



**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF EDUCATION LEEDS
REPORT TO SCRUTINY BOARD (Children's Services)
DATE: 5 July 2007**

SUBJECT: Officer Response to Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) Report on the 14-19 Review of Education and Training Provision in Leeds

Electoral Wards Affected:

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific implications for:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to respond to the recommendations made in Scrutiny Board's report arising from their special meeting focussed on the 14-19 Review of Education and Training Provision in Leeds

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Education Leeds submitted a report to Executive Board in January 2007 which outlined the findings of the review of 14-19 provision in Leeds undertaken by Cambridge Education on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC).
- 2.2 Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) called a special meeting in March 2007 to comment on the review prior to a more detailed report being taken by Education Leeds to Executive Board. The Education Leeds report went to Executive Board, along with the LSC's Strategic Options Review, in June 2007.
- 2.3 The report to Executive Board gained approval for Education Leeds to work with the LSC and stakeholders in developing a detailed plan for implementation. However, it should be noted the report does not present a blueprint for implementation. Indeed, the first stage of the plan will be a substantial consultation on the LSC's preferred options and further modelling around the arrangements proposed in the Education Leeds paper.
- 2.4 Education Leeds and the LSC would welcome further attention from Scrutiny Board as part of this process.

3. THE REPORT

3.1 The detailed implementation plan for 14-19 will not be drafted until the end of August 2007. This report therefore adopts a commentary report format, rather than an action plan, to outline how we intend to address the Scrutiny Board's concerns.

3.2 **Recommendation 1**
That these concerns must be raised by Education Leeds when responding to the green paper 'Raising Expectations'.

3.3 Appendix 1 contains the response compiled by Education Leeds on behalf of the Leeds Learning Partnership to the Raising Expectations consultation. The process of producing the response involved obtaining a wide range of views from interested parties across Leeds. The views and comments of Scrutiny Board were a particularly valuable contribution to this process and the points raised by members were included in the response to the appropriate questions in the consultation document. Specific references have been made to addressing the implications for:

- ★ learners with multiple and complex needs, including SEN
- ★ appropriate accreditation for on the job training
- ★ young people expected to bring income into the family home and others requiring financial support, possibly through a continuation of the Education Maintenance Allowance
- ★ curriculum that develops personal, social and thinking skills (soft skills)
- ★ a system of incentives rather than penalties
- ★ parental support and mediation

3.4 **Recommendation 2**
That Education Leeds, and in particular the LSC, ensure that young people are adequately consulted on the proposals for change before any final decisions are made.

3.5 There are several strands of the 14-19 strategy where the participation of children and young people has been secured or are ongoing. These include:

- (a) the development of the specification for individual learning plans and electronic individual learning plans
- (b) the establishment of best practice in relation to advocacy and coaching
- (c) the development and implementation of the online prospectus
- (d) the developing design and function of BSF schools
- (e) the creating of the 14-19 learner entitlement
- (f) vocational and work-related learning programmes for 14-16 year olds

3.6 Next term the LSC will be formally consulting on the proposed options for the FE estate and there will be more detailed modelling around the proposals in the Education Leeds paper. We will ensure that:

- (a) Young people are invited to the public consultations
- (b) That a special consultation event is held, in liaison with the Youth Council, to stimulate debate and gain the perspective of young people

3.7 **Recommendation 3**
That Education Leeds report back to us on how the Scrutiny Board's many concerns about the 14-19 review are being addressed.

3.8 The principal concerns of Scrutiny Board are addressed below. The concerns are shown in italics with a number in brackets at the beginning giving a reference to the relevant paragraph in the Scrutiny Board Report. For each concern progress is identified along with how we intend to further address these in the implementation plan, where appropriate.

3.9 *(7) Concern that the refocus of resources should not be detrimental to other aspects of the education system such as adult learning, SEN, projects focused on disaffected and disengaged young people, and the teaching and learning of 'soft' or 'life' skills.*

Both Education Leeds and the LSC fully support the views of Scrutiny Board that the infrastructure developed through the Review must address and support the needs of all learners aged 14 plus and the most vulnerable groups of learners in particular. We recognise that if we are to secure the challenging achievement and participation targets then the final option that is presented for consultation must address all these issues. 'Soft' or life skills are addressed in 3.19.

3.10 *(8) The need to see clear links with other services such as libraries and the youth service to ensure that the needs of those outside formal education were met.*

Education Leeds is working very closely with the Youth Service around linking the 14-19 Strategy and the development of an integrated Youth Service and the Youth Offer. The Youth Offer is seen as an integral part of the 14-19 offer and is included in the on-line 14-19 Area Prospectus.

3.11 *(9) The need for clear plans in place showing how the needs of pupils with Special Educational Needs (up to age 25) would be met in the new 14-19 world.*

Education Leeds and the LSC have had detailed discussions at the Review Planning Meetings around the need to ensure that appropriate vocational provision is made available for SEN learners at both a city-wide and local level. This will include for example establishing partnerships between Specialist Inclusive Learning Centres (SILCs) and the Post 14 Centres/FE colleges to develop and enhance appropriately supported pathways and secure the progression of learners. The incorporation of appropriate SEN provision in the new infrastructure forms one of the key workstreams associated with the next phase of the Review.

