



Stockton-on-Tees
BOROUGH COUNCIL



TEES VALLEY
SUB REGIONAL GROUP
14-19 EDUCATION AND TRAINING
STAGE 2 PROPOSAL

20 February 2009

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In September 2008, in order to progress the Machinery of Government changes for education and training for 16-18 year olds, the 5 Tees Valley local authorities (LAs) submitted a Statement of Intent, to work together to form a Tees Valley Sub Regional Group (SRG). The Tees Valley authorities already work together strategically as a city region through Tees Valley Unlimited (TVU) and have agreed a multi-area agreement to establish a mechanism to support the regeneration and skills agenda. This is also relevant to the ambitions to be delivered through the Machinery of Government changes. The fact that the Tees Valley has been chosen to pioneer the MAA approach demonstrates the enormous progress made in the past decade in developing strong and effective partnerships, with vision for the area, and also proof that the authorities can deliver.
- 1.2 This document sets out how the Tees Valley SRG would meet the requirements of the Stage 2 guidance on the transfer of responsibilities for 16-19 education and training and the integration of these arrangements into commissioning provision for 14-19 year olds in terms of:
- governance arrangements;
 - collaborative and strategic contribution;
 - resources and capacity;
 - policy and planning;
 - quality and targets.

2. GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

- 2.1 TVU is a partnership of public, private and voluntary bodies which co-ordinates activities, appropriate to a city region level, designed to improve the economic performance of the entire Tees Valley. The 5 Tees Valley LAs have signed a multi-area agreement which is testament to the strong and effective partnerships which exist, supported by a common vision for the region and vastly improved outcomes. Stockton Borough Council has been nominated as the lead partner to act on behalf of TVU and the 5 Tees Valley LAs.
- 2.2 The SRG would be aligned with TVU which has well established governance and accountable body arrangements approved by all Tees Valley LAs. This has advantages in that:
- A governance structure is already in place (Appendix 1) which can be adapted to incorporate the SRG.
 - A Joint Agreement between the 5 Boroughs approved by all 5 LAs is in place with Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council as lead LA.
 - Single Programme Agreements have been signed between each LA and Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, the lead authority, on the duties regarding accountable bodies.
 - Clear decision making and accountability mechanisms are included in the formal arrangements.
 - Protocols for dispute resolution have been developed and can be adapted to ensure they are appropriate to the needs of the SRG.
 - Financial arrangements are in place.
 - Each LA would maintain its existing powers and voting rights.
 - The representation of Chief Executives and Elected Members from the 5 LAs on the Leadership Board would ensure a high level of support and challenge for decision making.

- Employers are represented through the Private Sector Business Group and on individual Boards. The CBI, North East Chamber of Commerce, Jobcentre Plus, One NorthEast and Government Office North East are members of the Executive.

2.3 The SRG would formally consist of the 5 Tees Valley local authorities but with engagement, participation and influence invited from both Durham and North Yorkshire authorities. This would reflect the significant flow of learners from parts of Durham and North Yorkshire into the city region and to a lesser extent, vice versa.

2.4 The component groups of the TVU would be amended with a new 14-19 group of TVU comprising the 5 Directors of Children's Services. This would be the final decision making group for the commissioning arrangements of 14-19 education and training provision with a defined purpose and remit, terms of reference, composition and accountability. This Board would fit into the TVU governance structure already in place. It would report to Chief Executives and Elected Members through the TVU governance structure.

2.5 The structure which would operate beneath the 14-19 Education and Training SRG is shown in Appendix 2 and is described below.

- A Commissioning group with membership from the 5 Tees Valley LAs, and representation from Further Education colleges, Sixth Form colleges, schools and Work Based Learning providers drawn from the individual LA 14-19 Partnerships will be established. A representative from the neighbouring SRGs in North Yorkshire and Durham would be invited to join this group which would consider all 5 LA commissioning plans, and report and make recommendations to the 14-19 Board. Minutes of the Commissioning Group would be reported to the Board to provide a decision trail. An annual timetable would be produced with key dates including meetings identified to ensure timely and transparent decision making.
- The existing 5 Tees Valley 14-19 Partnerships would remain with their roles reviewed and aligned to one another where possible to ensure consistency whilst at the same time recognising any need for individuality. These 14-19 Partnerships already have mechanisms to include the learner and employer voice. Linkages already established with North Yorkshire and Durham 14-19 Partnerships would be further developed.

