

ABCD

LSC Greater Manchester

Post 16 Trafford Review

**FINAL REPORT -
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

KPMG LLP

31 July 2006

This report contains 20 pages

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1 **Executive Summary**

1.1 **Literature Review**

As part of this review we have analysed recent Government policy, national, regional and local strategic plans, inspection reports, and other strategic documents relating to the Greater Manchester and Trafford area.

1.2 **Economic Demand**

- The Trafford Economic Development Plan highlights that Trafford is central to the Manchester City Region economy given its physical proximity as the ‘centre’ of the City Region. The importance of Trafford is evidenced by significant economic growth driven by the high business density rates and business start ups, particularly within the Professional Service Sectors.
- Financial, professional and business services account for 30% of jobs in Trafford (38,000 jobs). In addition, Trafford Park is home to 1,400 companies that employ in excess of 40,000 people representing one of the largest concentrations of engineering, manufacturing and logistics related employment in Europe.
- Demand for skills within Trafford and the wider Greater Manchester economy is significant. The National Employer Skills Survey revealed that within Greater Manchester 6,600 vacancies were proving hard to fill because recruits lacked the relevant skills, experience or qualifications and 19% of companies reported a skills gap i.e. employees were lacking the skills required to make them proficient in their role.
- Employment Projections reveal that growth of 3.5% is projected for Greater Manchester from 2004 to 2014, culminating in an increase of 46,000 employees. Interestingly, this growth represents approximately 10% of employees that will be required due to replacement demand (478,000).
- Other Business Services is projected to show the most significant increase in Greater Manchester both in terms of net change and replacement demand requirements – with 120,000 employees required over the period, followed by Retail & Distribution and Health & Social Care with overall requirements for 87,000 and 62,000 employees respectively.
- The analysis suggests that Managers & Senior Officials, Professional Occupations and Administrative & Secretarial Occupations will have the greatest requirement for employees. Some occupations are projected to show a net decline over the period (e.g. Skilled Trades and Elementary Occupations) however the overall future requirement for labour remains significant due to replacement demand.
- The analysis of employment projections by level of qualification suggests that those occupations requiring level 3 and level 4+ qualifications will increase significantly over the period. This is particularly the case for level 4+ qualifications, with

projected demand of 234,000 over the next 10 years. Employment requiring Level 1 or no qualifications is projected to decrease significantly over the next ten years.

- The North West Regional Skills Priorities 2006/7 report states that all young people and adults should be supported to develop skills up to and including level 2 skills across all sectors, including those sectors with a high volume of entry level opportunities and replacement demand at level 2. Key sectors include: Retail & Distribution, Transport & Communications, Hotel & Catering, Miscellaneous Services, Health and Social Work and Other Business Services.
- There are a number of sector priorities that impact upon the Trafford area at Level 2, Level 3 and Level 4 and these have been identified in section 4 of this report. The Greater Manchester Skills Priorities document for 2006/7 has also listed a number of immediate priorities for provision that include: Retail, Financial and Business Services, Public Services and Food and Drink.

1.3 **Learner and Community Demand**

- There are an estimated 212,000 residents in Trafford, 61.6% of which are of working age. The population of Trafford is projected to grow by approximately 3% over the next 10 years. A significant portion of this growth is within the 20 – 29yr old age group, which is projected to grow by 17%. The number of young people aged 0 – 14yrs and 15 – 19yrs old is expected to decline over the next 10 years by 4% and 11% respectively.
- Analysis of the Trafford population by ethnicity reveals that the ‘White British’ group account for 89.7% of residents, similar to that of England and marginally higher than that of the North West region
- The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 (IMD 2004) reveals that Trafford is the 136th most deprived borough in England (out of 354 local authorities). However, further analysis of deprivation by ward shows that areas to the west and north east of Trafford have acute concentrations of deprivation.
- Analysis of MOSAIC lifestyle data shows that Trafford residents form a diverse range of lifestyle groups suggesting that a wide and varied curriculum is required to meet the needs of all residents within Trafford.
- Trafford has a strong residential skills base to draw upon. 31% of residents possess degree level qualifications (NVQ4+) compared with 23% across the North West region and 25% nationally. The percentage of adults within Trafford with no qualifications is 12.6%, lower than the North West region (17.7%) and GB average (15.1%).
- There are however pockets of low education performance with some wards in Trafford showing poor levels of basic skills, a high percentage of residents without level 2 qualifications and low proportion of residents with level 4+ qualifications.

