

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

Report to:	Executive
Date:	07 October 2014
Subject:	Strategic Priorities for 16 - 19 (25) Education and Training for 2015/16
Decision Reference:	I006945
Key decision?	Yes

Summary:

The report sets out the current situation in relation to post 16 education and training and identifies the Council's priorities for the strategic commissioning of education and training provision for 16 - 19 year olds (to 25 for young people with an education, health and care plan).

Recommendation(s):

Participation

Increase the number of young people aged 17 participating in education or training and therefore meeting their duty to participate, as required by Raising of the Participation Age.

Attainment and progression

- Reduce the number of young people failing to progress from AS level to A2.
- Close the gap in attainment at level 2 and level 3 by the age of 19 between young people from deprived backgrounds (those who have been eligible for free school meals) and the overall cohort.
- Improve progression pathways, including specifically increasing the availability of apprenticeship opportunities at advanced level (level 3) and higher (level 4 and above), to enable young people to access an alternative route to higher level study.

Curriculum

Maintain a broad curriculum offer across Lincolnshire so that young people are able to access the courses they require to achieve their careers aspirations. This will require schools, colleges and providers to work together in geographical areas.

Information, Advice and Guidance

All young people to have access to independent and impartial careers guidance and information about the labour market and opportunities so that they are able to make realistic, informed decisions about post 14 and post 16 education.

Vulnerable Learners

Develop programmes and transition pathways which better prepare young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) for adulthood and lead to improved outcomes in terms of employment, independent living, good health and community inclusion.

Employment and Skills

Stimulate demand for courses and programmes which better match the economic growth requirements and skills shortages in Lincolnshire, and therefore reduce youth unemployment among 19 - 25 year olds in particular.

Alternatives Considered:

Not Applicable

Reasons for Recommendation:

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 aged 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:

- 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 of 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 duties 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; and schools,

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

1. Background

In the academic year 2013-14 there have been some significant changes which impact on post 16 education, and there continue to be legislative and policy changes that will affect 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 who reached 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. The funding methodology for traineeships has recently been the subject of a consultation and the outcome is likely to be the implementation of similar arrangements to those for Apprenticeships.
- Potential reductions in post 16 education funding from 2015, including the ending of transitional funding protection arrangements and possible cuts to the basic funding rates.
- Increasing devolvement of funding and decision making to local enterprise partnerships (LEPs), 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 means that the young people currently in year 11, i.e. reaching the statutory school leaving age in June 2014, will be those 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.

- Vulnerable young people (including care leavers, young people known to the youth offending team, young people who have been entitled to free school meals, teenage parents etc.) continue to be over represented in the NEET (not in education employment or training).

Current and future actions:

- The duty to participate lies with the young person, and the Local Authority does not have the power to impose sanctions on young people (or their parents) who refuse to participate (although the Secretary of State has reserved the right to introduce these). Participation of young people of RPA age is tracked on an on going basis, and those who are not participating are offered support and encouragement to participate by the Local Authority funded Careers Service.
- There are a range of engagement programmes, including the Youth Contract and other NEET programmes, to which the careers service can refer young people to for additional support. In the future, these discretionary programmes will be funded and commissioned by the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (GLLEP), so it is imperative that Lincolnshire County Council are able to influence the types of provision and programmes that are procured for the area. The 14 – 19 team will continue to work with colleagues in Economy and Culture that support the GLLEP to do this.
- The RPA vulnerable learners group meets termly and is comprised of a range of stakeholders from the public, private and voluntary sector. The remit of the group is to identify barriers to participation and to ensure appropriate provision is in place to support participation of vulnerable young people. The group have been successful in increasing the access and level of CAMHS support to post 16 students and recently to link the YEP (Young expectant parents programme) with the Council's own EFA funded provision to develop it into an EFA funded and recognised post 16 engagement and education programme.

Apprenticeships and Traineeships

- 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.
- The growth in 16 – 18 apprenticeships that was seen in 2013/14 has plateaued, and it is anticipated that the year end figure will be slightly down on the previous year. This pattern is reflected across the East Midlands although other areas did not have the growth last year that was seen in Lincolnshire. Significantly, the number of providers delivering Apprenticeships in the Lincolnshire area has dropped from 133 in 2012/13 to 84 in 2013/14. This change warrants further investigation.

