

Open Report on behalf of the Executive Director Adults and Children's

Report to:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date:	9 September 2011
Subject:	Strategic Priorities for 16 – 19 (25) education and training for 2012/2013

Summary:

1. This report sets out the current situation in relation to post 16 education and training and establishes the changes to the mix and balance of provision that will be required to achieve full participation to the age of 17 by 2013 and age 18 by 2015
2. It also suggests the priorities for strategic commissioning of 16-18 (25 for young people with a learning difficulty assessment) for 2012/13

Actions Required:

1. To consider the information and strategic priorities for 2012/13.
2. To recommend other significant issues that should be considered as strategic priorities for 2012/13.
3. To recommend that the Local Area Partnerships review the mix of provision in their area and make adjustments to meet the priorities.

1. Background

The Council's statutory responsibilities under the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (the ASCL Act in relation to the commissioning of 16 – 18 age year olds (to age 25 for young people who are subject to a learning difficulty assessment) education and training are laid out in the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) Statutory Guidance: Funding Arrangements for 16 – 19 Education and Training. The guidance was revised in July 2011 and sets out the arrangements for 2012/13 (See Appendix A). From April 2012, the new Education Funding Agency (EFA), an executive agency of the Department for Education (DfE), subject to the passage of the Education Bill, will take forward the YPLA responsibilities set out in this guidance. The guidance suggests that local authorities working with their partners should shape provision in their area by identifying gaps, enabling new provision and developing the market, and that this is part of their (local authorities') wider leadership of education to the age of 19 and their place-shaping and economic development roles beyond 19. It goes on to state that the needs of young people are much more likely to be met where there are strong partnerships with those who provide education and training. The

partnership arrangements in Lincolnshire consist of the 14 – 19 Strategic Partnership Board, (on which schools, academies, general further education colleges, independent private and specialist providers are represented, together with employers and the third sector), which is supported by 3 Local Area Partnerships, incorporating a total of 9 local consortia.

All schools, Academies, colleges and other providers (including charities and third sector providers) are autonomous independent bodies and as such have responsibility for designing and delivering learning programmes which meet the needs of the young people in their area. In keeping with devolution of responsibility to front line professionals, it will be their responsibility to decide on their curriculum offer and mix of provision responding to the needs of individuals and employers and to the local authority strategic overview. The local authority however, has no direct powers to determine what individual schools, Academies, colleges and other providers choose to deliver, and is therefore only able to influence through negotiation and partnership working.

Raising of the Participation Age

The coalition government has confirmed its continuing commitment to increase the compulsory participation age (in education and/or training) to age 17 in 2013 and 18 in 2015, as laid down in the Education and Skills Act 2008. It is however, not clear what sanctions will be applied for non-participation. This means that the young people entering year 10 in September 2011 will be the first year group who will be required to remain in some form of education or training until the age of 17. Young people will not therefore be allowed to be employed in jobs that don't include formal training. The policy in relation to Raising the Participation Age is to be welcomed because of the significant impact post 16 education and training may have on improving the life chances for vulnerable young people and those affected by child poverty for which the local authority has statutory responsibilities. It is proposed that the 14 – 19 strategic partnership adopt Raising of the Participation Age as the key priority for 2011 onwards.

Apprenticeships

A significant increase in the number of apprenticeship opportunities available will be required if the coalition government's ambition for one in five young people to be studying an apprenticeship by 2020 is to be achieved.

A key priority for the Employment and Skills Board is to increase the take up of apprenticeships in Lincolnshire with a focus on the priority sectors: Agriculture and Food; Advanced Engineering; Health and Social Care; Green Technology; Transport and Infrastructure; and Tourism.

Currently a substantial proportion of apprenticeships are delivered by providers not based in Lincolnshire and there are between 150 and 200 providers delivering apprenticeships to Lincolnshire learners.

There is a need to ensure we have the right range of frameworks available to meet the employment and skills profile in Lincolnshire, as well as the appropriate balance between intermediate (level 2) and advanced (level 3) apprenticeships. Development of higher level apprenticeships (level 4 and above) will be required if this is to become an alternative route into higher education.

Whilst the current apprenticeship offer is more aligned to the skills requirements of Lincolnshire than other post 16 provision, there will need to be growth in the number and availability of apprenticeships in care, green technology and transport and infrastructure to meet future demand. The Council will need to continue to work with the National Apprenticeship Service to encourage and secure the required growth.

