

Young People's Learning Division of the Learning and Skills Council

North East

Regional Commissioning Statement 2010/11

February 2010

Of interest to Local Authorities, providers
and partner/stakeholders

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement sets out our commissioning intentions for young people's learning for 2010/11 in support of our priorities and targets, in the context of our national Statement of Priorities, as a signal to partners and providers.
- 1.2 We are in a period of organisational change. In April 2010, responsibility for securing sufficient education and training provision for all young people aged 16-19 and 19-25 year olds with a learning difficulty assessment will pass from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to local authorities.
- 1.3 In preparation for these new arrangements, we are engaging with local authorities, sub-regional groups, and the shadow Regional Planning Group throughout this year's business cycle on the commissioning of provision for young people for 2010/11. LSC local 16-19 teams have worked with local authority colleagues in each area on local strategic analysis to identify local commissioning priorities, set out in Local Area Statements of Need. These statements, together with the Regional Strategic Analysis, informed our regional priorities (set out in section 4) which were endorsed by the shadow Regional Planning Group in November 2009.
- 1.4 This commissioning statement builds on the significant progress made in recent years by all partners involved in the delivery of education and training to young people in the region. We have more young people staying on in learning after completing their compulsory education than ever before. Attainment rates are higher as more young people complete their learning and achieve their qualifications.
- 1.5 But the challenges remain. NEET rates among young people remain above the national average. Regional attainment of Level 3 at age 19 is lower than all other regions, and significant differences in attainment remain between disadvantaged young people and their peers. The recent recession has created particular challenges in youth unemployment and in encouraging increased employer engagement in Apprenticeships.
- 1.6 This statement sets out the high level regional priorities for young people's learning in the light of these challenges, and the broad shifts in provision required in support of these priorities.
- 1.7 We have structured the presentation of the regional priorities under two headings: they are the strategic aims of Raising the Participation Age and Narrowing the Gap. But a number of the priorities will contribute to both agendas. Note that while the PSA targets are focussed on those young people identified through measures of deprivation, our focus on Narrowing the Gap is broad ranging, encompassing the need to address all barriers to participation and attainment.
- 1.8 This is a huge agenda and one we cannot hope to achieve on our own. The need further to develop and implement collaborative arrangements within and across local authorities will continue to be a key driver in our efforts to raise participation and achievement for all young people.

2. National Priorities for Young People

New Arrangements

- 2.1 New arrangements for the planning and funding of education and training for young people will come into effect from April 2010. From this time, the priorities for young people and the responsibility for the outcomes achieved by them will be shared by local authorities, the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) and the schools, colleges and training organisations that work directly with all those aged 16-19 and those aged 19-25 who are subject to a learning difficulty assessment¹. The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) will be responsible for increasing the number of Apprenticeships for all ages. Local authorities and the YPLA will work with NAS to make sure young people realise their Apprenticeship ambitions. The priorities for investment in adult skills in 2010-11 were published in *Skills Investment Strategy* by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in November 2009.
- 2.2 The *16-19 Statement of Priorities and Investment Strategy* was published on 12 January 2010 jointly by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Learning and Skills Council. The national priorities have been summarised here. Further details of these priorities and the Investment and Allocations Strategy are in the national statement.
- 2.3 A full copy of the document is available at:
<http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/nat-statementofpriorities-jan10.pdf>
- 2.4 In planning for 2010/11, the LSC will make allocations direct to providers on behalf of the YPLA. In this transition year the LSC's Young People's Learning Division will work closely with local authorities, Sub-Regional Groupings and the Regional Planning Group to trial key elements of the National Commissioning Framework which will come into effect for 2011/12. The process will be based on the national formula and criteria described in the National Commissioning Framework (NCF). From April 2010, local authorities will actually deliver the allocations to providers.

Increasing Investment in Young People

- 2.5 The 2009 Budget and the Pre-Budget Report of December 2009 signalled record levels of investment in the education and training of young people in England. The Government is investing nearly £8.5 billion in 2010-11 to fund learning for over 1.6 million young people – the highest level ever.

Public Service Agreement targets (NI 79, NI 80, NI 117)²

- 2.6 The Public Service Agreements (PSA) with targets specifically in respect of the young people covered by this statement of priorities are:

¹ Financial year is written as, for example, 2010-11, and the academic year as 2010/11. References to young people aged 16-19 means those who had reached the age of 16 by 31 August 2010, but who had not reached the age of 19 by that date, but includes those whose 19th birthday falls within the academic year 2010/11; references to those aged 25 means up to their 25th birthday.

² For the benefit of local authorities any relevant indicators from the National Indicator (NI) Set are identified in brackets.

- PSA 10 Increase the proportion of young people achieving:
- Level 2 at age 19 to 82 per cent in 2011 (from 73.9 per cent in 2007);
 - Level 3 at age 19 to 54 per cent in 2011 (from 48.0 per cent in 2007).

PSA 14 Reduce the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training by 2 percentage points by 2010 (from 9.7 per cent in 2004).

