

Open Report on behalf of Debbie Barnes, Director of Children's Services

Report to:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date:	25 July 2014
Subject:	Strategic Priorities for 16 – 19 (25) education and training for 2015/16

Summary:

This report sets out the current situation in relation to post 16 education and training and identifies the changes to the mix and balance of provision required to ensure full participation to the age of 18, achieve attainment targets for all students at age 19, and meet the skills requirements to support economic growth in Lincolnshire.

The report suggests and identifies the issues which will inform the priorities for the strategic commissioning of education and training provision for 16 – 18 year olds (25 for young people with an education, health and care plan).

This report invites the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to make recommendations on the Strategic Priorities for 16 – 19 (25) education and training for 2015/16. The final report with the priorities defined is due to be considered by the Executive on 7 October 2014 and will be presented to the Scrutiny Committee on 12 September 2014.

Actions Required:

- (1) To consider the attached report and to make recommendations regarding the priorities for post 16 education and training for the academic year commencing September 2015.

1. Background

Under sections 15ZA and 18A of the Education Act 1996 (as inserted by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009) local authorities have a duty to secure sufficient suitable education and training opportunities to meet the reasonable needs of young people in their area, and to make available to young people age 19 and below support that will encourage, enable or assist them to participate in education or training (section 68, Education and Skills Act 2008).

The Education and Skills Act (ESA) 2008 also places a duty on all young people to participate in education and training. From 2015, they will be required to remain in learning until their 18th birthday.

The Education and Skills Act 2008 places duties on local authorities in relation to 16 and 17 year olds. These relate to Raising the Participation Age (RPA):

- A local authority in England must ensure that its functions (so far as they are capable of being so) are exercised so as to promote the effective participation in education or training of persons belonging to its areas to whom Part 1 of ESA 2008 applies, with a view to ensuring that those persons fulfil the duty to participate in education or training.
- A local authority in England must make arrangements to enable it to establish (so far as it is possible to do so) the identities of persons belonging to its area to whom Part 1 of the ESA applies but who are failing to fulfil the duty to participate in education or training.

Failure to set out the priorities and changes that are required to ensure suitable provision is available to meet the reasonable needs of all young people in the area will mean:

- Lincolnshire County Council will not deliver its statutory duties;
- 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.

In the academic year 2013-14 there have been some significant changes that impact on post 16 education, and there continue to be legislative and policy changes that will effect provision from 2015 onwards. These include:

- From 2015 young people will be required to participate in education or training until their 18th birthday. This means that in effect the current year 11, or those young people reaching the statutory school leaving age in June this year (2014), will be required to stay in education until their 18th birthday.
- Changes resulting from the Children and Families Act, which comes into force in September 2014; including the introduction of Education, Health and Care Plans for children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) aged 0 – 25, and the entitlement to personal budgets for those who are eligible from 2015.
- Reforms to A levels from 2015 onwards, in particular 2 year linear A level programmes.
- Changes to the funding methodology for Apprenticeships which put the funding in the hands of the employer. Arrangements for funding traineeships are currently being consulted on and are likely to include similar recommendations.
- Potential reductions in post 16 funding from 2015, including the ending of transitional arrangements and possible cuts to funding rates.
- Increasing devolvement of funding and decision making to local enterprise partnerships, rather than directly from government or via local authorities.

Raising of the Participation Age (RPA)

- From September 2015 young people will be under a duty to remain in education until their 18th birthday. This in effect means that the young people currently in year 11, i.e. reaching the statutory school leaving age in June 2014, will be those who are affected. Although the duty to participate is only until their 18th birthday, young people should be encouraged to remain in education past that date, until they have completed their education programme.
- Participation rates for 16 year olds in Lincolnshire have been good, with rates at 94.5% comparing favourably with national and regional rates and those of our statistical neighbours. However, participation for 17 year olds is 8% lower, and a key challenge for 2015 will be to ensure that young people are retained in learning. This will require young people having the guidance and support to make the appropriate choices in terms of programmes of study, and that the appropriate provision is available and accessible.