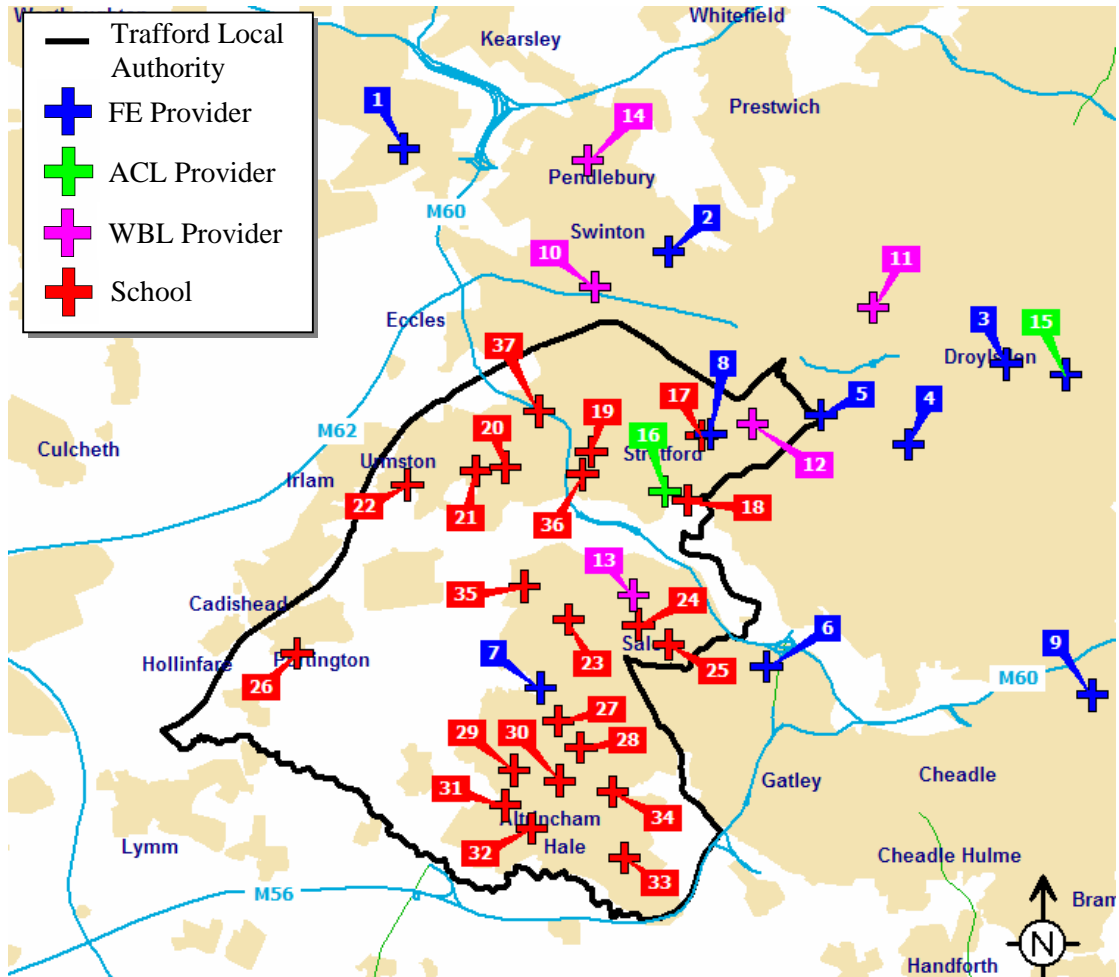
- Participation in education of young people in Trafford is high, there are however distinct pockets within the Borough where the density of NEETs (Not Employed in Education or Training) is high. This is predominately within the Bucklow, Park and Talbot and Longford Wards. These wards also show particularly low rates of Higher Education progression.
- A similar pattern of under achievement emerges for adults for the wards Bucklow, Park and Talbot and Longford Wards. Interestingly, one of the most deprived wards in Trafford (Clifford ward) has high levels of participation in education. This appears to be due, at least in part to the fact that there are a number of delivery points within this ward with both North Trafford College and South Trafford College delivering provision in this area.
- Current participation in Higher Education amongst adults is low in those wards characterised by high levels of deprivation and low education achievement.
- The employer demand section highlights how employers are having difficulty in meeting current requirements for level 2 occupations. The untapped resource in terms of skills and enterprise in the deprived neighbourhoods may be key to unleashing the full economic potential of Trafford. Upskilling residents of these deprived communities may house many of the solutions to the recruitment difficulties and skill shortages faced by local employers ensuring strong progression routes exist to meet future demand for level 3 and above.

1.4 **Supply of Provision**

1.4.1 **Trafford Providers**

The map below displays the location of providers within the Trafford area.