Guaranteeing Places and Increasing Participation

Raising the Participation Age

2.7 The age of compulsory participation in education or training will be raised to 17 in 2013 and to 18 in 2015. *Raising the Participation Age: supporting local areas to deliver*, published in December 2009, sets out what local authorities and other partners need to do by 2013, and the support available to start their preparations.

September Guarantee

2.8 Local authorities have overall responsibility for delivery of the Guarantee at the local level, working in partnership with schools, colleges, training providers, Connexions services and, currently, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), to ensure that they prepare, support and enable all 16 and 17 year olds to secure a suitable place in learning.

Reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training

2.9 In December 2009 the Government published *Investing in Potential*, a joint Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) strategy to increase the proportion of 16 to 24 year olds in education, employment or training.

Routes for Young People

Apprenticeships (NI 79, 80, 91)

2.10 The Government wants to see continued growth in the number of young people undertaking an Apprenticeship, to meet the long-term ambition that at least one out of every five young people are undertaking an Apprenticeship programme. The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning (ASCL) Act will ensure that by 2013 an Apprenticeship place will be available to all suitably qualified young people, increasing the number and variety of places available.

Diplomas (NI 90)

2.11 Diploma consortia will be delivering increased numbers of Diploma places by offering young people a choice of Phase 1, 2 and 3 qualifications. It is also a critical year for 14-19 Partnerships in terms of ensuring that they have robust plans to secure enough places to deliver the Diploma entitlement in 2013.

Foundation Learning (NI 79, NI 91, NI 117)

- 2.12 By 2010/11, all local authorities should be delivering Foundation Learning for 14-19 year olds in their areas, building on previous programmes, evidence from pilots and the phased implementation of Foundation Learning in the post-16 sector. From 2010/11, the majority of 16-19 providers should be involved in its delivery, as Foundation Learning will encompass all existing programmes at Entry Level and Level 1 for 16 to 19 year olds, including Entry to Employment (E2E).

Functional Skills

- 2.13 Functional Skills qualifications are now available at Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2. Providers are now expected to deliver these qualifications for young people wherever possible. The number of young people taking adult literacy or numeracy qualifications should fall significantly.

Community service

- 2.14 It is the Government's ambition that, in time, all young people will complete at least 50 hours of community service by the time they reach the age of 19. The community service for 16 to 18 year olds initiative will continue and be integrated into Foundation Learning from 2010/11 and, together with the local authority 14-16 pilots to be launched in early 2010, will inform future developments, including on the issues of capacity, delivery and recognition.

Flexible provision

- 2.15 Flexible and responsive provision is essential if every young person is to be enabled to participate in learning. In order to meet the requirements of vulnerable young people provision may need to be available at different times of the day, and a range of flexible start dates should be available from colleges and other providers throughout the year.

Support for Young People

Access to learning and transport

- 2.16 A short-term £12 million Transport Partnership Fund has helped local authorities to develop innovative and sustainable transport solutions. This fund will continue in 2010-11 and will be administered by the YPLA.

Information, Advice and Guidance

- 2.17 Local authorities should take forward the DCSF information, advice and guidance (IAG) Strategy: *Quality, Choice and Aspiration*, to ensure that the right support and guidance is in place for all young people by 2013 as an essential component of the 14-19 Entitlement. Local authorities will be expected to follow the related Directions and Statutory Guidance which is expected to be issued in spring 2010. Local authorities must work with and through 14-19 Partnerships to ensure that the Common Application Process is in place by September 2011 for all young people in

Year 11. The Common Application Process links with the 14-19 Prospectus and aligns with the Apprenticeship Vacancies Online system to give young people ownership of the application process and equal access to all curriculum routes. .

Work experience for people over compulsory school age

2.18 As part of the new vision for work experience and the review of the DCSF's work experience standard (as announced in October 2009 in *Quality, Choice and Aspiration*), more post-16 work experience with employers will be promoted. From 2010, local authorities will have the power to secure the provision of work experience for people aged 16-19 within their area, and for those aged 19-25 who are subject to a learning difficulty assessment.

Learner voice

2.19 The 14-19 Partnerships are developing good practice that enables the learner voice to be heard at the local level. The Learning and Skills Council's YPLA Committee has committed itself to listening to the learner voice in its deliberations, and it is planned that this will continue after April 2010 when the YPLA begins to operate.

Education of young offenders (NI 19, NI 45)

2.20 The YPLA will support local authorities in fulfilling their new responsibilities from 2010 to commission and fund education and training for young offenders in youth custody (this includes young people aged 10-17 and some 18 year olds near the end of their sentence who remain in youth custody).

Attainment and Progression

Narrowing the attainment gaps (NI 81, NI 82, NI 148)

2.21 Narrowing the gap between the attainment of the most disadvantaged young people (including those who are looked after or who are care leavers) and their peers is a key policy priority. The YPLA will provide local authorities, sub-regional groupings and regional planning groups with data on, and strategic analysis of, the attainment gaps.

Equality and diversity

2.22 The LSC will ensure that those providers it commissions comply with all the relevant legislation that relates to gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion/belief, age and transgender equality, and the statutory codes of practice for education published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Equality and diversity will be embedded in the new commissioning arrangements.

