

REVIEW OF 14-19 PROVISION IN LEEDS: A CONSULTATION PAPER FROM THE LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL IN WEST YORKSHIRE

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1. Purpose

- 1 This paper describes the interim findings of the Cambridge Education review of Leeds 14-19 provision which was carried out between January and August 2006. It is concerned with vocational provision for 14-16 year olds and with the general and specialist vocational aspects of 16-19 provision in schools and colleges. It focuses on the curriculum provided, with some commentary on the Further Education estate, and concludes with implications for the current structure of school and college provision in Leeds.
- 2 **Comments on the paper are invited by September 29th. Comments can be made electronically to westyorkshireinfo@lsc.gov.uk or via post to:**
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- 3 The responses to this paper will inform proposals on the structure of 16-19 provision in Leeds with a view to Cambridge Education making a final report to the West Yorkshire LSC by the end of October 2006. If these proposals recommend structural changes, and are accepted by the LSC and the Local Authority, there will follow a period of formal consultation on options.
- 4 The paper is driven by the logic of recent Government policy – that learner needs and employer demand for an increase in skill levels should determine the design of curriculum and organisational structure in 14-19 provision.

2. Background

- 5 This exercise follows previous reviews and consultations in Leeds over the past two years including the LSC's own Strategic Area Review and the Melia and Donaldson consultancy reports on post 16 education and training, commissioned by the LSC.
- 6 Donaldson concluded in October 2004 that retaining the status quo was not an option and proposed three organisational options as follows:
 - Collaborative arrangements. Develop a framework for a collaborative collegiate model linking schools, colleges, work-based learning providers, family/city learning centres(including Learning Campuses) for young people and adults.
 - FE Review. Undertake a review of FE in Leeds in conjunction with the Leeds Federation of Colleges to assess the strength of a business case for rationalisation of provision, including mergers and federal models, and the benefits of any changes to Leeds learners.
 - Work-based learning. Establish overlaps and possible gaps in WBL provision based on demand and sector needs. Rationalise over-provision and develop new provision to fill any gaps.
- 7 The Learning Partnership subsequently agreed with the LSC that the FE Review should be broadened to include 6th forms. Work-based learning is currently being reviewed separately.
- 8 The Cambridge Education review considers the first two options with a view to moving towards proposals for change.
- 9 Evidence for the paper has been drawn from interviews and from analysis of data and documentation. Interviews have been conducted with: secondary heads; college principals; representatives of the Local Authority and Education Leeds: LSC personnel; Yorkshire Forward; the Chamber of Commerce; Igen; personnel from local partnerships and the Leeds Colleges' Federation.
- 10 The full interim report from Cambridge Education to the West Yorkshire LSC, with detail supporting the arguments presented here, can be found on the LSC web-site at www.lsc.gov.uk/westyorks/Partners/StARs/StAR

3. The National Policy Climate

- 11 The national political focus on effectiveness and value for money is not about to weaken. Indeed, all the signs are that it is likely to become more challenging in the next five years. Underlying the prospects for school and

college sectors is the fact of more stringent public sector spending rounds to come. Alongside this direct financial impact is the drive for national competitiveness, fuelled by the new economic challenges from China and India. Two national policy directions derive directly from these circumstances:

- i. Further Education colleges will increasingly be required to focus on economic specialisms which have a direct relationship to employer need. It will be increasingly unsustainable for colleges to be all things to all learners.
 - ii. Especially in the 14-16 phase, schools and colleges will only be accredited to run the new specialist diplomas through collaborative activity which makes the most effective use of their shared resources. This is a direct constraint on the ability of every school or college to make its own decisions about provision in isolation.
- 12 In this harsh climate incremental change to current structures will not work. Leeds needs to think ambitiously about its potential if it is to get the best out of current possibilities. If it will do this, there are great opportunities in all directions

4. The Leeds Challenge

a. Planning for the economy and the community

- 13 Leeds' current economic prosperity should not distract attention from the threats posed by international competition and from the weaknesses in its learning and skills infrastructure which will be exposed by that competition. Whilst there are good stories to tell of individual institutions and partnerships, there is no clear plan to make provision match demand and need across the city to 2020. Achievement at all levels should be higher and should be delivered more cost-effectively.
- 14 Previous interventions over the last 30 years have failed to impact sufficiently on the City's achievement and post-16 participation levels: Education Priority Areas, the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative, Excellence in Cities and Education Action Zones have all contributed something but failed to significantly break the link between poverty and underachievement. As the effects of increased competition are felt nothing less than the optimum development of human resources will be good enough to guarantee the City's economic future. Project initiatives will never do this: only fundamental change to the system can carry a level of ambition which will get young people out of under-achievement in inner city areas and into the good jobs which a prospering city can offer. The new City Region Development is the Government's practical expression of this imperative, with its associated innovation of a city-wide Skills Board.