The purpose, terms of reference, membership and remit of each group in the structure would be agreed by the 14-19 Board.

2.6 There are a number of key principles which underpin the SRG proposals:-

The Learner

The learner is at the heart of the proposals and must always be the first consideration. The SRG would be focused on outcomes for young people through understanding their needs and aspirations.

Subsidiarity

The SRG would be the a forum for the Tees Valley LAs to work and plan together to build a picture of demand, to review individual local authority 14-19 commissioning plans, to ensure coherence and to consider how to deploy commissioning resources in the most cost effective and efficient manner.

Partnership

The SRG would be an inclusive partnership co-ordinating activity across the Tees Valley. Members of the partnership would be asked to sign a Memorandum of Understanding which would outline the expectations of partnership members, protocols and responsibilities, In addition to commissioning provision it is envisaged that a number of cross cutting themes would be addressed through the SRG for example, quality assurance, Diplomas, provision for those with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities, Information Advice and Guidance (IAG), and Employer engagement. Task and finish groups would be established for specific pieces of work as appropriate.

Voting

All members of the Commissioning Group would be able to vote on proposals to be submitted to the SRG Board, allowing members to feel they can influence decisions.

Accountable Body

Each LA would retain its statutory accountability with the lead LA having responsibility for the co-ordination and secretariat of SRG.

- 2.7 Each local authority would retain its independence and would produce a commissioning plan for the learners in its borough in consultation with its 14-19 Partnership. The plan would be considered, alongside other local authority commissioning plans, by the Commissioning Group. Through the Commissioning Group each LA would have dialogue with the Colleges based in its borough on behalf of all LAs in the SRG
- 2.8 An Interim Regional Planning Group which meets fortnightly has been already established. During the developmental stage of the SRG, Stockton Borough Council, who is leading on behalf of the Tees Valley LAs, attends this group.
- 2.9 In due course, the Regional Planning Group would scrutinise the commissioning plans of the three SRGs to ensure that they are coherent, fall within the overall budget available and deliver the entitlement for all young people in the region. The Regional Planning Group would also work with the Regional Skills Partnership to ensure that commissioning plans reflect local skills needs.
- 2.10 Within the North East a 14-19 Regional Commission, though not a commissioning body, already exists to provide support to local 14-19 partnerships. It seeks to add value to local 14-19 delivery, and better connect the Regional Economic Strategy to service planning in each local area. The Regional Commission has identified and agreed priorities and actions where it can add value at the regional level to local delivery of 14-19 programmes. It currently provides a mechanism for communication, consultation and support to partners, ensuring that dialogue adds value to local delivery. For example, in autumn 2008 a successful regional event organised by the Youth Forum, a sub group of the 14-19 Commission, was held to hear young people's views on their experience of IAG.

