

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 10 SEPTEMBER 2015

EDUCATION AND SKILLS - POST-16 OPPORTUNITIES

Summary

1. The Strategic Commissioner – Education and Skills has been invited to the meeting to update members on the range of opportunities available for post 16 students. It is now a requirement that all students remain in some form of education or training until at least their 18th birthday. This is not the same as raising the school leaving age, as students may choose from a range of options. This paper outlines these options and proposes areas of possible further scrutiny.

Background

2. The most frequently used benchmark of education attainment for young people has for long been outcomes at 16 years of age, the end of school Year 11. The most commonly used measure is attainment of at least five GCSE grades C and above, for individual students, schools and for wider groupings such as a local authority. This remains the key indicator, and the attainment of five or more good GCSE grades is a strong basis for future success.

3. While the GCSE attainment indicator is important, the changing nature of education and related legislation means that the measures of educational performance are being revised. The government is to replace the five GCSE attainment measure with an indicator called 'Progress8'. This measures progress during secondary age education rather than attainment, and takes account of a wider range of subjects – as its title indicates, eight.

4. In recent years, there has been a decline in the number of young people leaving education at 16. Most young people continue in education or training after they finish Year 11, because it gives them the best chance to get the skills and qualifications that employers and universities look for. Participating in education or training for longer means young people are more likely to attain higher levels of qualifications and have increased earnings over their lifetime, better health and improved social skills. This in turn contributes to a more highly skilled, productive, and internationally competitive workforce.

5. Although most young people progress to some form of education and training, a proportion do not. These young people who are NEET (not in employment, education or training) often find it more difficult to secure long term employment, and numbers are over represented in some particular groups, for example care leavers. Reducing the number of NEETs should begin with effective identification of, and support for, those identified as being at risk of becoming NEET. The effective tracking of NEETs and continued support and provision should then follow. A particular challenge has been the reduction of the number of young people who are

identified as 'unknown' – although this does not necessarily mean that all of these young people are NEET.

6. In order to make an informed decision about post 16 choices, young people should receive careers guidance. Since 2011, it has been the responsibility of schools to provide impartial careers guidance for young people. From September 2014 schools have been required to show that they have a strategy for the provision of careers guidance and that this is being implemented. During this period there has been concern regarding the quality and consistency of guidance provided by schools. It is essential that all young people are provided with detailed and impartial guidance regarding the range of options available to them, not just (where possible) an automatic transition to a school sixth form. In addition to guidance relating to choices beyond Year 11, it is important that young people receive quality careers education in order better to inform their choices at the end of Year 11.

7. Students who left Year 11 in summer 2013 had to continue in some form of education or training for at least a further year until June 2014. Those who left Year 11 in summer 2014 or beyond need to continue until at least their 18th birthday.

8. This requirement, called Raising the Participation Age, does not necessarily mean staying in school; young people have a choice about how they continue in education or training post-16. This could be through:

- (a) a full-time **Post 16 Programme of Study** in a school, college or with a training provider;
- (b) an **apprenticeship** or **traineeship**, or
- (c) **full-time work or volunteering** (20 hours or more) combined with part-time education or training.

Post 16 programmes of study

9. In line with these changes, from August 2013 the government introduced the requirement for all post 16 students to follow a recognised Programme of Study.

10. Any Programme of Study should:

- provide progression to a level higher than that of a student's prior attainment;
- include qualification(s) that are of sufficient size and rigour to challenge students and be clearly linked to suitable progression opportunities in training, employment or higher levels of education;
- require students who do not already have GCSE A*-C in maths and English to work towards them (or other approved stepping stone qualifications) that will help the student in question to progress towards achievement of these qualifications;
- include work experience - this may relate to the student's study programme, develop employability skills and/or create potential employment options for those who cannot do substantial vocational qualifications;
- include other activities unrelated to qualifications which develop the skills, attitudes and confidence that support progression, and
- enable students who are not yet ready to study for a substantial qualification to undertake a programme focused on work experience and the development of employability skills.

11. Students of all abilities follow study programmes. This therefore includes those studying 'A' level courses. 'A' levels count as 'substantial' qualifications. In addition to academic study, students following an 'A' level study programme should have the opportunity to undertake non-qualification activities such as tutorials, work experience, work to develop personal or study skills, and support in choosing options to ensure progression into employment and higher education preferences.

12. Those students for whom an applied or technical qualification is the most appropriate route will be expected to study at least one substantial qualification. These should be of sufficient size and relevance to provide a route into a trade, profession or other form of employment, or access to a Higher Education course.

13. They may be taken with or without other qualifications, including 'A' levels, and should make up the majority of the study programme time. In most cases these qualifications will be at a level above each student's prior achievement. However some larger qualifications offered at level 2 also provide a route into a trade and can provide progression for students holding other level 2 qualifications.

14. Work experience is no longer a compulsory component of the Year 10 and 11 curriculum. Most schools that offer work experience for students of this age require it to be organised by parents. As a consequence, many students leave Year 11 without the experience of a working environment that is built effectively into a programme of study.

15. Work experience is a key component of 16 to 19 study programmes and all students are expected to undertake work experience or some form of work-related training. Most students benefit from work experience as a major factor in developing employability skills alongside GCSE qualifications in English and maths. A work placement should be an integral part of most students' study programme and in particular for students choosing to enter a particular occupation or profession or those choosing a vocational route.