- 15 The scale of improvement needed in Leeds will only happen as a result of better planning of the system as a whole and of institutions accepting a measure of collegiate responsibility for whole cohorts of young people in an area. Without this many learners and employers will get what institutions want them to have rather than what they themselves want and need.
- 16 ***Comments are invited on this description of the challenges facing the city and the need for better planning of 14-19 provision to meet them.***

b. A new approach to targets and achievement

- 17 For 16 year olds the overwhelming policy concentration of the last 10 years has been on two targets: improving GCSE scores, particularly towards the 5 A*-C group, and reducing the numbers of those who are not in employment, education or training. Much less attention has been paid to the group of young people who fall between these policy-led categories – as many as 35% of the cohort in a city like Leeds. These are the young people who have the capacity and the interest to do better if they have different learning opportunities, to achieve a level 2 by 16 or, at least, be on their way to achieving it.
- 18 Despite admirable efforts which have resulted in narrowing the gap in recent years, at 49.3% Leeds is still 7% behind the national average for achievement of 5 A*-Cs at GCSE. It will not be possible to make further significant improvements within the confines of the traditional school and college curriculum. New targets need to be set with a recognition of the step-change in aspiration which should come with the new key stage 4 curriculum from 2008. An improvement of at least 20% in level 2 achievement at 16 should be set for 2012. This improvement would allow more resources to be devoted, as they should be, to level 3 achievement at 19, which is the key to Leeds' future competitiveness.
- 19 In tackling this objective there needs to be a sea-change in attitudes all round. The question should not be, "How many more percent can we get above last year's level?". It should be, "Why are we not getting over 90% to the level that equips them for the rest of life?"
- 20 ***Comments are invited on this proposal for setting achievement targets for 16 year olds.***

c. Learners first

- 21 Putting learners first is not something which is achieved by yet more rhetoric. Vision and mission statements everywhere espouse this ideal but too rarely achieve it once institutional interest and financial drivers take the field. Beyond basic morals – it's wrong to give young people institutionally self-interested advice – this change will be driven by the same drivers that work elsewhere:

Targets: These need to apply to the whole 14-16, then 16-19 cohort within an area, so that a group of institutions can take responsibility for their achievement and their progression; target setting needs to be based on key stage 3 achievement and to be mindful of the needs of particular groups, such as black and ethnic minorities and young white males

Learner support: It will be a duty for schools to ensure that advice is clear and comprehensive on routes forward, supported by the on-line Prospectus: a common application system at 16 would be a logical extension of this arrangement.

Inspection and self-assessment: These processes will be concerned with collaboration between institutions in the interests of learners and with responsiveness to employer demand. This will be in the context of the regional collaborative framework

Funding: This should follow the provision, with a transfer of funds from key stage 4 national curriculum to vocational provision

Planning: Only those schools and colleges which work in effective consortia will be recognised in the new gateway arrangements to deliver the new diplomas

d. Economic drivers

- 22 Leeds is a buoyant labour market with job opportunities and skill shortages reported in financial and professional services, health and caring, distribution, construction, communications, hotel and catering and higher level manufacturing. It is not illiberal to plan for education to prepare young people for employment and such preparation is not the same as narrow job training. Indeed, it should be a matter of general concern in the education and training establishment that so many 16-19 year olds are not prepared for the opportunities which the city can offer
- 23 14-16 Vocational education is not and cannot be determined solely by skill needs within an area. 14-16 is the stage at which generic skill acquisition is as important as specific vocational skills and understanding, though it is still important that choices should be informed by some understanding of the labour market.
- 24 16-19 Vocational Education and Training in FE and work-based learning should have a direct relationship to the labour market, whilst the possibility of transfer between occupational areas should still be allowed for.
- 25 The curriculum plan for Leeds needs to contain an analysis of the current progression to work or further study of 16-19 year olds, identifying mismatches of supply and demand. From that there will follow three questions:

- What can be done where individuals do not pursue employment and training in skill shortage areas?
- Even if there is a present match, is the mix good preparation for the future in changing economies?
- Is the system developing the skills which are most important across all occupations, such as ICT, communications and problem solving, to give young people transferability within employment.