3.12 *(12) Concern about the potential contradiction between the desire to streamline provision and eliminate duplication with the need to continue to provide learning opportunities in various locations.*

The view of Education Leeds is that we should be developing provision on a local basis as long as it is viable, sustainable and high quality. Changes to 14-19 funding means that the current pattern of delivery will not be financially viable in the future. However, it is envisaged that through the creation of a number of Post 14 Centres in localities then we will be able to eliminate provision that is not cost effective or of poor quality. Schools are already working together to eliminate duplication while at the same time maintain choice within an area by bringing

together small groups. Key benefits include improving the quality of the learner experience through access to the best teaching expertise, greater opportunities for peer group support and ensuring courses are financially viable and sustainable.

- 3.13 *(13) The view that the aspirational improvements in outcomes at Levels 2 and 3 would not be achieved with new and renovated buildings alone.*

Education Leeds fully share this view and see the solution as having three essential elements :

- Development of the physical infrastructure – including ensuring coherence between BSF and LSC capital build and making sure any new buildings are in the best possible location to serve the needs of the learner.
- Curriculum – ensuring all learners have easy access to the widest possible range of high quality curriculum options. This is being supported through the development of a Leeds Curriculum Framework that will ensure an agreed qualification framework, progression routes and timetabling arrangements.
- Supporting developments – better information, advice and guidance including associated developments on-line 14-19 Area Prospectus, Common Application Process, e-ILP, coaching and mentoring and development of personal learning and thinking skills

- 3.14 *(14) Concern that students in outer areas of Leeds might find it difficult to travel between sites and that the full curriculum is accessible from their locality and that transport practicalities have been fully considered.*

Education Leeds share scrutiny's concerns about the difficulties learners are experiencing accessing the full curriculum. The amount of funding schools and young people are spending on transport and the time that young people are spending travelling around the city when they could be learning are issues we are looking to address through the Review. These issues are key drivers behind the concept of the Post 14 Centres that should help ensure that a far greater proportion of the curriculum is available on a local basis and greatly simplify transport arrangements for schools, thus reducing costs.

The implementation plan will seek to secure well co-ordinated timetabling and transport arrangements in localities to ensure there is no disruption to learning.

- 3.15 *(15) The need for effective joint working with our city region partners to ensure no artificial barriers are in place, and that pupils can access the full curriculum at the most convenient place geographically regardless as to where local authority boundaries lay.*

Education Leeds continues to be very proactive in this regard and has supported arrangements and the quality assurance of 14-16 vocational provision for a significant number of learners from schools in the outer districts of Leeds. The arrangements include provision through Harrogate College and Henshaws College in Harrogate, Laistedyke Business and Education Centre and Carlton Bolling College in Bradford and Wakefield College. All this provision is included within the Leeds on-line prospectus.

- 3.16 *(18) Concern that the new 6th form funding arrangements, which will be based on actual retention and achievement performance, could lead to schools taking a more cautious approach to allowing students onto courses, thus narrowing rather than widening access for borderline students.*

It is vital that all young people are on courses that are at the right level to meet their needs. It is not to the benefit of either the learner or schools to have young people placed on courses where there is a high probability that they might fail. Evidence from the FE sector indicates that this is very rare in practice, as any caution regarding allowing borderline learners on course is countered by an opposing pressure to secure as many learners as possible and therefore maximise funding per course.

- 3.17 *(19) What plans and resources are being put in place to support schools through these difficult transitions including concerns about the possibility of staff redundancies.*

The first thing to note is that the outcomes of the Leeds Review and the national reform of the 14-19 Curriculum will be implemented over a number of years giving sufficient time for natural wastage and re-training to ease the transition. This transition towards a more vocational curriculum is not new and has been taking place successfully for a number of years. The proportion of Key Stage 4 points from vocational qualifications has increased from 6% in 2004 to 16% in 2006 and is expected to exceed 20% this year. As part of the implementation of the Diplomas the government has commissioned a range of organisations to offer support in the re-training and up-skilling of staff to deliver the new curriculum.

- 3.18 *(20) The need for the project plan to include clear arrangements for how young people will be supported through 14-19.*

The need to minimise any disruption for learners is uppermost in the plans of Education Leeds. Learners and their parents/carers will receive extensive impartial information, advice and guidance on the new 14-19 curriculum. Learners will not be expected to change institution part way through a course unless they are in agreement.

- 3.19 *(21) The importance of the development of 'soft' or 'life' skills in our young people.*

The development of personal learning and thinking skills is an integral part of the new 14-19 curriculum that is emerging through the development of the specialised Diplomas and the Foundation Learning Tier. Education Leeds has also commissioned a specific research and development project to support the developments in this area.

- 3.20 *(22) Concerned that many families might find it difficult financially if 16-18 year olds were required to be in full time education.*

The Raising Expectations Green Paper proposes that young people should participate in learning until they are 18 years of age. It is acknowledged in the paper that for many learners this will be on a part-time rather than a full-time basis. In the case of 16-18 year olds in full-time learning from families with an income of less than £30,000 per annum they are entitled to an Education Maintenance

Allowance (EMA) of up to £30 per week. In addition to this weekly allowance they are also eligible for bonuses of up to £500 based on making good progress with their learning. Parents/carers also continue to receive Child Benefit. Education Leeds also administers a Learner Support Fund that is available to support 16-18 year olds in particular financial hardship.

3.21 *(24) Concern in the light of national pressure being applied to agree organisational changes quickly in Leeds.*

Any national pressure to implement changes without appropriate consultation and agreement will be vigorously resisted. In particular, no new academies will be agreed unless there is clear evidence of the benefit they would bring to the young people of Leeds.

4. RECOMMENDATION

4.1 That Scrutiny Board notes the content of this report