- Opportunities for progression within the Apprenticeship route continue to be an area of concern. Only 206 advanced (level 3) Apprenticeships were undertaken by 16 – 18 year olds, compared to 599 intermediate (level 2). This suggests that there is limited opportunity to progress to level 3 and with only 1 higher (level 4) apprentice aged 16 – 18 and only 17 aged 19 – 25, it is clear that in Lincolnshire, Apprenticeships do not provide an alternative route to higher level study. 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.
- In terms of a match to skills priorities, the picture is mixed. The largest sector is retail, which is a priority for Lincolnshire, followed by business. There has been significant growth in the number of engineering apprentices, comprising 21% of total starts. Apprenticeship numbers in leisure and information technology are disappointing at 1.74% and 1.6% respectively. Apprentices in Health, Public Service and Care comprise 11.4% of starts.
- 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. 69% of starts in 2013/14 were with companies with less than 30 employees and 82% with companies with less than 100 employees.

Current and Future Actions:

- Work will continue to increase the supply and demand for Apprenticeship places through working with schools, the careers service, and in partnership with the Employment and Skills board and the Work Based Learning Alliance.
- The Council has continued to support the work of the Apprenticeship Champions 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. This work will need to be a priority for the GLLEP in their commissioning plans, and the 14 – 19 team have been working with colleagues in the Economy and Culture directorate, and with the Employment and Skills Board, to ensure this is included in their developing procurement plans.
- 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. This work should result in improved progression pathways, and may provide a model for work in the future in other sectors.

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 Scrutiny Committee, as was the potential negative impact of this on the range of curriculum offer. The predicted reduction in funding of £2.8 million for 2014/15 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.
- 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).

Current and future actions:

- 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. Difficulties with transport, timetabling, and accountability for quality are the most often cited issues preventing collaboration.
- Schools will continue to be provided with detailed analysis of their current and future funding projections. The first analyses will be completed on receipt of the October census, with further detail once the Education Funding Agency announces arrangements and funding rates for 2015/16.
- Work will continue to encourage and facilitate collaborative activities to mitigate the impact of future reductions in funding on the curriculum offer, including the identification and sharing of best practice from elsewhere in England.
- A letter has been drafted to Sir Michael Wilshaw, head of OFSTED, in support of his suggestion that collaboration will be a requirement for schools who are deemed to be good or outstanding in inspection
- It is anticipated that the increased focus on sixth form provision as a result of the re-introduction of a separate grade at inspection by Ofsted will increase the focus on the issue of lack of progression from AS to A2 and student destinations.

- The subject of schools' sixth form viability will be an agenda item for a future Schools Forum meeting, to explore potential solutions in terms of facilitating improved collaboration

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', and 3 'Good'. 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.
- Changes to adult funding and increasing restrictions regarding how this 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 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 the 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), but 2 are considering this from 2015/16 for particular vocational pathways.
- There is no FE College with a main campus in the East Lindsey area, however, analysis has demonstrated that there is a similar choice of provision in the area as in other areas with a main campus. Grimsby Institute for Further and Higher Education (GIFHE) provide a substantial vocational offer via their provision, badged as 'Lincolnshire Regional College'. In addition, there are independent providers including First College, Skegness College of Vocational

Training, and CLIP (Community Learning in Partnership) who offer a range of vocational programmes, Apprenticeships and traineeships, as well as foundation level programmes for the most vulnerable young people. The vocational offer will further be extended in September 2015 through the partnership between Wolds College in Louth and Gelders. There continues to be an over-sufficiency of school sixth form A level provision in East Lindsey.

Current and future actions:

- The work to develop provision for LLDD will continue, but the focus will in the future be on preparation for adulthood, including the development of programmes that better prepare young people for transition into some form of employment and/or increased independence.
- Termly meetings with FE college principals will continue to take place to discuss the Council's priorities. In the autumn this will include a proposal that Local Authority officers meet with college governors and senior leadership teams to discuss the strategic priorities; in particular, the current and future skills requirements for Lincolnshire, and the colleges' role in providing young people with the appropriate courses.
- Due to their size, colleges 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 incentivised to do this in order to maintain their student numbers and thereby their funding.
- Additional flexibility in programme start dates will be encouraged.

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.