Raising the Quality of Provision for Young People

2.23 The Framework for Excellence (FfE) is the Government's performance assessment framework for further education colleges and post-16 education and training

providers. The Framework for Excellence will be implemented in schools with sixth forms from 2010.

Non-section 96 funding

2.24 In 2009 an impact assessment, using 2008/09 data, was undertaken of a proposal that external qualifications for young people should only be funded if they have been approved by the Secretary of State under Section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000. Following consideration of the results of this impact assessment, funding will be withdrawn from 31 July 2010 from over 1,000 qualifications that are currently eligible for funding. A list of those qualifications has been published on the LSC's website.

14-19 Qualification Strategy

2.25 The 14-19 Qualification Strategy is designed to ensure by 2013 the majority of young people will access qualifications through one of the four national learning routes: Apprenticeships; Diplomas; Foundation Learning; and GCSEs/A levels. Providers are responsible for ensuring that they deliver only those qualifications approved by the Secretary of State under section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 and should also be working to align their offer to the four national routes.

Level 2 to Level 3 conversion

2.26 Around a quarter of young people nationally who achieve Level 2 do not go on to achieve Level 3. This includes some 30 per cent of those who achieve eight GCSEs at grade A*-C and 40 per cent of those who achieve seven GCSEs at grades A*-C. Local authorities should consider with their 14-19 Partnerships how such young people can be best supported to achieve Level 3.

Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Budgetary control

2.27 A key challenge for local authorities from 2010 will be to maintain control of the budgets to support learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LDD). In particular, they should, through Children's Trusts, seek to ensure that third-party contributions are secured wherever appropriate.

Roles and responsibilities

2.28 The ASCL Act fundamentally changes the responsibilities of local authorities for learners with LDD. Local authorities become the sole accountable bodies for all the outcomes and services for learners with LDD aged 0-19 and for those aged 19-25 who are subject to a learning difficulty assessment. Local authorities must secure appropriate provision for these learners.

Local provision and inclusion in mainstream learning

- 2.29 The inclusion of more young people with LDD in mainstream learning (for example in FE colleges) will remain a key priority. Local authorities should be working towards the development of high-quality provision to enable learners to participate locally (rather than be reliant on residential provision which can often be some considerable distance from the learner's home).

Employment and access to Apprenticeships

- 2.30 By September 2010, providers will no longer be funded to deliver work-preparation programmes for learners with LDD that do not focus on learning in the workplace and the supported employment model.

3. North East Economic Context

- 3.1 The Leitch Review of Skills³ articulated the scale of the economic challenge facing the nation, and the considerable increase in skills required to tackle this. The recently published national skills strategy⁴, renews the commitment to the Leitch Skills targets, and also puts a stronger focus on advanced technician and higher level skills to equip the workforce with the skills needed for economic prosperity.
- 3.2 The Regional Economic Strategy (RES)⁵ articulates the vision for sustainable economic growth in the North East. It sets out the regional ambition to drive up regional GVA to 90 per cent of the national average by 2016. Achieving this requires, among other things, increasing labour market participation among working-age people, and raising the skills levels of the labour force.
- 3.3 The RES recognises that the skills and qualifications of young people are a key determinant of the long-term skills profile of the region's economy and highlights the need to raise the aspirations and attainment of young people in order that they achieve their potential.
- 3.4 Historically, the region's economic output has been low relative to other English regions and the UK average. But over the last decade, there has been significant progress made in strengthening and diversifying the North East economy. The region's economy has been growing at a faster rate than nationally and there has been a narrowing of the gap in employment rates. This put the region in a much stronger starting position going into the recent recession than was the case in previous recessions of the 1980s and 90s.
- 3.5 Nevertheless, the recession has had a significant impact on the North East, as it has nationally. While the recession originated in the financial services sector, with knock-on effects on construction and property related industries, the impact soon spread across a wide range of sectors and occupations.

³ See http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/leitch_review_index.htm

⁴ Skills for Growth- The national skills strategy <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/skills-for-growth>

⁵ One NorthEast (2006) *Leading The Way: The Regional Economic Strategy* (<http://www.onenortheast.co.uk/page/res.cfm>).