Figure 2.1: Providers within Trafford and the Surrounding Area

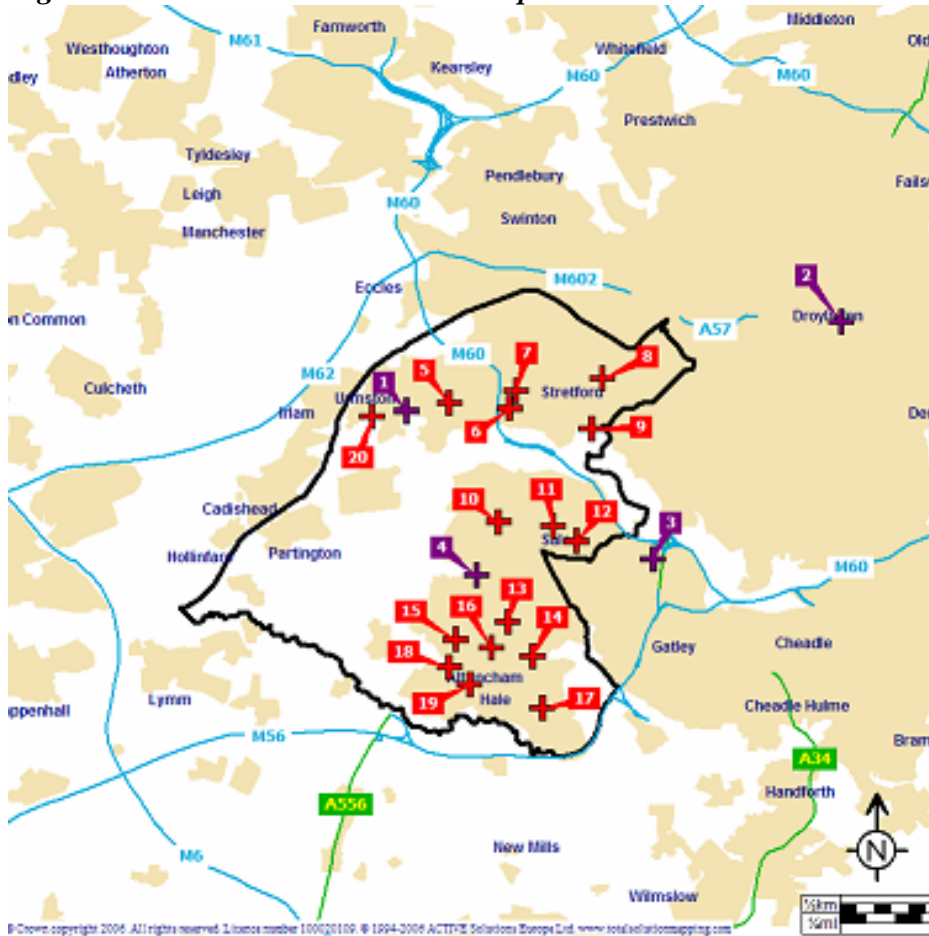


Institution Name	Number	Institution Name	Number
Salford College	1	Urmston Grammar School	20
Pendleton College	2	Flixton Girls High School	21
Manchester College of Arts and Technology	3	Delamere Special School	22
Xaverian College	4	Wellacre Technology College	22
Loreto College	5	Ashton-on-Mersey School	23
City College, Manchester	6	Sale Grammar School	24
South Trafford College	7	Jeff Joseph Technology College	25
North Trafford College of Further Education	8	Broad oak School	26
Stockport College of Further and Higher Education	9	Brentwood Special School	27
GDN Childcare Training Ltd	10	Wellington School	28
M J & V L McCormack	11	Loreto Grammar School	29
Manchester Solutions	12	Blessed Thomas Holford	30
Quantica plc	13	Atrincham Grammar School for Girls	31
Salford City Council	14	Atrincham Grammar School for Boys	32
Manchester City Council	15	St Ambrose College	33
Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council	16	Atrincham College of Arts	34
Stretford High School Community Language College	17	Manor High School	35
Stretford Grammar School	18	St Antony's Catholic College	36
Lostock College	19	Egerton High School	37

1.4.2 COVEs and Specialist Schools

The map below displays the number of schools with specialisms and centres of vocational excellence within Trafford and the surrounding area.

Figure 2.2: COVEs and schools with Specialisms



Number	College	Cove 1	Cove 2	
1	North Trafford College	Gas Service, Installation, Maintenance	Manufacturing Chemicals	
2	Manchester College of Arts and Tehnology	Construction	Automotive Studies	
3	City College Manchester	Logistics	Healthcare	
4	South Trafford College	Catering & Hospitality	Healthcare	Sports Management and Training

