

14-19 Update

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Purpose

- 1 This paper provides the Council with an update on various aspects of the 14-19 reform agenda.

Recommendation

- 2 Members of the Council are recommended to note the contents of this paper.

RAISING OF COMPULSORY PARTICIPATION AGE

- 3 The Secretary of State announced in February that he intended to bring forward proposals in the spring which would seek to increase participation in education or training by young people aged 16-18, including the possibility of making this compulsory.
- 4 Unfortunately, much of the original press coverage of the proposal referred to it in terms of "*raising the school leaving age*". It is important to stress that the working model being developed by DfES includes learning in schools, sixth form colleges, FE colleges, work-based learning and employment with accredited training. The learning could be full or part-time.
- 5 Issues being considered are: whether this should be until a young person's 18th birthday or earlier if they achieved level 2; whether the age should be raised to 17 first and to 18 after a further two years; and whether the raising of the age should coincide with the introduction of the national entitlement to all 14 Diploma lines in 2013.

6 Members of the Young People's Learning Committee considered this proposal at their meeting in February. Members welcomed the aim that all 16-18 year-olds should participate in education or training and gave some initial comments that:

- they had concerns about the element of compulsion and how this might be taken forward
- the approach to implementing this policy should be to consider all the opportunities and the support that young people aged 16-18 need and to identify the costs and infrastructure required to deliver these
- it would be vitally important to engage employers, delivery partners, parents/carers and young people themselves in developing the policy so that participation is increased through the provision of appropriate opportunities and support rather than the use of sanctions.

ACHIEVEMENT OF LEVEL 2 AT 19

7 In February, the DfES published provisional data for the achievement of Level 2 at 19 at the end of 2006. The data showed that 71.4 per cent of 19 year olds had achieved at least level 2, an increase of 5.1 per cent from 2004, and meaning that 40,000 more 19 year olds had achieved level 2 than did in 2004. This exceeds the Public Sector Agreement target of a three per cent increase. A particular feature of the increase is in the number of young people who achieve level 2 after the age of 16, which provides real evidence of the impact of LSC leadership and activity at partnership, regional and national level.

YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING (NEET)

Marketing campaign

8 The LSC has commissioned a leading public relations consultancy to support us in promoting the benefits of learning to young people as part of the overall campaign to increase attainment of Level 2 at 19. This has included national and local newspapers and radio. Overall evaluation of the campaign shows that between April 2006 and January 2007 it had generated 340 articles, has resulted in a circulation of 198,614,758 with a readership of 466,960,474.

10 There has been one major story in each of the last four months. In November television soap operas were encouraged to present more favourable role models of young people, with examples of the careers that could be pursued; in December the focus was on research which showed that good and relevant work placements boosted starting salaries; in

January, the target audience was young people considering a break from learning, stressing that a gap year could be beneficial, if used constructively, for example in work experience or volunteering, with a clear intention to return to learning; and in February results of a survey of adults were published, showing how many had come to regret not making the most of their learning opportunities when young.

Interdepartmental Meeting

- 11 A second meeting involving Ministers and senior officials of DfES and the Department of Work and Pensions took place on the 21 February 2007 to discuss progress towards reducing the numbers not in education, employment and training. The ongoing issues regarding data sharing, data matching and data collection were discussed at length with a focus on the Connexions Client Caseload Information System (CCIS) and other formal arrangements for data analysis.
- 12 The LSC contribution to moving this agenda forward includes the progression programme for young parents (described below), the formal arrangement for all LSC funded delivery partners to notify Connexions when a young person leaves learning, the review of the level 2 and NEET toolkit to take account of the changes in the Connexions service and the new role of the local authority, and the emerging guidance on the 'September Guarantee' with fields developed within the CCIS to record how many learners have an offer of a place to take up learning at key points in the year.
- 13 Other activities which are ongoing include: joint work with DfES on a national NEET strategy; practice led policy (PLP) work supported by NEET segmentation and a review of research to inform the LSC delivery plan which will emerge from the DfES strategy. In addition, a number of separate, and centrally managed, LSC budgets supporting 14-19 reform (such as Increased Flexibility and Young Apprenticeship) have been brought together and the total of around £200 million allocated to LSC regions, with flexibility to support the 14-19 offer as a whole and establishing the correct mix and balance of programmes on offer to deliver the required outputs for the region.
- 14 A further piece of work which is planned is to develop a clear understanding of what funding is in place currently with the LSC, local authorities and other bodies (social services, health authorities and so on) to support learning by 14-19 year olds, including the balance of funding between different routes and qualifications, in order to ensure that there is no unintended "drift" of funding, either between types of provision or away from learning.