- 3.6 All parts of the region have seen rising unemployment, although some have been harder hit than others. In July 2009, the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) was 70 per cent higher than in July 2008, and at 7.1 per cent the regional claimant count rate was above the national rate of 4.8 per cent⁶. Employment opportunities for young people have been affected – the number of young people claiming JSA rose sharply between August 2008 and February 2009. While numbers are now falling, youth unemployment is a considerable issue for the region.
- 3.7 The regional economy is now showing tentative signs of recovery. Positive output growth is predicted for 2010, but it is difficult to predict the strength of this recovery (or the longer term structural implications) with any certainty. Unemployment in the region continues to rise, albeit much less rapidly than at the height of the recession, and there continue to be significant redundancy announcements both by private sector and public sector employers in the region.
- 3.8 While the focus of the region in the short term has been to respond to the recession, the longer term aim remains for the North East to continue to close the gap with national performance in productivity.
- 3.9 The structure of the economy is a key determinant of relative economic performance. The region has a more diverse industrial base than it did in the past when reliance on primary and manufacturing industries left it exposed to structural decline in heavy industry. Despite the significant fall in employment in manufacturing over the last three decades, the sector remains important to the economy, although the nature of jobs in the sector continues to change as it diversifies into new areas such as renewables. The public sector (health and social care, education and public administration) is a major employer in the region. Business services and the retail sector are big employers in the region although these sectors make up a smaller share of overall employment than they do nationally.
- 3.10 The structure of the economy and the nature of jobs will continue to change regionally and nationally. Employment projections for the region suggest that over the next decade, employment in manufacturing and production sectors will continue to decline, while service sectors will continue to expand. But there will be continuing employment demand in all sectors over the next decade, including those that face decline in overall employment terms, because of the need to replace staff lost through turnover and retirement.
- 3.11 The RES identifies nine key sectors as drivers of increased economic participation and productivity growth in the region⁷. It also highlights the strategic importance of STEM⁸ knowledge and skills to the regional economy – analysis suggests that there is demand for STEM skills at all levels across the region's priority sectors, which outstrips current supply.
- 3.12 The Government's Industrial Activism agenda identifies areas of the economy for targeted support for the development of new activities to facilitate sustained

⁶ ONS Claimant Count, July 2009.

⁷ Including chemicals and pharmaceuticals, automotive, defence and marine, food and drink, energy (renewables and low carbon technologies), knowledge intensive business services, tourism and hospitality, commercial creative, and health and social care.

⁸ Science, technology, engineering and maths

economic recovery. The policy offers potentially significant opportunities for the North East as a number of the specific technologies and industries prioritised for support are those where the region has particular strengths⁹.

- 3.13 We know that in the future there will be fewer jobs which require no skills or low skills, and more jobs requiring higher skills. The shift to the knowledge based economy will continue. The changing nature of the economy - new technologies, the shift to low carbon and high value added will bring new specialist demands. It will be vital to adapt the skills of the workforce to meet these demands.
- 3.14 It will be increasingly important for young people, as the future workforce, to have the appropriate skills and qualifications and to have the capacity to continue to learn. Young people (and those from whom they seek advice such as parents/guardians, Connexions staff and teachers) must be equipped with robust and up to date information on the range of opportunities available across sectors and occupations so that they are able to make informed decisions about careers.
- 3.15 Many young people face considerable and complex barriers to engaging in learning. 32,300 young people in the North East – around 20 per cent of the young population live in areas ranked among the 10 per cent most deprived in England (compared to 12 per cent nationally). These areas are often characterised by multiple problems, including for example low levels of adult economic activity, poor health, high levels of teenage pregnancy. Raising aspirations of all young people to engage and stay in learning and to achieve is central to ensuring that all young people, regardless of their background, can fulfil their potential in the world of work.

4. Regional Priorities for 16-18 participation and success

Raising the Participation Age

Issues and Challenges

Overall participation

- 4.1 Participation rates of young people at 16 and 17 in the region compare favourably with the national position. Latest data shows participation of 16 year olds at 89 per cent compared to 88 per cent nationally. Participation rates fall significantly at age 17 (78 per cent in the region – at the national rate) and again at age 18. This 'drop out' may reflect: an inappropriate choice of route at 16; completion of the planned programme and a desire to start paid work; or difficulties in other areas of the young person's life.
- 4.2 A significant increase in 16 year old and particularly 17 year old participation rates is necessary if we are to achieve **full participation by 2013 and 2015** respectively.

⁹ Including electric vehicles, offshore wind, the process industries (biotechnology) and printable electronics.

- 4.3 The Government's commitment to Raising the Participation Age (RPA) means that local authorities will have a duty to promote effective participation of all young people in their area and will need to ensure that there is the provision and support to cater for all needs and all participation routes.

Demographic changes and travel to learn patterns

- 4.4 We also need to ensure that planning for increased participation rates among young people is done in the context of demographic change in the region and that it reflects travel to learn patterns.

- 4.5 While total population is projected to increase slightly, the 16-18 cohort is projected to decline by 13% between 2009 and 2013. This is a faster rate of decline than is projected nationally. This decline will be seen in all local authority areas although it is projected to be more significant in some: Middlesbrough and Sunderland are expected to see the greatest rates of decline in the region.

- 4.6 Travel to learn flows in and out of the region are relatively small, but flows are of greater volume and complexity across and between local authorities within the region. Local authorities and sub regional groupings will want to consider the planning and commissioning implications associated with the import and export of learners and the overall decline in the population of young people.