Number	School	Specialism	Number	School	Specialism
5	Urmston Grammar School	Science	13	Wellington School	Technology
6	St Antony's Catholic College	B&E	14	Altrincham College of Arts	Arts
7	Lostock College	Arts	15	Loreto Grammar School	Science
8	Stretford High School Community Language College	Language	16	Blessed Thomas Holford Catholic College	M&C
9	Stretford Grammar School	Science	17	St Ambrose College	M&C
10	Ashton-on-Mersey School	Sports	18	Altrincham Grammar School for Girls	Language
11	Sale Grammar School	Arts	19	Altrincham Grammar School for Boys	Language
12	Jeff Joseph Sale Moor Technology College	Technology	20	Wellacre Technology College	Technology

1.4.3 PLASC data

1.4.3.1 *Learner Numbers by school and year*

Table 2.4.1 shows the number of pupils aged 14+ in all Trafford Secondary schools as recorded by the January PLASC return 2006. Out of the 20 schools, 14+ numbers range from 21 to 834 pupils, with ten schools displaying sixth form numbers of between 16 and 301 students. Across all schools there are 9,824 pupils aged 14+ and 1,861 pupils aged 16+. There are three schools for students with special needs.

Table 2.4.1 – Learner numbers by school and year (2006)

School name	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13	Total
Altrincham College of Arts	160	152	154			466
Altrincham Grammar School for Boys	170	151	157	136	129	743
Altrincham Grammar School for Girls	196	174	201	147	116	834
Ashton-on-Mersey School	269	246	253			768
Blessed Thomas Holford Catholic College	161	148	139			448
Broadoak School	96	115	92			303
Flixton Girls' High School	196	198	214			608
Jeff Joseph Sale Moor Technology College	243	238	232			713
Loreto Grammar School	150	156	134	120	102	662
Lostock College	99	95	104			298
Sale Grammar School	175	178	176	139	162	830
St Ambrose College	124	131	124	86	87	552
St Antony's Catholic College	148	122	120			390
Stretford Grammar School	120	120	121	90	86	537
Stretford High School Community Language College	131	143	145			419
Urmston Grammar School	127	125	125	138	119	634
Wellacre Technology College	194	191	192			577
Wellington School	228	230	222	78	75	833
Brentwood School*	10	7	11	7	9	44
Manor High School*	30	32	28	22	13	125
Egerton High School*	8	7	6			21
Total	3035	2959	2950	963	898	10805

Source: Data supplied by Trafford local authority (PLASC 2006)

** Special school*

The breakdown of provision by qualification type for the Trafford schools can be found in section 6.

1.4.4 **14-16 Vocational Provision delivered to Trafford Schools by Partners**

Over recent years the Trafford area has benefited from the development of a 14-16 vocational offer delivered either through the Increased Flexibility Project (IFP) or by individual school contracts with providers.

It was reported to us that there are approximately 500 14-16 students involved in either the IFP or vocational programmes delivered via individual school contracts with providers. These students' learning programmes are either funded by LSC Greater Manchester (IFP) or by their home school.

We were informed by the colleges that the grammar schools in the Trafford area have minimal involvement in the IFP provision.

1.4.5 **Individual School Contracts for 14-16 Vocational Provision**

North Trafford College and South Trafford College both have individual contracts with some Trafford schools to provide vocational learning for some of their 14-16 students.

At North Trafford College in the current academic year (2005-06) it was reported that student numbers amount to approximately 110.

At South Trafford College it was reported there are 90 year 10 students involved in this type of provision in the current academic year. These students are all studying towards level 2. For 2006-07 the College expects Year 10 numbers to increase to 165 and all of the current Year 10 to remain involved (90 students)

1.4.6 **College data**

Table 2.4.2 – Learner numbers by age band

	North Trafford College of Further Education		South Trafford College		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
16-18	1158	16.6%	1911	30.2%	3069	23.1%
19-20	361	5.2%	368	5.8%	729	5.5%
21-24	638	9.2%	553	8.7%	1191	9.0%
25-59	4224	60.7%	3186	50.3%	7410	55.8%
60 and over	570	8.2%	311	4.9%	881	6.6%
Missing age	6	0.1%	4	0.1%	10	0.1%
Total	6957	100.0%	6333	100.0%	13290	100.0%

Source: ILR FO4 0506

The table above shows that the majority of provision in both colleges is delivered to adult learners aged 25 – 59 (50% for South Trafford College and 60% for North Trafford College of Further Education).