The development of the new site confirms a commitment from Bishop Burton College, which is a specialist agricultural college, to a continuing presence in Lincolnshire. The current arrangements for subsidised transport mean that students from across Lincolnshire are able to access courses in Agriculture if they choose. Agriculture is a key priority sector for Lincolnshire.

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. 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.

Current and future actions:

- 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. Local Authority staff will continue to work with the Education Funding Agency to identify and mitigate any emerging issues and concerns in terms of quality and viability.
- Local Authority staff will offer similar support in terms of data analysis and financial forecasting as that provided to school sixth forms.
- Work will continue in partnership with the Work Based Learning Alliance to ensure these providers continue to meet the needs of young people who are the most disadvantaged.

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 concludes 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 Plans (EHCP) as required in the Children and Families Act.

- Under the new legislation, young people with an EHC plan can remain in 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*).

Current and future actions:

- An evaluation of the Lincolnshire pilot of the Supported Internships programme found that this has been a success, with 68% of the participants securing paid employment at the end of the programme compared to 38% in the national pilot.
- Priorities for the coming year will be focussed on preparing young people with special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) for adulthood. This will 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 new 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, and there is more time to plan students' transitions.

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.
- There are increasing options for young people pre 16, particularly from age 14 onwards, including, for example, UTCs and GFE colleges. 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.

Current and future actions:

- The Local Authority Careers Service will continue to work 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, from September 2014, continue to purchase similar levels to those in 2013/14.
- In order to raise awareness of the additional opportunities for 14 year olds, 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.
- 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.

Current and future actions:

- 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 Local Authority will work with colleges and other providers to ensure they have the information.

- 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, and the Local Authority will continue to support and encourage the development of progression opportunities.
- The 14 – 19 team will undertake work with colleges and other providers (linking in and building on the work our school improvement partner CfBT is doing with schools) to challenge them in relation to how they propose to close the gap in attainment.

Curriculum

- The strategic analysis for this year includes an analysis of provision by sector tier in comparison with the skills priorities identified in the GLLEP 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. 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 readiness and employability skills are also a priority for the Employment and Skills Board (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.
- A recently published report by the Institute for Public Policy Research suggests that even a full blown economic recovery will not resolve the UK's young unemployment problem so there is a need for proactive action to address the issue.

Current and future actions:

- Work has been undertaken to raise awareness and stimulate demand for courses in the priority sectors in Lincolnshire through the Going for Growth conference, the publication of 'Aspirations' three times a year, and the various events organised by the Apprentice Champions.
- Access to national and discretionary funding will be increasingly via the Local Enterprise Partnerships in the future and there is therefore an urgent imperative to ensure that the Greater Lincolnshire LEP is aware of the issues in relation to the link between social inclusion, particularly unemployment among 16 – 25 year olds and economic growth.
- Some work to try to encourage colleges and other providers to amend their offer has already been undertaken by both the ESB and the LA 14 – 19 team, with mixed success. There is a need to work with the GLLEP to consider how these changes might be achieved by stimulating learner demand for courses required to ensure economic growth in Lincolnshire.
- A youth employment strategy will be developed to secure increases in opportunities for Apprenticeships, Traineeships, Supported Internships and work experience within Lincolnshire County Council and its strategic partners.

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 in some areas have become bogged down in detail about timetabling, quality assurance etc.

Current and future actions:

- In addition to the actions specified in the schools sixth form section of this report, the Council will publish a very clear statement that it will not accept that young people will not have access to a full curriculum, and that it has an expectation that schools, Academies and other providers will co-operate to ensure that students have access to the courses they wish to undertake to enable them to achieve their education and employment aspirations.

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.

Current and future action

- Touchstone have been commissioned 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.

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.

- Increasingly the resources to address some of the issues will in the future come via the GLLEP and there is a pressing need to ensure that they are aware of the issues and allocate resources and commission appropriate activities.

3. Legal Comments:

The legal issues to be taken into account in the consideration of this report are set out within it.

4. Resource Comments:

There are no immediate financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report. The report highlights a number of significant challenges, and the actions that have been proposed to address those will need to be funded from the base budgets that are currently available.

5. Consultation

a) Has Local Member Been Consulted?

Yes

b) Has Executive Councillor Been Consulted?

Yes

c) Scrutiny Comments

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee will consider this report at its meeting on 12 September 2014. Comments from this meeting will be presented to the Executive on 7 October 2014.

d) Policy Proofing Actions Required

Not applicable

6. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

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