26 ***Comments are invited on this vision of how vocational provision in Leeds should be designed to match employer demand.***

5. The Organisation of Schools Provision

a. 14-16 vocational provision

- 27 The new specialist diploma programme at key stage 4 is the basis of the new curriculum order which is needed in Leeds. The best and only chance of raising achievement to the levels needed to stay competitive and to counter social exclusion is by offering many more vocational learning opportunities to 14-16 year olds.
- 28 The habit of thinking that vocational provision is for those who are unlikely to hit 5 A*-Cs is likely to be disrupted as specialised vocational diplomas come on stream. There is likely to be a progressive move towards a more mixed group as the possibilities of respectable careers based partly on vocational study is recognised. After the 50% or so who get 5 A*-Cs nationally, the next 25% get one to four A*-Cs, and most of the remaining 25% are lower attaining. The concept of the specialist diplomas offered at levels 1-3 applies across the whole range, and the biggest lift might well come from the middle 25%, to whom relatively little attention has been paid in national policy in recent times. There should be some planning to allow a mix of general and specialist diplomas at level 3, either as preparation for entry to employment at intermediate levels or for progression to vocationally-oriented HE. The recent FE white paper gives extra force to this case in promoting greater diversity of curriculum in 6th form colleges.
- 29 Amongst 14-16 year olds ICT is currently the most popular of the 5 vocational lines which will be available as diplomas from 2008, chosen by approximately 25% of the cohort. Health and Social Care attracted 9.6% of the cohort and Creative and Media 5%. Engineering and Construction are 2-3%. Business Admin and Finance is the most popular of the other choices, with around 17% of the cohort. A strong caveat on these figures is that these are choices from the current menu of vocational options, which lack the coherence and progression routes the diplomas will offer. Greater take up, across a wider

range and at all 3 levels, is expected to characterise the diplomas once all are in place.

30 There should be a plan to ensure that all choices will be available for 14 year olds as they come on stream from 2008. From 2010 all 14 year olds should be able to choose from all 14 new specialist vocational diplomas, from entry level to level 3, within the Leeds area. The system of provision needs to be designed to follow from their choices, not to pre-determine them, so there needs to be professional modelling of:

- what choices learners are likely to make as the new diplomas become available from 2008, informed by information, advice and guidance which is both objective and comprehensive
- how the profile of the teaching, lecturing and training workforce will need to change to deliver the new courses
- what additional specialist accommodation will be needed for the new provision
- what revenue and capital costs will follow from this

31 ***Comments are invited on this approach to planning 14-16 and 16-19 provision for the new specialist diplomas from 2008***

b. 16-19

32 The 13 inner Leeds secondary schools had 642 students in the year 2005-06 with an average group size varying from 1.8 to 10.9, the largest groups being found where there was collaboration. Nine schools had less than 50 in the 6th form. In 2005 whilst 10 Leeds schools had over 200 exam entries, 6 schools had less than 20 entries in all subjects – GCE, VCE, Advanced and GNVQ.

33 In the main the 6th form curriculum is academic. Of approximately 1900 vocational learning places in 05-06 about 27% were level 2 and 73% level 3. Given that Year 12 constitutes about 55% of the 6th form cohort, a larger proportion of level 2 places might have been expected. Of the vocational options in schools only ICT attracts more than 10% of the cohort.

34 Based on the basic DfES measure Value Added for Students (in the 32 relevant schools) between GCSE and A/As/Advanced GNVQ on average across the City is good, being 9.27 points above the national median average. Sixteen Leeds schools had 25% or more of their pupils in the lowest quartile nationally for value added i.e. students making least progress in the 6th Form. Eighteen Leeds schools had 25% or more of their pupils in the highest quartile nationally for value added i.e. students making most progress in the 6th Form. Only two inner Leeds schools (Intake and Parklands) showed a positive value added.

35 Funding allocations for the inner Leeds schools for 04-05 averaged £5,382 rising to £7,280 per student in one school. The average for all Leeds schools was £4,637, for all FE colleges £3,980 and for all 16-18s in Leeds schools and colleges £4,263.