3. COLLABORATIVE AND STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTION

- 3.1 Since the submission of the Statement of Intent collaborative work has been undertaken to develop the Stage 2 proposal and SRG in anticipation of ratification.
- 3.2 From 1 October 2008, arrangements have been in place with the LSC to 'align' the work of a Partnership Director to support Stockton, the lead local authority, in the development of the Stage 2 proposal.
- 3.3 A 'stakeholder' event was held with over 50 people attending from across the Tees Valley. The purpose of the event was to provide an initial opportunity for partners from the School, Sixth Form College, Further Education and Work Based Learning sectors along with representatives from LAs to contribute to the development of the SRG. Contact with neighbouring SRGs has been made and representatives were invited to the conference. A conference report has been circulated. Similar events will be held in future to update and engage stakeholders in developments.
- 3.4 A wide range of people from across the Tees Valley have been engaged to gather 'intelligence' to support the development of the SRG and the Stage 2 proposal and to ensure that key stakeholders have been given the opportunity to contribute.
- 3.5 Each local authority has nominated a senior officer as their lead on the development of the SRG. A Steering Group, with agreed Terms of Reference (TOR), has been established to share good practice and contribute to and support in the development of the Stage 2 proposal. Membership of the Steering Group includes representation from LAs, Further Education, Sixth Form Colleges, Schools and Work Based Learning providers. A representative from One Northeast is providing support as and when appropriate and is a member of the Steering Group. LA Chief Executives and Directors of Children's Services have been kept informed through progress reports.
- 3.6 The Steering Group considered a number of operational models for the SRG and proposed potential models to the Tees Valley Directors of Children's Services, for their agreement. The agreed model and structure for the SRG is set out in Appendix 2. This model has also been shared with Directors of Children's Services across the North East region and agreed as compatible with proposed regional arrangements.
- 3.7 LA Officers with responsibility for 14-19 meet on a monthly basis to share good practice and developments in their borough and where appropriate work collaboratively.
- 3.8 All 5 lead LA IAG professionals recently formed a TV CEIAG group to replace individual LA IAG groups and are jointly and collaboratively responsible for all CEIAG across the sub region. Their joint working is reported to all 14-19 Partnerships and would be monitored by the SRG. This joint approach ensures a cohesive and strategic approach so that all young people receive consistent, co-ordinated, good quality and impartial advice and guidance from Connexions, providers and Connexions.
- 3.9 A strategy will be developed around working arrangements with the neighbouring SRGs of North Yorkshire and Durham. Representatives of these areas are already represented on the Darlington Borough Council 14-19 Trust.
- 3.10 In addition to collaborating through the SRG to plan and commission provision, the SRG will work other key players such as RDA, GONE, the new Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) and Skills Funding Agency (SFA) as part of a Regional Planning Group (RPG).

4. RESOURCES AND CAPACITY

- 4.1 In preparation for the transfer in 2010 each LA is now considering its proposed delivery and staffing needs and those of the SRG. The model of a shared service, to gain economies of scale is being given serious consideration and would reflect the TVU model. However until further details are available regarding the transfer of staff from the LSC no final decisions on staffing, costs or location can be made. There is a growing capacity issue within LAs as more initiatives are transferred from the LSC to the LAs. The work of Partnership Team staff from the LSC is being 'aligned' to LA working and this will develop further as time progresses. However this is an informal arrangement and the amount of support may differ between LAs. The LSC is working closely with LAs on the business cycle and plans are well established for both the tracking (2008/09) and transition (2009/10) years of commissioning.
- 4.2 Once the Stage 2 proposal has been submitted it is expected the Steering Group will continue to meet to further develop the SRG, to share good practice and to ensure that the SRG is ready to operate under Model (b) as defined by DCSF.
- 4.3 The Steering Group will develop an action plan between January and March 2009 pending the outcome of the Stage 2 proposal to take the work forward the work in progress and to include for example:
- Continuing relationship development within and between the 5 LAs and also with North Yorkshire and Durham SRGs
 - Establishing the SRG within TVU
 - Giving further consideration of delivery and staffing needs
 - Developing the purpose, TOR, membership and accountability of component groups building on the already agreed TOR of the Steering Group
 - Undertaking a self-assessment of readiness to operate Model (b)
 - Reviewing TVU protocols for dispute resolution to ensure they are appropriate to the needs of the SRG
 - Reviewing existing data sharing protocols
 - Developing a Memorandum of Understanding for partnership working
 - Reviewing 14-19 Partnerships to ensure they are aligned
 - Developing a three year strategic SRG plan
 - Establishing a group to lead on quality and develop a process to ensure that only quality provision is commissioned
 - Developing strategy around working arrangements with the neighbouring SRG's of North Yorkshire and Durham
 - Developing a strategy around cross cutting themes