Apprenticeships and Traineeships

- At the time of writing, insufficient data has been made available to enable a detailed analysis of performance in relation to apprenticeships and traineeships. Assuming this is provided in time by the Skills Funding Agency, this will be included in the September paper.
- The latest data received (November 2013) showed that the number of 16 – 18 year olds undertaking apprenticeships in Lincolnshire was continuing to grow, bucking the trend regionally and nationally where there is a decline. This is a result of our continued investment in Apprenticeship Champions, and the work undertaken in partnership with colleagues in the Economy and Culture Directorate and with the Employment and Skills Board to promote the apprenticeship route. Work has included: inset days for school staff based on employers' premises, including Siemens and Bakkavor; visits to schools; and employer events. Continued growth in apprenticeships will be required if the Government ambition, that 1 in 5 young people aged 16 – 18 will be undertaking an apprenticeship by 2020, is to be achieved.
- Traineeships are a new study programme introduced in September 2013, the aim of which is to prepare young people to develop employability skills. They include: work experience; English and maths; and other employability skills including curriculum vitae preparation, and all participants undertake a real or mock interview at the end of the programme. Traineeships have been slow to get off the ground, but are starting to gather momentum, and they will meet a gap in provision in terms of developing the employability skills of those young people who wish to undertake an apprenticeship, but who lack the skills to secure employment.
- It is not anticipated that the data, when received, will show any significant changes in the proportion of intermediate (level 2) and advanced (level 3) apprenticeships, or that there are many young people studying at level 4 (higher) or above from age 19 onwards. The lack of progression routes continues to be of concern in terms of: promoting the apprenticeship route as an alternative to the academic route; participation to the age of 18 (young

people will require level 3 programmes in which to participate following completion of level 2); and attainment of level 3 at age 19. Similarly, we do not anticipate there has been a significant shift in the skills mix of apprenticeships available in response to the skills priorities for Lincolnshire. Some initial discussions have been held with Bishop Grosseteste University around the potential to deliver higher level apprenticeships in health and social care, which is a sector priority for Lincolnshire.

- There is a potential risk that changes to the way apprenticeships are funded will impact on the financial viability of some apprenticeship providers and on the number of apprenticeships offered. Lincolnshire has a large proportion of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), some of whom are already reluctant to take apprentices due to the perceived additional bureaucracy, and it is likely that this will increase depending on the options chosen to implement the transfer of the funding to employers.

School sixth forms

- The challenges relating to the future viability of some of our smaller sixth forms as a result of funding changes, ending of transitional protection, increasing competition, and decline in the size of the cohort until 2020 were the subject of a recent paper to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, as was the impact of this on the range of curriculum offer. The predicted reduction in funding of £2.8 million for 2014 to school sixth forms in Lincolnshire proved to be accurate, and we estimate, based on current funding rates, that there will be a further reduction of at least £1.2 million in 2015/16. Early indications are that the Department for Education have not ruled out a reduction in the basic funding rate for 2015/16, which will of course have a further financial impact.
- All schools have been provided with information about their financial forecasts and officers have provided support to facilitate discussions regarding potential collaboration to mitigate some of the risks. There has been limited take up of the offer of support and other than the two formal arrangements that were already in place in Sleaford and North Hykeham, and some positive movement in Louth, there has been little progress towards further collaboration to date.
- The slight improvement in the numbers of students progressing from AS to A2 last year has plateaued again in 2013/14. 18% of young people fail to progress, which is unacceptably high. This will be critical in 2015 as the 2 year A level will be introduced, and AS will become a stand alone qualification. Students will not be able to progress from AS to the second year of A level, but will need to choose whether to undertake a stand-alone AS (considered to be little benefit in terms of employment), go directly onto a 2 year A level programme, or to complete AS followed by a 2 year A level programme.
- In terms of quality of provision, of the 38 schools currently with sixth forms, 14 have an Ofsted grade 1 (Outstanding), 18 are grade 2 (Good) and 6 are grade 3 (Satisfactory or Requiring Improvement, depending on the date of inspection).

General Further Education Colleges (GFE)