c. Planning schools' 14-19 provision

- 36 We do not leave the progression of the most academically able young people to chance: we ensure that those who do well at GCSE have a clear pathway starting at key stage 3 and going through A-level to University. There is no reason to apply less rigour to progression to the same level through vocational routes, but we often do, partly because the vocational route is still taken less seriously and partly because it requires different institutions to collaborate. When the new specialised diplomas are in place the vocational route will offer the same rigour in accreditation and progression routes as is offered currently by academic subjects.
- 37 The traditional prescriptions of minimum 6th form size are not appropriate to an environment in which AS/A2 learning can be combined with specialist vocational learning. The principle of local area entitlement, however, should apply to the breadth of choice in general education; within a consortium or delivery partnership the aspiration should be to give a breadth of choice – of perhaps the 20 most popular subjects and in a wide range of possible combinations – to all 16+ learners.
- 38 The South Leeds Partnership is one example of good 16-19 collaborative practice, with 269 6th form students from 3 schools and 330 college full-timers offering a range of AS/A2 courses, Intermediate GNVQs and 25 other level 1 and 2 courses. Across Leeds, however, there is a confusion of structures for collaboration; learning campuses, family centres, vocational skill centres, delivery partnerships and city learning centres are all in the mix but there is no plan to turn these into a coherent delivery mechanism. Location of provision should be determined by considerations of learner access and of cost-effectiveness of accommodation and specialist teaching across an area, not the often random preferences of individual institutions. There should be a presumption in favour of level 3 provision being made in colleges, or in work-based learning provision, in cases where specialist resources and expertise are needed. This adds up to the concept of resourcing learner entitlement.
- 39 Current diploma gateway possibilities concentrate the mind but require a shift away from natural groupings. To meet learners' needs well the system must be treated as a whole. Where provision is shared across institutions in an area those institutions need to regard the achievement of the whole cohort as their collegiate concern. There should be a city-wide planning function to drive and co-ordinate the network of vocational specialisms:
- Representing the learner and employer voice
 - Establishing a co-ordinated network to deliver vocational specialisms across the city
 - Managing brokerage of provision where necessary
 - Supporting timetabling and transport arrangements
 - Leading on curriculum and professional development for a specialism
 - Advising on specialist accommodation and resources

40 In the light of the performance and cost analysis in section 5b above there need to be different arrangements for the provision of AS/A2 provision in inner Leeds. Notre Dame is the only Leeds 6th form college and is denominational, with nearly all Level 3 provision. Currently young people in inner Leeds have the choice of staying in 6th forms which often offer limited entitlement, moving to the Park Lane 6th Form Centre or applying to Notre Dame. There is a strong case for providing an additional dedicated 16-19 general education provision in the inner Leeds area, either through a new 6th form college or through a formal federation arrangement of the sort promoted by the Education and Inspections Bill and the FE White paper.

41 ***Comments are invited on the need for stronger, city-wide planning arrangements for schools 14-19 vocational provision and for a new organisation of 16-19 general education provision***

6. FE provision

a. Profile of provision

42 In 2004-05 there were 6,470 full-time and 2,996 part-time 16-19 year olds in the 8 Leeds colleges. This generated 7,420 full-time equivalents and income of £26.6m for the colleges.

43 The current profile of provision in FE reflects a significant volume of school leavers entering FE without a full level 2. The LSC therefore commits a disproportionate amount of funding to take 16-18s to level 2:

- In 2004-05, of £26.6m spent on 16-18s £4.5m, or 17%, was at level 1 or below (KS3 equiv); £8m or 30% was at level 2 and only £4.6m of this was for full level 2
- £14m or 53% was at level 3; two thirds of this was full level 3, mainly at Notre Dame
- Leeds College of Music had 86% at full level 3, Park Lane had 53%, Leeds College of Technology had 43%, Thomas Danby 36% and Leeds College of Building only 15%
- Leeds College of Art and Design had high level 3 activity at 93% but 40% was not full L3
- Joseph Priestley had 39% level 3 work but less than half full level 3

44 Currently Schools take insufficient numbers to full level 2 at 16. Colleges do remedial work at entry/1/2 levels but then not enough leads to full level 2, the minimum Government standard. This raises two concerns:

- The UK economy needs higher level skills to compete internationally; too few 16 – 19 year olds in the Leeds area are being given the chance to achieve level 3 and 4 academic or vocational skills.

- As specialised diplomas are delivered at 14 to 16 there will be a significant shift in the demands placed on FE. This should lead to an increase in progression to level 3 vocational courses, enabling FE to offer more achievement of full qualifications. FE has to be prepared for this with highly qualified vocational staff who are able to deliver to higher levels and in facilities appropriate to developing higher level skills.

45 Comments are invited on this distribution of funding across levels of provision and its consequences for achievement in Leeds.

b. Outcomes from FE provision

46 FE provision is measured in a number of ways, but primarily by the success rate of individual courses taken by students – the percentage of students who started the course and achieved a qualification or outcome. The success rate is compared to national benchmarks, which is the average performance of all providers. The table below summaries strengths and weaknesses by comparing colleges to a national bench mark for a vocational area.