School sixth forms

A reduction in the size of the cohort, reduction in funding (as school sixth form funding is brought in line with that in FE), and the application of the lagged learner number formula to determine funding allocations mean that the majority of school sixth forms face challenges over the next few years, particularly small sixth forms. Our forecasts based on information currently available indicate a worst case scenario of a reduction in overall funding of £2.5million for the 26 schools and Academies for which we have information.

There was a small drop in the overall numbers of learners attending school sixth forms in 2010/11 compared to the previous year. Some areas have more than one school sixth form offering similar curriculum resulting in some duplication of courses, as well as some courses having very small numbers of students participating. There are over 580 subjects across school sixth forms in Lincolnshire with less than 10 students enrolled. Whilst this may include some provision where there is already collaboration that doesn't show in the statistics e.g. Robert Pattinson and North Kesteven Schools, and Sleaford Joint Sixth Form, it does indicate the vulnerability of some subjects, particularly if enrolments reduce further in line with the cohort. It is important that the breadth of curriculum is maintained in each area, including the availability of minority subjects which may be at risk if learner numbers are not viable. There is a need to find ways to maintain the curriculum, which will include collaboration and partnership working. (There are already some examples where this works well within the county).

Significant numbers of students leave school after completing Year 12 (after completing AS level). Schools need to establish whether they should be taking steps to retain these learners through to Year 13 and completion of A levels, where this is appropriate, or whether better advice and guidance would result in students making more informed choices at age 16.

It is unclear at this stage what impact a significant increase in apprenticeship participation will have on school sixth form numbers, but potentially it could impact more on schools as the colleges already deliver their own apprenticeship programmes. If this is the case it will create further challenges.

In terms of quality of provision, 6 of our school sixth forms are judged by Ofsted to be outstanding, 11 good and 9 satisfactory.

General Further Education (GFE) Colleges

The four GFE colleges based in Lincolnshire are all judged by Ofsted to be good, with one outstanding. The GFEs are able to maintain a wider curriculum, and be flexible and responsive to changes in demand and priorities due to their size and scale. Overall numbers of students have grown year on year.

We recognise there is a need to develop more provision for LLDD, in order to reduce the reliance on residential provision, as well as engage more learners with LDD as they are over-represented in the cohort of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

There will be a need for more Entry and Level 1 provision that is focussed towards outcomes which include employment and independence. GFE colleges are well placed to meet this demand, and the availability of provision has already improved. GFE colleges are also the largest providers of apprenticeships in Lincolnshire, and are well placed to support the requirement to increase the range and level of frameworks. Because they have their own apprenticeship programmes, an increase in the number of young people undertaking apprenticeships should not affect their overall learner numbers.

In order to further impact on NEET and therefore support the need to move to full participation to age 17, there is the need to increase the availability of flexible start dates to programmes within GFE colleges.

All the GFEs in Lincolnshire have plans to increase their Foundation Degree offer to provide a local accessible route into Higher Education.

Independent Private Providers (IPPs)

There are currently 8 IPPs based in Lincolnshire, 5 of which are deemed to be good and the remainder satisfactory according to their most recent Ofsted inspections. These provide Foundation Learning to small numbers of young people, most of whom are not ready to access mainstream college, apprenticeship or school sixth form provision.

Whilst some are part of larger organisations, e.g. NACRO, YMCA, others are small independent organisations and as such are vulnerable to changes in funding, and/or if learner numbers drop even slightly.

In addition they will be subject to minimum levels of performance from 2010/11. This may result in removal of some provision by the YPLA. There is a need to retain this provision and potentially increase it.

These providers are well placed to meet the needs of some of the more vulnerable learners (e.g. leavers from Pupil Referral Units), and the LLDD review identified a potential role in supporting more learners with LLDD, including those age 19 – 25.

This provision (apart from apprenticeships) is the only provision with truly flexible start dates, and which therefore can be used to address NEET throughout the year.

These providers have in the past relied on referrals from the Connexions Service, so will need to review their recruitment processes to take into account changes to the provision of information, advice and guidance.

Independent Specialist Providers (ISPs) for Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LLDD)

Considerable progress has been made in developing local non residential provision to enable young people to access education whilst remaining in their own communities. This is in line with the council's commitment to the principles of: Inclusion; Personalisation; Localisation and Effective use of Resources, and the requirement to reduce Lincolnshire's call on the YPLA budget for Independent Specialist Provision.