Table 2.4.3 – Enrolment numbers by sector subject area

Sector subject area	North Trafford College of Further Education		South Trafford College		Total	
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	109	0.8%	1	0.0%	110	0.4%
Arts, Media and Publishing	576	4.1%	1451	10.1%	2027	7.1%
Business, Administration and Law	741	5.2%	657	4.6%	1398	4.9%
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	1012	7.1%	174	1.2%	1186	4.1%
Education and Training	272	1.9%	257	1.8%	529	1.8%
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	1976	13.9%	12	0.1%	1988	6.9%
Health, Public Services and Care	2656	18.7%	870	6.0%	3526	12.3%
History, Philosophy and Theology	8	0.1%	91	0.6%	99	0.3%
Information and Communication Technology	928	6.5%	1388	9.6%	2316	8.1%
Languages, Literature and Culture	161	1.1%	902	6.3%	1063	3.7%
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	213	1.5%	1390	9.6%	1603	5.6%
Preparation for Life and Work	5141	36.2%	4983	34.5%	10124	35.3%
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	24	0.2%	1494	10.4%	1518	5.3%
Science and Mathematics	385	2.7%	528	3.7%	913	3.2%
Social Sciences	0	0.0%	180	1.2%	180	0.6%
Unknown	13	0.1%	48	0.3%	61	0.2%
Total	14215	100.0%	14426	100.0%	28641	100.0%

Source: ILR FO4 0506

The largest areas of provision for both colleges are: Preparation for Life and Work; Health, Public Services and Care; and Information and Communication Technology which accounts for approximately 55% of all FE provision in Trafford.

North Trafford College of Further Education attracts significantly more enrolments on Construction, Planning and the Built Environment; Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies sector subject areas while South Trafford College tends to attract more learners onto the Leisure, Travel and Tourism; and Retail and Commercial Enterprise sector subject areas.

The sector subject areas of Social Sciences; Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care; and History, Philosophy and Theology attract limited numbers of enrolments at both colleges.

1.4.7 Adult and Community Learning

1.4.7.1 ACL Learner and Enrolment Numbers (2005-06)

Table 2.4.4 – Learner numbers by age band and provider

	Cheshire County Council	Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council	Manchester City Council	Total
Unknown	0	9	2	11
16-18	1	2	1	4
19-20	0	1	2	3
21-24	0	4	2	6
25-59	9	119	94	222
60 AND over	3	33	84	120
Total	13	168	185	366

Source: ILR C01 0506

Manchester City Council provides the majority of learning to Trafford residents followed by Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council. The smallest provider to Trafford residents is Cheshire County Council.

1.4.8 Work-based Learning

1.4.8.1 Number of starts by Trafford residents

Based on the original data provided by the LSC, we analysed initially 26 providers who had recruited Trafford residents during 2004/05 onto WBL programmes. At the request of the Steering Group, this data has subsequently been replaced by the current available data for 05/06, which to date is not a complete years worth of data.

Of the providers selected a total of 22 providers have recruited Trafford residents, with 14 of them each recruiting less than 10 learners each.

The main providers of learning as shown in the table below are Manchester Enterprises Limited; Quantica plc; South Trafford College; Total People Ltd; and YMCA Training. Manchester Enterprises delivers the main bulk of WBL to Trafford residents with 151 starts.

Table 2.4.5 – Number of starts by Trafford residents

Provider	Number of starts to period 8 2006
Carillion Construction Limited	8
Central Sports Management & Training LTD	5
CITB-Construction Skills	6
EMTEC Holdings Limited	3
GDN Childcare Training Ltd	5
General Physics (UK) Ltd	8
HCTC Limited	7
JTL	16
M J & V L McCormack	9
Manchester Enterprises Limited	151
North Lancs Training Group	15
Protocol Skills Limited	11
Quantica plc	87
Retail Motor Industry Training Limited	6
Salford City Council	4
South Trafford College	31
The Football Association Premier League Ltd	4
The Vocational College Ltd	6
Total People Ltd	21
Training & Manpower Ltd (Salford)	5
VT Plus Training PLC	5
YMCA Training	23
Total	436

Source: ILR Period 8 2006

1.4.9 Higher Education

1.4.9.1 Trafford residents accessing HE

The analysis of Trafford residents accessing Higher Education reveals that 81% are undergraduates and 19% postgraduates. In terms of age the ‘under 21yr old’ age group account for 38% of Trafford residents engaging in HE during 2003/4.

Table 2.4.6 – Trafford Residents by Age and Level Accessing HE in 2003/04

	UG	PG	Total
Under 21	3062	4	3066
21 to 29	1856	659	2515
30 to 64	1889	884	2773
65+	189	7	196
Total	6996	1554	8550

Source: HESA, 2003/04

1.5 Gaps/ Overlaps

When comparing demand for provision and supply of provision in the Trafford area, it has been possible to identify generic trends with regards to gaps and overlaps in provision. These have been summarised in section 7 of this report.

1.6 Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups

This stakeholder section summarises the views of the stakeholders and learners interviewed; it does not represent the views of KPMG. No corroboration of the views expressed has been undertaken as part of this report. However, we summarise perceptions here as important contributions to our overall understanding of the acceptability of the proposed option.