The Guarantee and NEET levels

- 4.7 A key tool in building towards full participation of 16 and 17 year olds is the **September Guarantee**. Performance in the region on the September 2009 Guarantee compared favourably with the national performance. There is a robust process in place in the region to monitor progress and deal with issues promptly. But it is important that in meeting the Guarantee in the region the offer is the right one for the young person concerned. For this reason high quality, impartial information advice and guidance that enables young people to make informed choices is vital.
- 4.8 Raising participation towards 100 per cent means that we will have to engage those **young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)**. The proportion of young people who are NEET in the region has fallen recently, reflecting concerted efforts by local partnerships, and local examples of good practice in multi-agency working.
- 4.9 But the proportion of young people in the region who are NEET remains high at 9.8 per cent (9,010 young people) in the period November 2008 – January 2009, compared to 6.7 per cent nationally. It is the highest of all English regions.
- 4.10 NEET rates vary significantly between local authorities, from 6.3 per cent in Northumberland to 13.2 per cent in Sunderland (identified as a hotspot alongside Redcar & Cleveland)¹⁰. We should ensure that good practice at the local level in reducing NEET is identified and shared across the region. The most successful interventions have been provision which is targeted and locally defined. ESF funded

¹⁰ DCSF November 2008 -January 2009 adjusted average

Youth Participation projects in each local authority are aimed at delivering such provision, and form a key part of the strategy to reduce NEET in the region.

4.11 NEET rates also vary considerably between different groups of young people. This is discussed further under *Narrowing the Gap*.

Work without training

4.12 The proportion of **young people in jobs without training** in the region has decreased in recent years but at November 2009 there were over 2000 16-18 year olds in jobs without training to Level 2. It is important in preparation for RPA that these young people are identified and we work with them and their employers to convert, where appropriate, jobs without training into Apprenticeships.

Creating the right learning opportunities

4.13 If we are to engage young people who are NEET, and if we are to raise participation towards 100 per cent, we must ensure that there are sufficient and appropriate high quality learning opportunities to meet their individual needs, supported by impartial information, advice and guidance and appropriate learner and learning support. A key challenge for the region will be to broaden the offer to young people as a platform for the **curriculum entitlement** to the four learning pathways by 2013:

- Meeting the **Apprenticeship** entitlement for 2013 and meeting the regional and local targets for Apprenticeship starts by young people pose significant challenges. Opportunities currently available reflect the level of employer take up across the region: this needs to be increased, but to do this represents a particular challenge in the current economic climate. This is at the heart of the mission for the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) in the region, which will expand the Apprenticeship offer by driving up employer engagement, stimulating high quality demand from individuals, whilst targeting those sectors (such as the public sector) which present the greatest opportunities for expansion.
- There has been good progress in securing **Diploma** approvals through the Gateway process but take up of Diplomas to date has been lower than planned. There are also concerns about the lack of progression routes through from Level 1 to Level 3 Diplomas. A key challenge for local consortia will be to meet the challenge of the planned numbers for Diplomas and to ensure that there is sufficient range and breadth of Diploma provision to meet the entitlement.
- A sufficient and coherent **Foundation Learning** offer is crucial for supporting increased engagement and progression of young people with learning needs below Level 2. In 2008/09, 25 providers in the North East were involved in the developmental delivery of post-16 progression pathways. Early signs are that delivery of Foundation Learning has increased in 2009/10. In 2010/11 it will be necessary to ramp up delivery on a trajectory which will ensure that Foundation Learning is the primary offer for all learners below Level 2.

- **General qualifications** are a well established route for young people. There is a comprehensive offer of GCSEs and A levels across the region delivered in General FE and Sixth Form Colleges and in School Sixth Forms.

4.14 There are currently a number of established qualifications available outside the four national learning routes which have high learner take up in the region and nationally. These include BTECs, OCR Nationals and those from City & Guilds. DCSF is currently working with the Awarding Organisations that offer these high take up qualifications to develop plans for these qualifications as the four national routes evolve and expects to provide greater detail on these plans shortly.

4.15 In summary, meeting the young person's entitlement presents a key challenge for local authorities, sub regional groupings and 14-19 partnerships in the region. Success will rest on effective 14-19 partnership planning and on effective links with employers. It will also require an appropriate delivery infrastructure able to assist and foster collaboration not just within local authorities but also across local authority boundaries. This will ensure access to the full entitlement for all young people, will maintain quality and deliver economies of scale.

Raising the Participation Age Priorities:

- * Accelerating progress in meeting **NEET** targets and raising participation as a platform for full participation through increased multi-agency activity – improved identification and tracking, aided by improved data sharing, and targeted, personalised intensive interventions. Identifying and sharing across the region good practice in reducing NEET.
- * Developing a **broad, high quality curriculum offer** that meets the individual needs of all young people on a trajectory to meeting the entitlement to the 4 qualification routes- Apprenticeships, Diplomas, Foundation Learning, and General Qualifications by 2013. Ensuring that there are clear progression routes between levels and to higher levels and the appropriate support is in place at points of transition.
- * Accelerating progress in establishing a sufficient and coherent **Foundation Learning offer**, vital for the engagement and progression of young people with learning needs below Level 2.
- * Ensuring that young people and their parents/carers have access to up-to-date, high quality, contextualised, impartial **information, advice and guidance** about the full breadth of learning and career opportunities available to help them make the choices that are right for them and reduce the chance of them dropping out of learning. This support must be responsive to the changing circumstances of young people, in particular at **points of transition**. Integral to IAG will be the continued development of the on- line 14-19 Prospectuses in all 12 local areas with links to

the Apprenticeship Vacancies On-line and the introduction of a common application process and on-line individual learning plans.