5. POLICY AND PLANNING

- 5.1 The LSC will remain accountable for the commissioning of provision until 2010. However the SRG would work closely with LSC North East for the remainder of the 2008/09 tracking year and the 2009/10 transition year to ensure a smooth transition of responsibility for planning and funding of young people's provision in 2010. This would be based on the Principles and Framework for transition identified in '*Commissioning 14-19 Provision through Transition*'.
- 5.2 In future each LA will develop its own commissioning plans following a review of existing provider performance, and an analysis of learner and employer demand. The Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) will provide integrated analytical services to the LAs along with regional level market intelligence to assist in the strategic analysis which

supports the planning and commissioning of provision. Particular attention will be given to the needs of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities (LLDD) to ensure capacity meets demand.

- 5.3 At all times consideration will be given to the neighbouring SRGs of North Yorkshire and Durham with relationships being developed in specialist areas. A process will be developed and agreed with them to share strategic analysis and to inform planning.
- 5.4 Partnerships focused on 14-19 developments already exist within each of the 5 Tees Valley authorities. These have seen the successful development of Diploma Gateway bids and subsequent planning for delivery of the new curriculum offer across the sub-region. Each LA has a common e-prospectus, which is available for young people across the region to access. The regional support provided in maintaining the e-prospectus would continue. A sub-regional 14-19 partnership, with representation from all 5 14-19 partnerships, already exists with a mandate to develop a consistent approach to Diploma delivery.
- 5.5 Individual 14-19 Partnerships would be reviewed to ensure there is a common core and the effective representation of a broad provider base. Each LA would also review its 14-19 Plan to ensure an entitlement to the right learning opportunities and support is available and that they are prepared for the raising of the participation age in 2013.
- 5.6 There are a number of 'cross cutting themes' common to all LAs, for example, area wide prospectus and common application process; Diplomas; IAG; education business links; employer engagement and provision for LLDD. It is anticipated that one LA would take the lead in a cross cutting theme on behalf of the SRG so that expertise and good practice can be shared and a coherent offer be available. There are already a number of groups that work across Tees Valley and beyond. Where appropriate these established groups would be used rather than forming new ones.
- 5.7 Current data sharing protocols to ensure effective monitoring and tracking of all learners across the region will be reviewed.
- 5.8 Commissioning arrangements for future provision for 14-19 education and training should reflect travel to learn patterns. In the Tees Valley, existing travel to learn patterns, and plans for new curriculum delivery strongly support a sub-regional approach to strategic planning and commissioning of 14-19 education and training. Details of the inflow and outflow of young people both within and outside of Tees Valley were provided in the Stage 1 proposal (Statement of Intent). Each LA has a transport policy that meets the needs of its learners, and these policies will be reviewed.
- 5.9 BSF Transforming Learning Programmes are underway across the 5 authorities, with alignment to LSC capital programmes where appropriate ensuring maximum benefit and value for money from both initiatives. A co-ordinated approach to 14-19 strategic planning and commissioning across the sub-region will further support this transformation agenda.