1.6.1 Schools

It was felt that the grammar schools had a good academic record in providing AS and A-level courses. Vocational provision was felt to be well delivered by the two Further Education (FE) Colleges.

The schools reported that they have good relationships with Higher Education (HE). It was felt by schools that the Aimhigher programme was generally achieving its goal and access to Higher Education had improved.

The special schools felt that they cater for diverse learner needs extremely well. The special schools expressed some concern over links with the two local FE colleges and specifically expressed a desire to improve links with the local colleges. Interestingly, two of the special schools reported that colleges in Manchester have provided successful link courses to the schools' learners and that many have then progressed on to these colleges as a result.

Two of the 11-16 schools and one special school expressed a desire to be involved in the piloting of Specialised Diplomas in areas such as Media, Construction and Health and Social Care.

The majority of those interviewed felt that there were pockets of good collaborative practice across the Borough, although this was felt to be largely down to the commitment of heads in participating schools, as opposed to being strategically driven.

There were varying degrees of enthusiasm expressed by the schools regarding both of the FE colleges. A number of schools felt that both colleges were excellent to work with, and that both provided specialisms that were, in general, very good and not in competition with the schools

There were a number of schools who expressed concerns about the apparent lack of development of the 14-19 Implementation Plan. Collaboration appeared to be piece-meal, with a general lack of awareness of what arrangements existed unless the school was directly involved. It was felt that strong strategic leadership is required to drive this forward.

Some schools felt that there was a very good balance of provision in Trafford, with good academic provision for those who wished to access this, and a broad range of good quality vocational provision offered by the two FE colleges. This range of provision was believed to offer a rich variety of provision and learning environments.

Vocationally related provision in schools was considered by a number of schools to be a current weakness.

Specialist provision for disaffected learners and those with learning difficulties was seen as an area where further development was required.

A number of schools felt that North and South Trafford Colleges were 'complementary' to each other and provided good 'hard' and 'soft' vocational provision which was not deemed to be in competition with the schools. Contrary to this, it was suggested that there is a degree of competition between certain elements of colleges' provision and the 11-18 schools in Trafford. The colleges are seen as providing a different environment to the traditional school environment, creating wider choice for learners at Post 16. It was suggested that duplication on these grounds was acceptable as it provided choice of where to access similar programs of study.

It was felt that impartial IAG was critical in terms of fully informing learners and their parents about the options available and their suitability to the needs of the individual.

It was felt by the majority of schools that any changes to the structure and organisation of education and training in Trafford should ensure that collaboration between schools and colleges provided learners with a comprehensive range of options between 14-19. Vocational and occupational provision, in particular, would need to be expanded to ensure ready access across the borough.

A small number of schools' preferred option was to develop or expand their own sixth form provision.

Some schools supported a merger between North and South Trafford colleges, with other schools feeling that there would be no real benefits achieved by a merger. Some schools felt unable to comment either way.

There was some discussion about the benefits of developing a 14-19 centre, particularly in relation to the development and delivery of Specialised Diplomas.

1.7 **Special Schools**

The special schools felt that they cater for diverse learner needs extremely well. The special schools expressed some concern over links with the two local FE colleges and specifically expressed a desire to improve links with the local colleges. Two of the special schools reported that colleges in Manchester have provided successful link courses to the schools' learners and that many have then progressed on to these colleges as a result.

Specialist provision for disaffected learners and those with learning difficulties was seen as an area where further development was required.

1.8 Colleges

The interviews with college Principals suggested that there is a common acceptance within further education institutes in Greater Manchester that any potential options for curriculum development and structural change in Trafford will be significantly influenced by the system of selection at 11.

It was generally accepted that within Trafford the vast majority of learners were well catered for. It was felt that the grammar schools provide high quality academic provision Post 16 and the colleges and high schools between them provided a mix of provision from academic to occupational.

There was a recognition that, in spite of generally perceptions about Trafford being an affluent borough there are significant pockets of deprivation. There is also a perception that in these areas Post 16 provision, or ready access to it, is not always available due to community perception or geographical isolation. Many Principals commented on the NEET cohort and that further provision needs to be developed to meet their very special needs.

There would currently appear to be little significant impact on Trafford learners from Post 16 providers out of the borough, except for the apparent attraction of the two Roman Catholic colleges whose culture and breadth of offer was felt to draw learners other than just for faith reasons. Likewise college provision in the borough does not draw heavily from other areas in Greater Manchester. However, it is understood that the Grammar Schools do appear to be very attractive to parents from outside the borough, both at 11 and again at 16.

A common concern was expressed that if Post 16 vocationally related programs did not have a focus on the occupational context, or were delivered in an environment and with resources that weren't sufficiently strongly related to industry and commerce, then this often created problems for learners when they looked to progress to higher levels of vocationally related or occupational programs at 17 and 18.