- * **Increasing Apprenticeship opportunities** for young people, as a step towards the Apprenticeship entitlement and in support of the Government's ambitions for Apprenticeship take up through increasing employer engagement including, where appropriate, those employers with young people in jobs without training. Ensuring a range of progression routes into Apprenticeships including from the Young Apprenticeship programme, and routes from Apprenticeships into higher level skills
- * Ensuring **effective 14-19 partnership planning** for the delivery of the young person's entitlement and preparing for the raising of the participation age.
- * Ensuring the most **appropriate delivery structures** are in place to assist and foster collaboration, both within and across local authority boundaries.
- * Developing an effective mechanism for **collaborative working with employers** to maximise the impact of their contribution to the development and delivery of 14-19 curriculum.

Narrowing the Gap in participation and attainment while improving outcomes for all

Issues and Challenges

Participation

4.16 The participation rate of young people varies significantly between different groups of people. Among those who are more likely to be NEET are young people who:

- Have learning difficulties or disabilities
- Are looked after
- Are care leavers
- Are teenage parents
- Are supervised by Youth Offending teams
- Live in a deprived area
- Have no or low qualifications

4.17 These young people often face complex barriers to learning and require the greatest support to engage and stay in learning. It is important to raise the aspirations of all young people, regardless of their backgrounds to participate and progress in learning. There are examples of good practice in the region where local programmes have

been successful in engaging vulnerable young people. It is important to continue to identify such examples and to share them across the region.

Attainment at Level 2

- 4.18 Attainment of Level 2 at Key Stage 4 in the region has been improving at a faster rate than nationally and at 66.4 per cent¹¹ is now above the national average. Regional attainment of Level 2 at Key Stage 4 including English and maths, however, has not improved as quickly, and at 44.9 per cent remains below the national average.
- 4.19 Attainment at Key Stage 4 varies by local authority. Attainment also varies between different groups of young people: pupils with special educational needs; looked after children; and pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are among those who are less likely to achieve. Variations in achievement can also be seen by gender and ethnicity.
- 4.20 Increasing attainment of Level 2 at age 16 has fed through to increased attainment of Level 2 at age 19 in the region. At 76 per cent in 2007/08 attainment of Level 2 at 19 was just 1 percentage point below the national average and on a trajectory to exceed the national target of 82 per cent by 2011.
- 4.21 All local authorities in the region have seen improvement in attainment of Level 2 at 19 but differences remain: from 67 per cent in Middlesbrough to 75 per cent in Stockton.
- 4.22 Attainment of Level 2 at 19 also varies by gender, ethnicity and between those young people who have learning difficulties and /or disabilities and their peers.
- 4.23 There are also significant differences between those young people who are from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who are not. Attainment of Level 2 by age 19 by those eligible for free school meals at 54 per cent in 2007/08 was some 26 percentage points behind attainment of those not eligible. This is what we term the attainment gap. The gap is narrowing however, although not as quickly as nationally.
- 4.24 The attainment gap at local authority level in 2007/08 ranged from 20 percentage points in Gateshead to 34 percentage points in Stockton. 2007/08 data suggests that the gap has widened since 2006/07 in some areas¹².

Attainment at level 3

- 4.25 Attainment of Level 3 at age 19 has improved in the region and the gap with national performance has reduced very slightly. But at 44 per cent in 2007/08 attainment of Level 3 at age 19 is lower than any other region and there is considerable improvement to be made to match the national target of 54 per cent by 2011.

¹¹ 2007/08 5 or more A*-C GCSEs or equivalent (maintained schools)

¹² Note that local trends can be difficult to ascertain due to statistical effects related to small numbers of young people eligible for FSM in some local authorities.

- 4.26 There is considerable variation in Level 3 at 19 attainment within the region, from 36 per cent in Middlesbrough to 49 per cent in Stockton in 2007/08.
- 4.27 Attainment at Level 3 varies by gender, ethnicity and between those young people who have learning difficulties and /or disabilities and their peers.
- 4.28 Attainment also varies significantly between those young people who are from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who are not. Attainment of Level 3 by age 19 by those eligible for free school meals in 2007/08 was some 28 percentage points behind attainment of those not eligible. The regional gap is narrowing, but only very slightly.
- 4.29 At local authority level the attainment gap in 2007/08 ranged from 20 percentage points in Gateshead to 34 percentage points in Stockton. 2007/08 data suggests that the gap has widened since 2006/07 in some areas¹³.
- 4.30 Our analysis highlights that significant inequalities remain in participation and achievement in the region. For this reason it is important to prioritise targeted activity to improve outcomes for vulnerable groups and those who are most at risk of failing to succeed or disengaging, with a view to reducing the differences between these groups of young people and their peers.