The council has reduced spend on Independent Specialist Providers (ISP) provision by £1.25million for 2011/12, and will be expected to reduce this by a further £1.25million in 2012/13. Responsibility for commissioning high cost provision for LLDD is expected to transfer to local authorities in 2012, and it is therefore imperative that appropriate provision is in place by September 2012. A review into post 16 provision for LLDD has been undertaken and has resulted in a number of recommendations which will be implemented in 2011/12.

We have two Independent Specialist Providers in Lincolnshire: Sense and The Linkage Community Trust (Linkage). The review into post 16 provision for LLDD recommends working with Linkage to 'establish particular contributions which might be made by Independent Specialist Providers'.

Currently Linkage are unable to meet the needs of learners with complex and/or significant behavioural needs and these learners currently have to go to ISPs outside of the county.

There is also a very small group of learners (4-5) with very complex behavioural needs for whom there is no identified provision nationally or locally. There is therefore a need to develop provision for learners with the most complex needs within the county.

Information Advice and Guidance

The statutory duty to provide impartial and independent careers guidance will largely transfer from local authorities to schools and Academies in September 2012. There will be no minimum requirements or external monitoring of the arrangements schools and Academies make, nor will they receive additional funding.

Local Authorities will retain responsibility for the provision of information, advice and guidance for young people in vulnerable groups, and for the completion of learning difficulty assessments. The latest information from the Department for Education is that support for vulnerable young people should include support for those who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

During 2011/12, there will be a need to plan how we ensure all young people, parents and employers have information about: the raising of the participation age; all the options available to young people; and information about the skills and employment opportunities in Lincolnshire and surrounding areas. Provisional plans are outlined in the separate report 'Improving Access to Post 16 Learning Provision on Lincolnshire: A Review by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee' also being considered on 09 September 2011.

External factors

There are a number of changes to national and local policy that could potentially have an impact on participation of 16 – 18 year olds in learning. These include: the discontinuation of the Education Maintenance Allowance and the introduction of the 16 – 19 bursary fund at a much reduced level of funding; the potential impact of the cost of post 16 transport; the impact of the policy to provide subsidised transport only to the nearest provider; and the potential impact of the transfer of the duty to provide advice and guidance to schools from September 2012. The Council will monitor the impact of these changes.

The following priorities seek to address the key issues outlined above:

- Increase the number of young people age 16 – 18 participating in post 16 education and training in line with requirement to raise the participation age
- Increase the availability of provision within independent providers to meet the needs of the more vulnerable young people and those at risk of disengaging in learning
- Increase the number of available apprenticeship places in particular in priority sectors
- Increase availability of apprenticeship frameworks at levels 3 and 4 to secure progression routes particularly in priority sectors
- Discourage growth in overall numbers of A level places in school sixth forms and Academies beyond current levels
- Reduce the number of young people failing to progress from AS to complete A2 qualifications
- Encourage further collaboration between school sixth forms to maintain niche and specialist A level provision that is vulnerable due to low numbers of participants
- Increase availability and range of opportunities for LLDD to enable more young people to access learning within their own community
- Increase the number of programmes with flexible start dates in particular in general further education colleges

Risks in not identifying the key priorities

The council will be in breach of its statutory responsibilities under the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 and the Education and Skills Act 2008 if it fails to determine the overarching priorities to meet the needs of young people in Lincolnshire

Schools, Academies, Colleges and other providers will not have the information they require to enable them to develop their provision to respond to the needs of young people and employers.

The 14-19 Strategic Partnership and the three Local Area Partnerships will lack the policy steer that will lead to full participation to the age of 17 by 2013 and 18 by 2015.

2. Conclusion

Overall, there are sufficient places allocated to Lincolnshire for post 16 provision. However, the mix and balance of provision requires adjustment. There needs to be an increase in the number of apprenticeships available as well as provision for LLDD and provision at entry and level 1. GFE colleges and independent private providers are well placed to meet these required changes. There is currently an over supply of A level provision in school and Academy sixth forms. Any further increase in the numbers of schools and Academies offering A level provision will put increasing strain on existing 6th forms whether that is within maintained schools or academies. In order to protect the current infrastructure therefore, any requests from current 11 to 16 schools or academies for support to develop a sixth form should be considered very carefully against this backdrop.

3. Consultation

a) Policy Proofing Actions Required

n/a

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	YPLA Statutory Guidance: Funding Arrangements for 16 - 19 Education and Training

5. Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Education and Skills Act 2008	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/25/contents
Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009	http://www.legislation.gov.uk/all?title=Apprenticeship%2C%20Skills%2C%20Children%20and%20Learning%20Act

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