All Principals interviewed were keenly aware of the possibility of merger between the two FE colleges in the borough. Most of those from outside Trafford felt that such a development would fall in with what appears to be a growing perception that any borough should only have one FE College. Many of these Principals have been involved in mergers, at some point in their careers, and recognise the positive and negative aspects of the process. However, the majority felt that the benefits to resource optimisation and for strategic management of provision in the borough outweighed any drawbacks.

A small number of those interviewed discussed the potential of federation and one felt that such a development might provide many of the positive aspects of merger, without the negative.

1.9 Work Based Learning Providers

E2E provision and Construction were felt to be areas which need developing within the Trafford area.

Providers felt that there is a requirement to build sustainable relationships with the schools so that WBL options are fully represented.

Providers perceive that a barrier to entering WBL provision at 16 is through lack of Information, Advice and Guidance in School.

Providers reported that relationships with both the LA and schools in Trafford are beginning to improve, but much more needs to be achieved to replicate the collaborative successes in Salford.

It is felt that collaboration and working partnerships within WBL are strong, but that more involvement from the colleges and the LA are needed if it is to significantly impact on learners in Trafford.

Providers felt that the main issue for the future are the increased number of learners who are applying for Apprenticeship and Advanced Apprenticeship programmes on completion of a two year FE course. This is a particular concern as the funding structure is moving towards supporting learners to achieve their first level 3, which those successfully completing two years in FE would already have attained.

Providers would be keen to see the development of a 14-19 centre where schools, colleges, connexions, the LA and providers would work together to develop suitable programmes to meet learner needs at 14 and at 16.

1.10 Other Stakeholders

It was felt that Trafford benefits from a high standard of provision for the majority of learners and that this was reflected by the excellent achievement results in Trafford. However, it was felt that the development of any new provision needed to be strategically driven to ensure that gaps in provision were closed and duplication avoided.

It was felt that it was particularly important to ensure that vocational provision was further developed and that there was parity of esteem for this provision.

Some concerns about the DfES policy relating to the development of school sixth forms were raised. It was felt that such activity reflected government national aspiration and took no account of the needs and plans for a local area, sometimes cutting across regional strategy.

It was noted that Trafford MBC are considering whether they should be moving away from their current position with regards to acting as a provider for adult learning, and towards the role of becoming commissioners for this service.

Greater collaboration and partnership was felt likely to be driven by the introduction of the Specialised Diplomas.

The two colleges were considered by some stakeholders to have played an invaluable role in driving 14-19 partnerships and strategy forwards.

Some stakeholders felt there to be a major gap in the area of WBL provision and occupationally focused provision at all levels from level 1 through to level 4. WBL experience was felt to need to include industries such as engineering, construction, motor vehicle repair and warehousing

It was suggested that in the near future the development and embedding of Specialised diplomas would be the major focus for meeting the needs of learners across Trafford. The delivery of these Diplomas are most likely to drive change towards common timetabling and greater partnership/collaboration.

It was suggested that any proposed change should focus on offering choice without duplication. Any development would need to be designed to keep learners within the Trafford borough as well as engage those who might not otherwise stay on. It was felt that any subsequent curriculum development should not compete with existing high quality provision.

Some stakeholders held the view that a merger between the colleges would provide complementary delivery of provision and a degree of rationalisation of management and services that might create financial savings that could be channelled into delivery.

1.11 Focus Groups

A number of focus groups were undertaken as part of this review. These covered 14-16 learners, 16-19 learners, adult learners and a community group.

1.11.1 Learners 14 – 16

The majority of pupils interviewed were following predominantly GCSE courses with some GNVQ and Diploma courses.

It was perceived that the amount and quality of Information, Advice and Guidance received by the pupils varied from basic booklets and a parents evenings about Key Stage 4 options, to one to one Connexion's interviews, peer counselling and input from specialist staff. We were informed that there was little discussion about progress and pathways beyond 16 and where pupils' options may lead after 16. Where it had been discussed, there was a concentration on continuing education at either school sixth forms or at Further Education Colleges. It was stated that there was little if any mention of Work based Learning or alternative pathways.

It was stated that the choices pupils would make for Post 16 education would depend on their educational experiences so far; those in grammar schools saw little reason to go elsewhere unless courses were not offered at their school; pupils from 11 to 16 schools either wanted to go to a grammar school sixth form or college; their choice of subject would be based on ability, enjoyment, relevance to careers and availability of courses.

Pupils had mixed views about whether they would stay at their present schools if Post 16 provision was made available; some felt if relevant courses were run they would like to stay whereas others felt ready to move on to new courses and locations.