Narrowing the Gap Priorities:

- * **Raising aspirations** of all young people, regardless of their background, to engage in and stay in learning to get the skills and qualifications they need to fulfil their potential in the world of work.
- * **Narrowing the gap in participation** between vulnerable young people and their peers through increased multi-agency activity. This includes improved identification and tracking, aided by improved data sharing, and **targeted, personalised intensive interventions**. Identifying and sharing across the region good practice in reducing NEET amongst vulnerable groups.
- * Raising attainment at **Level 2 including English and maths at Key Stage 4** and **narrowing the gap in attainment** between those young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers from more affluent backgrounds.
- * Raising attainment at **Level 2 and in particular Level 3 at 19** and **narrowing the gap** between those young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers from more affluent backgrounds. Ensuring that for those young people without English and maths, attainment of functional literacy and numeracy underpins their learning.

¹³ Note that local trends can be difficult to ascertain due to statistical effects related to small numbers of young people eligible for FSM in some local authorities.

* Increasing the capacity within the region to deliver high quality local provision and supported employment opportunities for **young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities** (LDD). Improving **equality of access** to and experience of post 16 learning for young people with LDD compared to their peers without LDD. Ensuring a smooth transition for young people with LDD between schools, FE, and Apprenticeships through improved multi agency working and data sharing.

5. Summary Statement of Provision for 2010/11

Commissioning intentions

- 5.1 Commissioning is a term we use in a broad sense to describe all planning and needs analysis as well as purchasing activity across the learning and skills sector. This includes procurement that is negotiated or competitively tendered.
- 5.2 The majority of provision for young people for 2010/11 will be negotiated. Negotiated commissioning involves agreeing plans with the colleges, schools and providers that currently deliver LSC-funded provision. But we will adopt open and competitive tendering for some provision where appropriate. Examples are: where there are ESF match requirements; to fill gaps in provision that cannot be met by current providers; where a different or innovative approach is required.
- 5.3 All of our commissioning decisions are underpinned by a firm commitment to: allocate our budget wisely; be provider neutral, target provision of the highest quality; contribute to government priorities and meet targets; give value for money; promote equality and diversity; and ensure learner health, safety and welfare.
- 5.4 We want to focus investment on provision that helps to meet national, regional, and local targets and priorities. In particular we want to increase the focus of investment on 'vulnerable' groups of young people; those from disadvantaged backgrounds; those who face issues of social exclusion; and other groups of young people who are under-represented in terms of participation and achievement.
- 5.5 Through our commissioning arrangements we will continue to encourage continuous improvement across the system to ensure that we buy the best provision available for young people. We will also continue to implement the policy on identifying and managing under performance.
- 5.6 These commissioning intentions should be read alongside the national Statement of Priorities for young people which sets out the detail of the national funding policy for 2010/11.

Learner Responsive provision

- 5.7 In 2009/10 we secured some 63,000 places for young people in FE and School Sixth Forms. In 2010/11 we expect to fund a modest increase in overall volumes (of the order of 3.8 per cent), reflecting cohort decline but also the aspiration for increased participation rates and reduction of NEET.

- 5.8 Growth will be allocated strategically in those areas where it is best placed to meet the needs of the NEET group, the September Guarantee, and other local and regional priorities.
- 5.9 We will ensure that providers manage the size of learner programmes so that the focus of increased funding is on increasing participation. Exceptions are legitimate increases in the size of programmes for example resulting from introduction of Diplomas, International Baccalaureate, or shift from part-time to full-time. English and maths qualifications are priority for funding of additional qualifications.

Apprenticeships

- 5.10 In 2008/09 there were some 8,000 Apprenticeship starts by young people resident in the North East. In 2010/11 we expect to see a significant increase in Apprenticeship starts (to 10,700) by North East residents in line with the national trajectory.
- 5.11 We expect to see an increase in the proportion of all starts that are Advanced Apprenticeships (Level 3).
- 5.12 We expect to see an increase in the number of young people from under-represented groups in particular those learners with LDD taking up an Apprenticeship. We look to providers to make effective use of ALS funds to support this.
- 5.13 Following the recent ASCL Act, and considering the relatively high proportion of Programme Led Apprenticeships currently delivered in the region, providers will need to consider how they will move towards delivery of a fully employed status programme.
- 5.14 The key sectors for growth of Apprenticeships in the North East identified by NAS are:
Public Sector;
Health, Public Services and Care;
Retail and Commercial Enterprise;
Hospitality and Catering;
Construction (including Low Carbon);
Engineering (including Low Carbon and Renewables); and
Business, Administration and Law.

Diplomas

- 5.15 We expect to see an increase in Diploma places offered at all levels as the lines of learning and geographical spread of Diplomas expands in the region. 14-19 Partnerships will need to ensure they have robust plans in place to secure a sufficient range and breadth of Diploma provision to meet the 2013 entitlement.

Foundation Learning

- 5.16 2010/11 sees the full integration of current E2E programmes and all entry level and level 1 learning in further education into Foundation Learning. We expect that the majority of learners working below level 2 will be following a full Foundation Learning programme based on qualifications drawn from the Qualifications and Curriculum Framework (QCF).