Area	No. of Colleges below National benchmark	No. of Colleges 10% or more above benchmark
Health & Public Services	3 colleges out of 6	2 colleges
Science & Maths	4 colleges out of 6	0 colleges
Engineering	3 colleges out of 7	2 colleges
Construction	1 college out of 2	1 college
IT	2 colleges out of 6	3 colleges
Retail & Commercial	2 colleges out of 5	3 colleges
Leisure & Travel	1 college out of 4	1 college
Arts & Media	5 colleges out of 7	1 college
Language & Lit	4 colleges out of 7	2 colleges
Preparation for Life	6 colleges out of 8	1 college
Business	1 college out of 5	4 colleges
Long Level 1	3 colleges out of 8	3 colleges
Long Level 2	3 colleges out of 8	4 colleges
Long Level 3	4 colleges out of 8	2 colleges

47 This table shows that there is a significant amount of provision which achieves less success for its learners than national averages, balanced by some strong performances that are better than the national average. One point of view might be that this is not a manifestly bad performance. But for Leeds to close its skills gap and deliver the needs of the local economy it needs to be consistently better than the national average in most areas. An

average skills performance will produce average competitiveness: Leeds needs pre-eminence in both.

- 48 Several colleges are due to be inspected by OFSTED and ALI in the near future. Most published inspection reports show the need for improvement in both cross-college responsibilities, such as leadership and management, and specific curriculum areas. However, within the conurbation there are strengths evident in all aspects of college delivery. The concerns lie in the distribution of strengths and weaknesses across individual institutions and the capacity of an approach dependent upon improvement at single college level to effect the degree of transformational change required to make Leeds a world class economy with high social integration.
- 49 ***Comments are invited on this analysis of the quality of provision in Leeds colleges.***

c. The FE estate

- 50 The review of the FE estate concludes that:
- i. Though there has been some investment in some good quality facilities in all sites, the estate is generally poor by national standards
 - ii. Development has been piecemeal, often expanding the capacity of sites that are inflexible and dated.
 - iii. Accommodation which has been improved in the short term with remodeling and refurbishment is often in buildings which have a limited shelf-life.
 - iv. The majority of colleges have multiple sites and for most there is a question over whether it would be more efficient to relocate to a single building.
 - v. Social space and sports provision are generally not good.
 - vi. There is significant duplication of services as a result of colleges having several sites, especially in administration and learning resource centres.
 - vii. There are a large number of opportunities available that could lead to a more efficient and affordable pattern of provision. Rationalisation of overall provision, both on main and outreach sites, would provide massive space savings and also improved efficiency. The generation of receipts from site disposals would enable investment in new accommodation.
- 51 These are worrying conclusions for a city of the stature and ambition of Leeds, which needs buildings that speak loudly for the value of vocational education. Combined with the conclusions on quality of provision, they suggest a strong agenda for change.
- 52 The proposals from the colleges' estate review should match investment plans for schools involving Building Schools for the Future and Academy and specialist school developments. Re-configuration of schools and colleges

should fit an integrated capital strategy for 14-19 learning and achievement, informed by the modelling of vocational choices of the 14-16 cohort.

- 53 ***Comments are invited on these conclusions from the FE estates review and on the view that there should be a unified approach to school and college capital development for vocational provision.***

d. College structures

- 54 These conclusions suggest that the current organisation of colleges will increasingly fail to meet Leeds' economic and social needs. A better approach would see colleges collaborating, perhaps to the point of merger, to ensure that strengths were aligned to benefit learners, employers and communities across the city and to ensure that weaknesses were eradicated. This approach could enable the FE service to create the framework for excellence as set out in the FE White Paper. All three elements of this framework - quality, responsiveness and financial health - could be delivered to a high standard by a new city-wide FE service. Moreover, the investment in facilities urgently required by colleges would be made as part of an integrated capital strategy for FE in Leeds rather than by individual corporations based on historic patterns of provision.
- 55 The Education and Inspections Bill and FE White Paper offer the opportunity for radical, student-centred arrangements between schools, colleges, WBL providers, universities and the voluntary/community sector, which should be investigated. These arrangements include collaboration short of merger underpinned by formal and legal agreements such as Trusts. Access to area wide learning opportunities beyond the scope of any one provider could be enhanced by formal partnerships, allowing a focus on *provision* for learners rather than *providers*, be they schools or colleges.
- 56 The Universities have a significant role to play in such a city-wide development, especially. As the new diplomas become available it should be possible for any younger to see a track forward from key stage 4 through to foundation degree level and beyond which can be pursued locally and which does connect to the Leeds' economy.
- 57 ***Comments are invited on the case for re-organisation of FE provision in Leeds.***

9. Further work

- 58 Comments on this paper are invited by September 29th via the methods given in paragraph 2 above.
- 59 The comments received in response to this consultation will inform the final report on 14-19 provision in Leeds which Cambridge Education will make to the West Yorkshire LSC by the end of October 2006.