16. Students should also be encouraged to take part in meaningful non-qualification activity alongside work experience placements. This activity may include other planned and organised enrichment activities such as tutorials, work to develop study skills, leadership, team-work or self-management skills and activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award or volunteering.

17. The needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) can vary widely, but the study programme principles still apply. Students should follow a programme that prepares them for adulthood, including supporting their progression into work or further study. For students with LDD who have a learning difficulty assessment (LDA) or an education, health and care (EHC) plan, a study programme can apply up to the age of 25. Institutions, in discussion with the student, need to assess what type of programme is most suitable given their career aspirations.

18. Study programmes for students with profound and/or complex learning difficulties and disabilities may also concentrate on work experience or other non-qualification activities rather than qualifications, to prepare them for adult life. For example, supported internships are for young people with a special educational needs (SEN) statement, LDA or EHC plan, and aim to prepare young people for employment through extended work placements with employers.

19. Study programmes should always include English and maths but at an appropriate level. Some students with LDD will be able to work towards achieving GCSE grade C or above whereas others may qualify for exemption from the Education and Funding Agency (EFA) condition of funding. More information about this exemption can be found in the EFA condition of funding guidance.

Apprenticeships and traineeships

20. Apprenticeships offer young people the opportunity to earn money while they learn, get excellent vocational training and build a sustainable career. They help employers to build a professionally skilled workforce, equipped with the knowledge and experience that their businesses need to succeed and compete. Apprentices get a work related competence based qualification assessed in the workplace. An Apprenticeship Framework includes a technical certificate assessing the knowledge and understanding that underpins the competences required in the sector, key skills in numeracy & communications and learning about employer rights and responsibilities. Progression from an Apprenticeship can be onto an Advanced Apprenticeship or directly into full employment.

21. Apprenticeships are available at three levels:

Intermediate	(Level 2) equivalent to 5 GCSEs Grades A-C
Advanced	(Level 3) equivalent to 2 A Levels
Higher	(Level 4) equivalent to Foundation Degree/HNC/HND

22. Traineeships are an education and training programme for young people aged 16 to 24 who do not have a level 3 ('A' level equivalent) qualification. They consist of work preparation training, a work experience placement, and English and maths provision where appropriate, designed to equip young people with the skills and experience they need to progress onto an apprenticeship or other sustainable employment.

23. Traineeships for 16 to 18 year olds are a type of study programme and they provide another option for young people who lack the skills, experience and behaviours sought by employers. Traineeships can last a maximum of 6 months with the aim of getting the young person into an apprenticeship or other sustainable employment as quickly as possible.

Full time work or volunteering

24. As an alternative to the above options, students may choose a programme that involves work and volunteering. This needs to be at least 20 hours per week, and combined with some form of part time education or training.

In Worcestershire

25. Outcomes for Year 11 leavers in Worcestershire have improved significantly in the last four years. In 2014 nearly 60% of students attained the benchmark of at least five GCSE grades A*-C, and provisional data indicate that this figure will rise with the 2015 results. 2014 attainment was 3% above the national average and 2% above the average for our statistical neighbours. Students have increasingly high

aspirations for their progression beyond Year 11 and this requires a range of quality educational provision to be available.

26. There has been significant progress regarding reducing the proportion of NEETs, and particularly the number recorded as 'Unknowns'. In June 2015 the proportion of students recorded as NEET was 3.8%, compared with 4.8% nationally and 5.2% for the Midlands. The Unknowns figure at the same time was 6.3%, compared with 6.5% nationally and 8.6% for the Midlands. The figure for Worcestershire has subsequently fallen further to just below 5%. Despite this excellent progress, vulnerable groups of young people, such as care leavers, remain over represented in the number of NEETs.

27. In line with national expectations, schools manage their own careers guidance. Those that encourage work experience link to the Council's work experience website, called Worcestershire Skills Central. This site has been developed as part of the Connecting Schools and Business programme, and is recognised in the region as an example of good practice. All High Schools have signed up to use the website, and it has recently been refined to include a 'Virtual School' where the oversight of placements for looked after children will be managed by the Virtual School Headteacher.

28. The Connecting Schools and Business programme links to Open for Business, and its progress is monitored through the Employment and Skills Board (ESB), which is a sub-group of the Local Education Partnership (LEP). The first phase of the programme has worked through the development of the work experience programme, and also links between businesses and schools regarding governance, and curriculum developments. The next phase of the programme will develop these links and also have a strand focussed on the needs of vulnerable groups of learners. The ESB includes representation from local businesses, the local authority, and further and higher education institutions.

29. More than one half of post 16 students take their courses in colleges, and the majority of provision in schools is targeted at 'A' level students. We are currently considering how best to map future demand and provision across the county to ensure there is effective coverage and range for the needs of learners.

30. As part of future developments, the ESB has considered how better to provide for the future needs of Worcestershire businesses. Central to this has been recognition of the need to improve provision in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and maths). To this end the LEP has commissioned a feasibility study regarding the possible construction of a University Technical College (UTC) in Worcestershire.

Purpose of the Meeting

31. The Panel is asked to consider:

- Whether there are any comments that it would wish to make to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility
- Whether it would wish to carry out any further scrutiny on any of the following areas:

- strategies to reduce the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET);
- evaluating the quality and effectiveness of careers education and guidance in schools;
- the provision of work experience in Year 11, and the range of work experience opportunities in post 16 Programmes of Study;
- the range of provision of vocational pathways through scrutiny of apprenticeship and traineeship provision.

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Children's Services) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.