communications Strategy**

January 2015 v.4

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## **1.0 Context**

### ***The Education and Skills Authority (ESA)***

The overall objective of the Review of Public Administration (RPA) was to review the existing arrangements for the accountability, administration and delivery of public services in Northern Ireland, and bring forward options for reform.

In November 2005 proposals were published for RPA in education, proposing that the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) would be put in place by April 2008 to replace the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs), Staff Commission, CCMS, CCEA and the Youth Council. The creation of ESA has been a key commitment in two successive Programmes for Government.

Following a number of attempts to secure the agreement necessary to establish the new organisation, in February 2014, the Education Minister announced that he was stopping the programme to establish ESA.

On 9 September 2014, the Executive agreed to withdraw the commitment to establish ESA from its current Programme for Government.

### ***Local Government Reform***

The territorial responsibilities of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) are defined in law (Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986, Article 3 (2)) by reference to council areas. Currently this is a reference to the existing model of 26 councils and so the ELBs are defined by five groupings of these 26 territories.

From 1 April 2015 the 26 council model shall be replaced by the new model of 11 councils. The ELBs must change to be compatible with this. Otherwise, from 1 April 2015 the ELBs may be subject to a legal challenge that may adversely impact on education services.

Given these circumstances, the Minister decided that the 5 Education and Library Boards and their Staff Commission should be replaced with a single Education Authority as this offered the best prospect of agreeing and implementing a new future that will be compatible with local government reform.

### ***The Education Authority (EA)***

The Executive endorsed the Minister's proposals for the creation of a single Education Authority at its meeting on 9th September 2014. The Education Bill 2014 was introduced in the Assembly on 6 October 2014. This provided for the EA to deliver all the functions of the five ELBs and Staff Commission. The Bill became law on 12 December 2014 following Royal Assent.

The EA will deliver the required structural and technical change to ensure that the system of education administration is aligned to the new local government structures and continues to deliver services effectively.

It is recognised that the EA will not deliver all of the benefits planned under ESA, but has the potential to realise significant savings while maintaining and improving service delivery. The EA will, over time, regionalise and standardise the delivery of services. It will bring greater consistency and equity to the implementation of Departmental policy and the levels of support provided to educational providers, families, children and young people.

In addition, the establishment of the EA will greatly simplify governance in education administration; and it will bring a much more coherent approach to key challenges such as the ongoing drive to raise standards, foster school improvement and plan strategically and sustainably the education provision of every area.

### ***Communications***

The establishment of the EA by April 2015 is a key priority for the Department of Education.

It will bring stability and certainty back to the education sector and ensure that the system of education administration is solid.

This involves a significant programme of change across the education sector. Communications will be central to the delivery of a successful change management programme.

This document outlines a strategic and integrated approach to communications that will support the delivery of the objectives of the Change Management Programme.

The Education Authority Delivery Directorate (EADD) and the Education Authority Implementation Team (EAIT) will work closely together to implement this strategy and deliver associated plans. This will ensure consistency of message and approach from the Minister, DE and EADD, the Interim CEO and EAIT. Assistance will be sought from the DE and ELB Communications Officers in implementing this strategy.

## 2.0 Objectives

- To identify and agree stakeholders and produce a stakeholder map of those interested in and/or impacted by potential changes in education administration and to determine their communication requirements.
- To develop and implement a detailed stakeholder engagement plan, tailored to the needs of specific groups as outlined in the stakeholder map.
- To develop and implement a detailed staff engagement plan to secure buy in and support for the change programme.
- To ensure close working relationships are maintained with key stakeholders.
- To put in place a range of mechanisms to ensure that communications are effective, timely and are accessible to meet the needs of diverse stakeholder groups.
- To align the timing of the issue of important communications with key milestones in the change programme.
- To monitor the effectiveness of all communications activity on an ongoing basis.

### **3.0 Stakeholders**

There is a broad range of stakeholders with varying levels of interest and influence in relation to the future of education administration and the change management programme. Communications will be tailored to the needs of groups of stakeholders.

Internal communication is critical to the success of the change programme. The staff in the education sector are a key internal stakeholder group. They must be engaged and involved. Securing the buy in of the staff at the earliest possible stage is essential to the success of the programme. Ensuring their support, commitment and engagement in the work programme to bring about the change is essential.