- At the time of writing, of the 4 main GFE colleges in Lincolnshire, one is judged by Ofsted to be outstanding, 2 Good, and one has recently been re-inspected due to a previous 'requiring improvement' grade. Learner number allocations for the four main colleges have remained reasonably steady with increases for New College Stamford and Boston College for 2014/15, and a reduction for Lincoln College. As numbers are allocated on a lagged basis (providers are funded for the numbers they delivered in the previous year), we can assume that Lincoln College failed to recruit to their target this year. Analysis last year showed that almost 1500 learners attend GFE colleges outside of Lincolnshire, including significant numbers attending Grimsby Institute for Further and Higher Education, College of West Anglia, Peterborough Regional College and North Lindsey College. We do not yet have data to show whether there have been any significant changes for 2013/14.
- Changes to adult funding and increasing restrictions regarding how the funding is used, together with the introduction of adult student loans, continue to create challenges for GFE colleges in terms of managing their overall budgets, which may potentially impact on provision for 16 – 18 year olds. Colleges are subject to the same funding mechanisms and rates for 16 – 18 year olds. However, due to their size they are able to offer a much wider choice of curriculum, including offering alternatives for students who decide they are unable to continue with their programme part way through the year, and they are better able to withstand the reductions in funding due to their ability to flex their offer to meet changing requirements. They are the main providers of vocational training, sub level 2 programmes, and apprenticeships.
- The reduction in the funding for young people in year 14 will present some challenges. The number of young people who do not continue to complete A2 following AS level remains worryingly high in Lincolnshire at 18%. Many of these young people then join a college to complete an alternative 2 year level 3 programme, which will mean colleges receive the lower rate of funding for their final year. The financial impact of this change has been capped for one year only and is unlikely to continue into 2015/16.
- The mix of curriculum in GFEs remains broadly similar to the previous year, although there has been a significant increase in enrolments onto work experience, reflecting the introduction of study programmes. There has also been a slight reduction in AS and A2 provision from 14% to 13%. It is unclear what decisions colleges might make in terms of continuity of delivery of A levels following the implementation of reform in 2015, but if they decide to discontinue delivery this can be more than adequately picked up by schools, where there is an over sufficiency. The GFE colleges have been proactive in supporting the Lincolnshire County Strategy for Post 16 Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LLDD), and in 2013/14 only 6 young people with LLDD needed any form of residential provision in order to access appropriate education.
- From September 2013, GFE colleges have been able to recruit young people from age 14. It is not expected that any of the 4 Lincolnshire based colleges will do this from 2014 (other than Lincoln College through the

involvement with the University Technical College (UTC)), but 2 are considering this from 2015/16 for particular vocational pathways.

Further Education in Higher Education.

- From September 2012, Bishop Burton College has been operating from the Riseholme campus of Lincoln University to provide specialist programmes in agriculture and horticulture. They are building their own campus on land adjacent to the Lincolnshire Showground. There will be a phased transfer to the new site, and ties with Lincoln University will end completely by 2020.

Commercial and Charitable Providers (CCP)

- There have been some improvements in quality in terms of CCPs, with two of the three providers judged by Ofsted to be requiring improvement achieving grades of Good on re-inspection and the third judged to be making reasonable progress. These providers continue to be the only ones providing roll on roll off programmes with truly flexible start dates. Their unique learning environments and small group sizes mean they are able to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged learners who would find it difficult to manage on a large college campus.
- Many of them also offer apprenticeship programmes, so there are some concerns that changes to the way apprenticeships are funded may impact on future viability. The specialist nature of the provision and the narrower offer means that although there will be some budgetary challenges, these will not be to the same extent as those faced by our smaller sixth forms.
- The main independent specialist provider for LLDD based in Lincolnshire has adapted its learning offer to provide day placements rather than residential provision in line with the Lincolnshire Strategy for Post 16 Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities.

Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LLDD)

- The Lincolnshire Strategy for Post 16 Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities was officially launched in September 2012, with the key priority being to develop local provision for Post 16 LLDD to meet their needs and aspirations for adult life within their own communities. A recent evaluation of the impact of the strategy is attached as Appendix 1, and shows that whilst there is still significant work to do, there has been substantial progress; meaning that Lincolnshire is well placed to meet the new education requirements for young people aged 16 – 25 with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) required by the introduction of the Children and Families Act.
- Collaboration and partnership working have been key to the success of the strategy and demonstrate that this approach can be hugely successful in terms of improving the offer to Lincolnshire learners.
- September 2013 saw a substantial change in the funding arrangements for learners with high cost support needs, with placements requiring high levels of funding (over £10,000 in total) being funded and commissioned directly

by the Council. This has required a very close contractual relationship with colleges and other providers, including discussions and negotiations regarding individual learners, which is in contrast to the 'hands off' relationship the Council has in relation to all other aspects of post 16 education provision.

- In 2013/14 appropriate provision was secured for all high needs learners within budget.
- It is not anticipated that this budget, which is delegated from the Education Funding Agency, will increase in future years, but we do expect that it will come under increasing pressure as young people with increasingly complex needs come through the system, and as expectations are increased as a result of the introduction of Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans as required in the Children and Families Act.
- Under the new legislation, young people can remain in continued education to the age of 25. This is not however, an entitlement, nor is there an expectation that young people with an EHC plan will remain in education until the age of 25. When deciding that an EHC plan is no longer required 'the local authority must have regard to whether the educational or training outcomes in the plan have been achieved'. (*Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years*).
- Priorities for the coming year therefore need to be around preparing young people with SEND for adulthood. This will need to include development of study programmes that better prepare young people for adulthood including further development of supported internships, independent and supported living skills, communication, independent travel etc. As part of their funding agreements, colleges and providers will be expected to proactively work with other agencies to support transition of young people into appropriate outcomes.
- A key concern for colleges and other providers has been the timing of decisions by the Council in relation to agreeing placements and funding. The new legislation requires that all young people making the transition to post 16 education have an EHC plan completed by the end of March 2015 with the provision named by the end of June. Achievement of these timescales will be challenging, but will mean decisions are made earlier in the year.

