

In-depth review of the Widening Participation UK Performance Indicators

UKPITG 13/10

Issue

1. As part of their initial response to the 'Fundamental review of the UK Performance Indicators' the UK Performance Indicators Steering Group have asked the UK Performance Indicators Technical Group to provide advice to support a process of in-depth review of the Widening Participation UKPIs.

Recommendations

2. That the UKPITG consider the role that they are able to play with respect to an options analysis to be undertaken regarding the potential for UK PIs in different areas of WP (both including and beyond those areas in which current UK PIs exist).
3. That the UKPITG provide advice to the UKPISG regarding the fit of the current WP UKPIs with the principles proposed for UKPIs, from a technical perspective.
4. That the UKPITG provide preliminary and general comments to the UKPISG on the potential for UKPIs in the WP areas proposed by the steering group to date.
5. That the UKPITG highlight to the UKPISG any specific measures which they perceive may add value to further consideration of viable future WP UKPIs. Similarly with respect to measures that the UKPITG understand, on technical grounds, to be worthy of no further consideration.

Discussion

6. The fifth recommendation arising from the fundamental review of the UKPIs, as accepted by the UKPISG, states that:

"The current set of UKPIs should undergo a more detailed review to ensure that they use the most appropriate data and have the appropriate focus to measure the specified topics, including the scope of the population covered."

7. At their September meeting the UKPISG agreed that the WP UKPIs were the highest priority for a detailed review process, and that a rolling process should be commenced whereby the WP, employment and retention UKPIs were reviewed in turn. The research-related UKPIs were to be considered as outlined in paper UKPITG 13/09.

8. The UKPISG noted that the issues identified through the course of the fundamental review with respect to the UK wide aspect of the WP measures seemed to suggest an urgency for an in depth review of this area. It was felt that it would be preferable to ask the UKPITG to undertake an options analysis with respect to this set of UKPIs, rather than to commission consultants. The technical group have been asked to advise the UKPISG as to the advantages and disadvantages of different options that

might seek to address issues relating to the coverage, definition and UK-wide nature of WP UKPIs.

9. The UKPITG are invited to bear in mind a finding of the fundamental review which indicates that there is a desire to broaden the populations and institutions covered by UKPIs to take account of the changing make-up of HE provision and the HE sector.

Recommendation: That the UKPITG consider the role that they are able to play with respect to an options analysis to be undertaken regarding the potential for UK PIs in different areas of WP (both including and beyond those areas in which current UK PIs exist).

10. Included within the UKPISG's preliminary actions in response to the fundamental review was a proposed set of guiding principles for UKPIs (given at Annex B of paper UKPITG 13/09). The UKPISG indicate that:

"It is anticipated that these principles will be used by the UKPISG to guide their governance of the UKPIs, and in particular to assess the utility of the UKPIs to their key audiences. Any new or amended UKPIs will be assessed against each of the principles listed below to explore whether it should (and, to some extent, could) be produced – at both sector and individual institution level or at sector level only. It should be noted that the UKPISG intends the principles to be guiding rather than binding."

11. In the context of the UKPISG's stated intentions for their guiding principles for UKPIs, it would seem reasonable to suggest that a first stage of the in-depth review of the WP UKPIs should be to consider the fit of the current indicators with these principles. As such the UKPITG are invited to consider the current WP measures of state school marker, NS-SEC marker, low participation (POLAR3) marker and DSA marker, with a view to identifying any specific issues of fit (from a technical perspective) with the proposed guiding principles for UKPIs.

Recommendation: That the UKPITG provide advice to the UKPISG regarding the fit of the current WP UKPIs with the principles proposed for UKPIs, from a technical perspective.

12. The UKPITG are also directed to the proposal that UKPIs should measure long-term policy issues and/or sector-wide priority areas. For WP the UKPISG have asked the technical group to consider access measures in the policy areas listed below:

- Area-based disadvantage;
- School-based disadvantage;
- Social class / socioeconomic status;
- Free school meals;
- Parental income;
- Sex;
- Ethnicity;
- Qualifications on entry.

13. The UKPISG note that the priority areas listed in paragraph 11 have been provided taking no account whatsoever of their fit with the proposed principles for UKPIs. The technical group are invited to provide any preliminary assessment of fit with the proposed principles that they are able to make, as well as any other general comments regarding the potential for UKPIs in the areas identified.

Recommendation: That the UKPITG provide preliminary and general comments to the UKPISG on the potential for UKPIs in the WP areas proposed by the steering group to date.

14. The UKPITG are also invited to highlight their awareness of existing measures in the areas identified by the UKPISG which they feel that the steering group should be directed to take note of in further consideration of potential WP UKPIs. If the UKPITG were willing to make any suggestions of specific measures that may have the potential or feasibility to be included in a discussion of possible new WP UKPIs then the group would be welcome to make such suggestions to the UKPISG at this stage.

15. Similarly, if the UKPITG have any awareness or willingness to highlight specific measures or issues which they understand would *not* contribute to a viable WP UKPI, then they are welcome to also make suggestions of this nature.

Recommendation: That the UKPITG highlight to the UKPISG any specific measures which they perceive may add value to further consideration of viable future WP UKPIs. Similarly with respect to measures that the UKPITG understand, on technical grounds, to be worthy of no further consideration.

Further information

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