There are also a number of external stakeholder groups with varying levels of interest in the reform of education administration as they are directly or indirectly impacted by any potential changes. These include:

- schools
- political representatives
- other government departments
- trade unions
- sectoral representative bodies
- wider community groups
- parents

The wider public will also have a general interest in the administration of education.

## **4.0 Key Messages**

The high level key messages remain constant. Messages will vary as communications reach the operational level and we begin to target specific groups. It will be important that all key, high level communications are agreed with the Programme Management Board.

### **High Level Key Messages**

1. Creation of EA will bring together the five ELBs and Staff Commission into one organisation by April 2015.

- What the new organisation's functions will be
- When it will be operational
- Where it will be located

2. It is the most efficient and effective way of providing administrative arrangements for education that are compatible with the new local government structures effective from 1 April 2015.

- Bringing stability and certainty to the structures

3. Benefits

- EA will provide an administrative structure that is compatible with the new 11 council model of local government;
- Consistency, equity and improved efficiency in service provision
- Greater efficiencies through regionalisation

## Project Communications

Key messages at an operational project level will be determined by Project Managers via EADD and EAIT in line with their project plan objectives and timescales for delivery.

### 5.0 Approach

The approach to communications is set out in the table below. All communications will be aligned to the overall Change Management Programme.

Topic/Milestone /Initiative	Audience	Message(s)	Channels	Timing	Monitoring
What is the latest development as set out in the progress report?	Who needs to know?	What do we say to each audience - message may be slightly different depending on the stakeholder group	What is the most effective method of communication for each group?  How do we maximise the reach?	When do we issue communications?  Are advance briefings required? e.g. Ministerial, Permanent Secretary, SRO Chief Executives/internal EADD and EAIT briefings.  Can the message be released to all interested parties simultaneously?	Has the communication been effective?

## **6.0 Resources**

The timescale and budget associated with implementing this strategy depends on the availability of resources. Additional support may be provided collectively by the Communications Officers in the existing ELBs.

## 7.0 Staff Engagement Plan – Internal Communications Mix

Creating a dialogue with staff throughout the change process is vital to the success of the change management programme. It is important to keep them informed and take their views into consideration when drafting and implementing plans for change. They should be made to feel involved and empowered.

In the context of EA, the staff currently employed by the ELBs and their Staff Commission, coordinated centrally, must take on much of the work in implementing the change programme facilitated by EAIT.

The table below sets out a detailed plan for staff engagement.

Tactics	Timescale
<b>Intranet</b>	February 2015
<b>Info Box – <a href="mailto:info@eani.org.uk">info@eani.org.uk</a></b>	February 2015
<b>Project Workshops</b>	From January 2015
<b>Consultations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff</li> <li>• TUS</li> </ul>	As required in line with Programme Management requirements
<b>Seminars for DE Staff</b>	23 February &18March

<b>Regular meetings of the ELB Comms Officers &amp; EAIT Comms Project Manager</b>	From January 2015
<b>Regular meetings of the CEOs with the EA Interim CEO (Transition Board)</b>	From February 2015
<b>Regular staff e-newsletter – issued by EAIT</b>	First edition to issue February 2015
<b>Staff Roadshows in local areas</b>	From March 2015
<b>FAQs</b>	From February 2015
<b>Celebration event to mark the end of the ELBs</b>	24 March 2015

## 8.0 Stakeholder Engagement

Tactics	Timescale
Updates on DE website & Intranet	From February 2015
Stakeholders newsletter	From February 2015
Updates issued via Email	From February 2015
Consultations	As required in line with Programme Management requirements
Interim CEO Meetings with Stakeholders	From February 2015
Schools Information	<p>Letter from DE March 2015</p> <p>EA requires a long term Communications Plan for schools</p>
<p>Assembly Education Committee</p> <p>Ministerial Statements</p>	<p>As appropriate (1<sup>st</sup> briefing to Committee scheduled 18<sup>th</sup> February)</p>

## 9.0 Public Awareness

<b>EA Website</b>	From 01 April 2015
<b>Media</b>	Ongoing
<b>Parents Information</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Letter/pamphlet</li><li>• Website</li></ul>	From 01 April 2015
<b>Partners</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• NI Direct</li><li>• Links from other relevant websites</li></ul>	From 01 April 2015