Progression Programmes for Young Parents / Parents to be

- 15 There are around 24,000 young mothers or mothers-to-be aged 16-19. Of these, some 17,000 are not in education, employment or training. We estimate that some of these young people will take advantage of a range of

provision in parenting skills, but these programmes should not be publicly funded as they do not formally lead to a qualification or progression in learning or employment.

- 16 Agreement has now been reached on how these programmes might be developed to lead productively to a qualification and progression. We believe that this could bring some 5,000 young people annually back into learning.
- 17 It is intended to test whether such programmes can be restructured to enable the young person returning to learning to achieve higher levels of qualifications and progress to valuable employment with training. The ultimate aim will be to align such progression activity with the Foundation Learning Tier.
- 18 Funding has been made available to regions for 07/08 to commission programmes that will accommodate the learning needs of young people in dealing with pre and post natal issues using these features as the context to improve basic skills, independent living skills, vocational skills and to offer a range of formal and non formal awards. These young people can continue to be supported post child birth through Care to Learn funds that will cover the costs of childcare whilst they continue their training or education.
- 19 This move has been welcomed by ministers as evidence of a pragmatic approach to reducing the number of young people classified as NEET.

ENTRY TO EMPLOYMENT (E2E)

- 20 E2E continues to show marginal improvements in recruitment, with in-learning figures gradually catching up on the 2005/06 period. The period from April to September 2006 (post EMA extension to e2e) showed a significant downturn, mainly due to the fact that many young people had been encouraged to enrol on the programme prior to the introduction of EMA (which would be financially beneficial for those who were from families with an annual income of over £30,000).
- 21 To continue to improve this position regional colleagues were encouraged to utilise any under spend to engage the hardest to reach groups. Flexible arrangements were agreed to enable delivery of programmes through fewer hours per week and in some cases more weeks per learner in order to better meet individual needs. Some areas have proactively taken up this option.
- 22 At the same time a proposal to stimulate apprenticeship take up with a discrete pre-apprenticeship route was also encouraged. This resulted from an initiative by the Carter & Carter group, a major provider of vocational learning, who had identified a particular group of young people whose needs were not being met by existing options. Evidence to date shows the

programme has been successful where it has been commissioned. The effectiveness of this initiative will be reviewed and will help to inform the development of learning pathways that will populate the Foundation Learning Tier as it develops.

DIPLOMA DEVELOPMENT

- 23 The 9 Diploma Gateway regional moderation panels met in January and February before announcement of the outcomes following national moderation in March. Each consortium will receive feedback on their Gateway proposal highlighting specific areas for development and providing information on workforce development support. It will be a key role for LAs and LSC partnership teams to provide the strategic leadership and support for logistical, workforce and administrative planning to enable effective collaborative and partnership working between colleges, schools and training providers. This leadership and support will be particularly important with those consortia that are unsuccessful in passing through the Diploma Gateway for 2008 delivery, to prevent partnerships drifting apart and help them prepare for 2009.
- 24 We will need to use our 14-19 resources and funding imaginatively and in alignment with LA's flexible funding pot and schools' enhanced dedicated support grant funding for 2007-08 to maintain and increase the impetus and momentum for partnership and vocational learning.
- 25 With the first five Diplomas due to be available from 2008, concerns have been raised within the FE system about Diploma workforce development proposals. DfES is aware of those concerns, and are putting together a comprehensive programme of support.

KEY STAGE 4 SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME

- 26 An allocation of £18m has been made by the Treasury to DfES to support LA/LSC regions to implement year 2 of a programme aimed at 14-16 year olds at risk of becoming NEET at 16. Regional Young People's Learning Directors are currently negotiating programmes and places for 07/08 with a national target of 15,000 learners.

YOUNG APPRENTICESHIP

- 27 Ministers have agreed funding for a fourth cohort of the Young Apprenticeship (YA) Programme from September 2007. The basis for the ministerial agreement of a new cohort was that interest in the programme remains high and the approval of a further cohort allows time to evaluate

the fit of the programme within the 14-19 reforms. Outcomes from cohort 1 will not be reported formally until early 2007, but early indications are promising and it is hoped that young people on the programme will, in many cases, progress rapidly on to Advanced Apprenticeships.

- 28 The funding confirmation of £33.75m in total for the programme in 2007/08 is to cover 3,500 in Y11 of Cohort 3 and a target of a maximum number of 9,000 in Y10 of Cohort 4.

Clearance

This paper has been cleared by Julia Dowd, National Director of Young People's Learning and Melanie Hunt, Director of Learning.

Communications

No external communications necessary.

Impact assessment

The various initiatives and activities described in this paper are intended to have a positive impact on the learning opportunities of young people, and in particular of disadvantaged young people.

Resources

The costs associated with the initiatives and activities described in this paper are contained within existing plans for increased participation by young people.

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