Information Advice and Guidance

- The statutory duty to provide impartial and independent advice and guidance transferred from local authorities to schools in September 2012. From September 2013 the duty was extended to include pupils in schools in year 8 and in schools and colleges up to year 13.
- There continues to be potential and increasing tension in schools with sixth forms between the requirement to provide independent impartial guidance pre 16 and the need to retain learner numbers in the sixth form to maintain funding levels. The high numbers of students failing to progress from AS to A2 referred to earlier in this report suggests that AS is perhaps not the most appropriate programme for significant numbers of young people who have been accepted onto the courses. GFE colleges continue to report difficulties in gaining access to some schools to explain their offer.

- The local authority careers service works with young people aged 16 – 18 who are not in education, employment or training to fulfil the statutory duty to make available to young people support that will encourage, enable or assist them to participate in education or training. It also provides a traded service to schools, and early indications are that schools will continue to purchase similar levels to those in 2013/14.
- There are increasing options for young people pre 16, particularly from age 14 onwards, including, for example, UTCs and GFE colleges. In order to raise awareness of these opportunities, information is being prepared which will go to every parent of a year 6 pupil in September 2014 to enable them to consider the future opportunities which may impact on their choice of school for their child at year 7.
- The DfE published revised guidance for schools earlier this year, which reduced the emphasis on the provision of professional careers advice and increased the focus on schools developing links with employers. A 'Going for Growth' conference for school and provider staff was held in March this year by the 14 – 19 team in partnership with colleagues in Economy and Culture, to showcase some examples where partnerships with employers were working well. There will be a requirement to work with schools and employers to encourage and facilitate links and to ensure that where the links are made they are effective in both improving students' awareness of the opportunities available and the world of work. This will require the engagement of the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership via the Employment and Skills Board.

Attainment and Closing the Gap

- Projected figures for 2013/14 show that attainment of level 2 by age 19 for Lincolnshire is 88.2%, an increase of 3% from 2012/13, and above the regional (85.2%) and national (87.3%) averages. Although there has been some improvement in attainment of level 3 at 19, from 56.2% in 2012/13 to projected 58.25% in 2013/14, performance continues to slip gradually compared to the national average (59.8%), although it is above that of the region (56.1%). Until 2009/10, performance in Lincolnshire was higher than that nationally, but since then increases in attainment have been slower than elsewhere.
- Progress in reducing the gap in attainment at both level 2 and level 3 at age 19 between those young people who have been eligible for free school meals (FSM) and the overall cohort is disappointing, and the gap remains well above the national average. The gap for level 2 has reduced by 3% to 22%, but nationally has reduced from 17% to 16%. For level 2 with English and maths, the gap remains at 35%, where nationally it remains at 27%. For level 3, the gap in Lincolnshire has actually increased by 1% to 33%, where nationally it has remained level at 24%. Given the impact of attainment of level 2 and level 3 on an individual's future employment and potential earnings, closing the gap continues to be a high priority for Lincolnshire. The introduction of free meals in FE for those who are eligible should make an impact, as for the first time colleges and other providers will have information regarding the identity of the individuals concerned and will therefore be able to target support more effectively.

- The requirement to include English and maths in study programmes should start to address the gap in attainment at level 2 with English and maths, but data will not be available to assess this until next year.
- The lack of apprenticeship opportunities at level 3, the high proportion of young people leaving school at the end of year 12 and the higher number of young people not in education, employment or training at the age of 17 are all contributory factors to the attainment of level 3 at age 19.