1.11.2 Learners 16 – 19

Those learners who were following Work based Learning provision felt that the Information and Guidance that they had received was narrow and too heavily slanted towards progression to school or college sixth forms. They had not been given any information by their schools about WBL and had only accessed this from Connexions advisors; this was a matter they felt should be addressed in the future.

Learners who were following courses in colleges felt that they had received a good level of Information and Guidance and were well supported by the Colleges; a number had not had good experiences whilst at school so would not wish to stay in a school environment. Advice from the Connexions service had been instrumental in influencing the choices of two learners.

Many of the college students felt that the Colleges were in good locations although there was some concern about distance travelled from some students, citing that it could take an hour to get to college at peak times.

Students were happy with the current offer in Trafford apart from the travel to learn issue; they could not generally see the benefits of merging the colleges and felt that competition was largely advantageous to the learners.

1.11.3 Learners in Special Schools

Parents and students with learning difficulties and disabilities want to continue their education through to 19 and beyond. However, it was felt that local colleges could not cater for those with the greatest degree of need and that residential experiences which would foster independent living skills would be a preferred option.

1.11.4 Adult learners

The adults interviewed had accessed provision at college for a variety of reasons, although there was a strong emphasis on taking access courses in order to progress with career development.

We were informed that information about college courses had come from a variety of sources including college prospectuses being received 'through the door'. Job centres, word of mouth and previous access to provision were also cited as sources of information.

There was a general feeling that there was much on offer in Trafford for adult learners and that the colleges had a good reputation. It was felt that the main barrier to learning would be money if funding for adult courses was withdrawn.

1.11.5 Community Group

It was felt that those young people who did not progress into education and training did so because of social circumstances with 'street culture' being cited as the main blocker.

Gaps in present provision were felt to be in the softer key skills and addressing skills such as leadership, interviewing, team building, negotiating and life skills.

There was a feeling that continuing education should be centred on schools with a Skills Centre for the delivery of practical skills. It was felt that it was important to remove the stigma of returning to learning for older learners.

None of the group had found it difficult to secure employment. This had been done via the Connexions service, advice from college or help from family members. The group were happy that they had the right skills to allow them to access the jobs in which they were interested.

The community group felt that they had received the help they required to get a job or training and had used the Connexions service, college prospectuses, the Job Centre, the Internet and members of the Youth Service for help.

1.12 Options Identification

On the basis of information which has been gathered from the secondary data analysis and the interviews conducted, plus our experience of conducting such reviews elsewhere, we have considered six main options for the Trafford area. The options considered are summarised below.

• Option 1	‘Status quo’- No change
• Option 2	Enhanced informal collaboration between colleges, schools, work-based learning providers and employers
• Option 3	Formal collaboration between the colleges, work-based learning providers, employers and informal collaboration with the schools.
• Option 4	Formal collaboration between the colleges, work-based learning providers, employers and schools based around local ‘clusters’ (Planning Forums)
• Option 5	Merger of the two colleges with enhanced informal collaboration with all other providers around local ‘clusters’ (Planning Forums)
• Option 6	Merger of the two colleges with formal collaboration with all other providers around local ‘clusters’ (Planning Forums)

1.13 Conclusion

Analysis of the six options would suggest that the Preferred Option should be Option Five: Merger of the two colleges with enhanced informal collaboration across all providers around local ‘clusters’ (Planning Forums).

It is important to note that the merged college will not solve all of Trafford’s problems on its own as it will require collective responsibility from all providers to tackle issues in a ‘joined-up’ and strategic way.

Whilst such a large Post 16 provider might be seen by some schools as too influential, if it were to be developed as part of borough wide enhanced informal collaborative arrangements based around ‘clusters’ in the borough, it could provide a strategic overview and the capacity to deliver the core requirements of major educational and training development such as the introduction of the Specialised Diplomas and the adult skills development agenda. A culture of partnership aimed at providing high quality mixed provision focussing on the needs of learners, not institutions, could ensure that all partners were closely involved in delivering the type of provision that matched their skills, experience and facilities and that also provided the ‘right’ programs of learning in the ‘right’ place within the borough.

A number of 'clusters' including schools, WBL providers, the merged College and employers in the Borough would assist in creating appropriate mixed curriculum provision and the ready potential for institutes with high quality delivery, resources and facility to support those requiring further development and improvement. Potentially the clusters could be a combination of the Borough Council's nine neighbourhood forums (see Section 9.5) or could be a series of overlapping clusters based around the delivery of the Specialised Diplomas. Furthermore the clusters should be planned utilising the specialist status provision in the schools within the context of shared responsibility for planning and delivery. Any clustering will need to be supported by targeted funding in order to facilitate their ongoing progress and development as well as include any additional transport costs. It should also be noted that specific activities related to working with the most 'vulnerable groups' are likely to have additional costs that will need to be accounted for.