- 5.17 In 2010/11 we expect to maintain the volume of provision below level 2 with a particular emphasis on ensuring appropriate provision to meet the needs of young people who are NEET, or at risk of becoming NEET.
- 5.18 Foundation Learning should offer opportunities for positive progression across the curriculum range.

Full Level 2

- 5.19 In 2010/11 we expect to secure an increase in full Level 2 places, the greater proportion of this increase being within Apprenticeships. We expect to see continued improvement in Level 2 success rates and a 'narrowing of the gap' in attainment, and increased progression to Level 3.

Full Level 3

- 5.20 In 2010/11 we expect to secure an increase in full Level 3 places, the greater proportion of this increase being within Apprenticeships. We expect to see continued improvement in Level 3 success rates and a 'narrowing of the gap' in attainment, to support achievement of PSA targets and progression to higher level learning.

Skills for Life

- 5.21 We will continue to fund sufficient opportunities for those young people who leave school without GCSE English and maths to improve their literacy and numeracy to underpin learning at higher levels. Functional literacy and numeracy continue to be a priority for funding for additional qualifications.

NEET

- 5.22 We expect to see increased engagement in the above programmes by those young people previously NEET.
- 5.23 Mainstream funded activity will be complemented by Priority 1 ESF funded 'Youth Participation Project' to December 2010. NEET will continue to be a key priority for ESF funding from 2011.
- 5.24 We expect to see an increase in flexible provision across all levels – flexible start dates and start times - in order to reengage young people who have dropped out of learning or employment as soon as possible.

Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

- 5.25 We expect to secure increased local opportunities for the participation and success of young people with LLD.
- 5.26 Particular focus will be given to developing a range of local provision to meet the needs of people with Autistic Spectrum Conditions; Sensory Impairments; and provision for people with Emotional and Behavioural difficulties, including Mental Health needs, in mainstream settings.
- 5.27 Provision will also be developed to ensure that people with more complex learning difficulties effectively transition from specialist programmes into their local areas.

- 5.28 Research will be undertaken to ascertain how Additional Learning Support (ALS) is currently used, particularly in relation to supporting young people with LDD in Apprenticeships.
- 5.29 To protect the sustainability of provision that has developed over the past three years and ensure mainstream providers have sufficient resource to support learners on programme, ALS funding will be transferred to those providers who have proactively responded to the regional and national strategies for learners with LDD.
- 5.30 Work will be undertaken with providers to re-focus work-preparation and independent living skills programmes, to adopt models of learning with clear endpoints linked to progression opportunities, which enable people to: develop their skills to take up voluntary, part-time or full-time employment; or live more independent and active lives in their local community.
- 5.31 To ensure ongoing quality improvement within the FE System, the training priorities of teachers, trainers, tutors and support workers will be addressed focusing on increased understanding of, and expertise in, initial, baseline and diagnostic assessment of learners' needs; and the setting of appropriate and challenging targets, and monitoring and recording of learners' progress and achievement.

Learner Support

Learner Support funding

- 5.32 Discretionary Learner Support (dLS) funding is an important part of the range of financial support available for 16-18 year old learners, which also includes Care to Learn payments for young parents, and the Educational Maintenance Allowance. For 2010-11, dLS allocations will be issued to providers alongside 16-18 Learner Responsive allocations following the same timescales, though there will be no allocation in January at the point sustainable baselines are issued.
- 5.33 From 2011-12, all dLS funds will be issued through Local Authorities.
- 5.34 The purpose of dLS is to provide exceptional support to learners who are experiencing financial difficulty in meeting the costs associated with learning. This would not normally include transport costs, which should be met through subsidised travel and EMA for learners from low income households.
- 5.35 Priority should be given to learners in danger of dropping out of learning. The funding exists to respond to hardship needs, particularly those which arise through sudden changes in circumstances such as redundancy or a sudden drop in income, which the EMA cannot respond to in year.

Post 16 transport arrangements

- 5.36 Local authorities will need to consider young people's access to education and training provision in developing their sub-regional 16-19 commissioning plan.

Transport arrangements will need to support 16-19 commissioning plans to ensure young people are able to participate in education and training.

- 5.37 Local authorities also have a duty to prepare an annual transport policy statement for young people aged 16-19 and those aged 19 to 25 with a learning difficulty and/or disability. These policies should support sub regional 16-19 commissioning plans, and sub regional groupings will want to consider how policies support young people's reasonable choice to travel to provision outside their home local authority.
- 5.38 Funding for Transport Partnership projects will continue in 2010-11 and will be allocated to local authorities. Local authorities are encouraged to collaborate in the use of this funding to support a coherent approach to transport provision for learners across local authority boundaries.

Learning and Skills Council

North East Regional Office

Moongate House
5th Avenue Business Park
Team Valley
Gateshead
Tyne and Wear
NE11 0HF

T: 0845 019 4181

F: 0191 492 6398

www.lsc.gov.uk

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