Curriculum

- The strategic analysis for this year includes an analysis of provision by sector tier in comparison with the skills priorities identified in the growth plan for Lincolnshire. The analysis shows little change to the vocational offer with delivery of engineering, construction and IT at the same level as last year, albeit not at sufficient levels to meet future potential demand, and there has been a reduction in retail of 2% and leisure and tourism of 3%, both of which are skills priorities.
- The majority of vocational training takes place in our GFE colleges who tailor their provision for 16 – 19 year olds to meet student demand rather than sector priorities. Work has been undertaken to raise awareness and stimulate demand for courses in the priority sectors in Lincolnshire through the Going for Growth conference mentioned earlier, the publication of 'Aspirations' three times a year, and the various events organised by the Apprentice Champions. This will remain a priority for the Employment and Skills Board (ESB) and the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (GLLEP).
- Work readiness and employability skills are also a priority for the ESB and GLLEP, and there is evidence that colleges have adjusted their curriculum to address this with an increase of enrolments on work experience of 9%. This is a direct result of the introduction of Study Programmes, including traineeships and supported internships, in September 2013.
- It is too early to determine the impact of this on youth employment in Lincolnshire, where the latest figures show that 16 – 25 year olds make up 28% of the total unemployed in Lincolnshire compared to 24% nationally. Given that Lincolnshire has a lower than average proportion of 16 – 25 year olds in the population this is a huge issue.
- Participation levels for 16 and 17 year olds compare well with the national and regional averages and therefore there are questions about the appropriateness of the curriculum offer in terms of preparing young people for work. This includes the advice and guidance young people receive; the vocational offer; Apprenticeship progression routes; and attainment of level 2 with English and maths and of level 3.

Provision

- The challenges facing providers in Lincolnshire, particularly those relating to school sixth forms, have been discussed at length following an earlier report and are re-iterated in this paper. The financial challenges are likely to impact increasingly on colleges and other providers.

- National policy is that all schools and providers are autonomous organisations, free to set their own curriculum (taking into account the priorities set by the local authority) and that they are free from interference from the local authority. Whilst the local authority can encourage groups of schools and providers to develop solutions to address the over provision, such as collaborative and partnership development, only the schools and providers themselves can effect change.
- The solution could be for post 16 providers in an area (schools sixth forms and colleges) to collaborate in a way that means they behave like a single large sixth form college, in that there is one curriculum offer and a single enrolment process. This could be achieved by developing formal structures whereby one institution in an area becomes the main funding and admissions authority, with the students and associated funding directed to other institutions where the particular curriculum a student requires is available. This would reduce or eliminate duplication of curriculum, reduce the number of small class sizes, make more efficient use of funding, permit staff savings, reduce the pressure for partiality in careers guidance (therefore reducing the drop out at the end of year 12) and would mean learners who changed their minds early in the academic year could access alternative courses without having to wait until the following year. Such arrangements would need to include colleges and their satellite sites, where they exist, due to the breadth of their vocational offer.
- However, there is no appetite for such formal arrangements at the present time, and therefore the next best solution would be to put informal arrangements in place that would achieve some of the benefits described. Priority would be areas where there are several small sixth forms, and in Louth, some early work is taking place to create a single curriculum offer for the whole town. The disadvantages of this approach are the informal nature of the arrangements which can lead to them breaking down (as demonstrated in Sleaford for example where one school is no longer part of the collaborative partnership) and discussions with groups of schools some areas have become bogged down in detail about timetabling, quality assurance etc.

Student finance

- It continues to be difficult to evaluate the impact of student finance on participation and attainment in post 16 education. The continuing and growing gap in attainment between young people who have been or are eligible for free school meals suggests that this is an issue.
- We have commissioned Touchstone to undertake a survey of young people to find out what the barriers are in relation to participation and attainment in post 16 learning, and whether finance has an impact on the choices young people make. The results are not available as yet, but we would hope to include in the report in September.

2. Conclusion

- There are a number of successes in relation to post 16 education in Lincolnshire, including the low levels of NEET, high participation at age 16, development of provision for LLDD, and growth in the number of Apprenticeships.
- There are, however, continuing challenges including: ensuring the mix and balance of provision is appropriate to the needs of the local economy in terms of skills; progression routes for those choosing apprenticeships; participation at age 17 (including levels of drop out from school sixth form provision); provision of impartial careers advice and guidance; attainment of level 3 at age 19; and closing the gap.
- The biggest challenge is securing the continued viability of school sixth forms and ensuring a continued broad curriculum for the future. September 2015 is when the impact of the changes to funding and the decline in the size of the cohort will have the greatest impact. Working together will help address these issues.

3. Consultation

a) Policy Proofing Actions Required

Not applicable

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix 1	Evaluation of Lincolnshire Local Authority's Strategy for Post-16 Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities – March 2014

5. Background Papers

Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning (ASCL) Act 2009

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/22/contents

Education and Skills Act 2008

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/25/contents

Children and Families Act 2014

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted>

Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

Education Act 2011

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/21/contents/enacted

Careers guidance and inspiration for young people in schools

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-guidance-for-young-people-in-schools>

Apprenticeship funding reform in England: payment mechanisms and funding principles

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/apprenticeship-funding-reform-in-england-payment-mechanisms-and-funding-principles>

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