6. QUALITY AND TARGETS

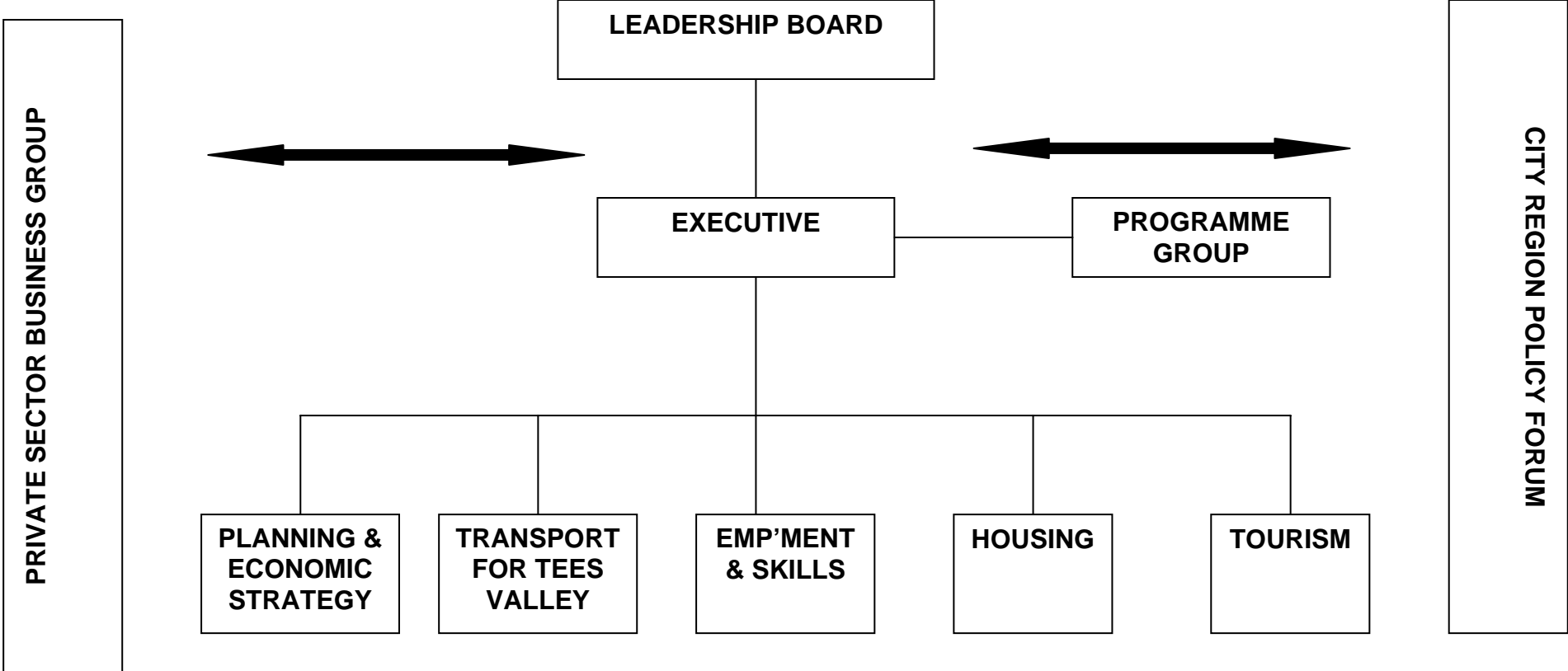
- 6.1 In moving towards a full entitlement based on high quality provision which is inclusive of new diploma lines there is likely to be an increase in collaborative arrangements with potential cross LA timetabling with specialist providers. LAs will want to ensure that they are purchasing high quality provision.

- 6.2 There are a range of existing mechanisms and indicators in place for quality improvement for example, Ofsted inspections, School Improvement Partners, Challenge and Support, Framework for Excellence and Minimum Levels of Performance. These along with, for example, the national indicator set and 14-19 progress checks ensure that provider performance is measured and appropriate support provided. The findings of these external reports will be taken into consideration and the SRG will develop criteria and clear lines of accountability that will ensure quality provision is being commissioned.
- 6.3 The requirements of the comprehensive spending review in terms of achievement of PSA targets, delivering increased participation to meet the ambition of raising the participation age and a dramatic increase in the proportion of young people entering apprenticeships will be considered.
- 6.4 All 5 LAs are committed to a consistent, transparent approach which has integrity in determining and monitoring the quality of provision offered to learners. Building upon the current good practice in Schools and Colleges appropriate staff and expertise from the LSC and LA School Improvement services will work together as a team to monitor and report regularly upon quality of providers to ensure informed and appropriate choices are made to suit individual learner needs across the Tees Valley. Common principles and protocols will be developed and shared with neighbouring SRGs. In addition, this team will report on the effectiveness of the sub regional QA procedures for annual review by the SRG Board.
- 6.5 Each institution or provider is currently responsible for the quality assurance of its own courses, using its own systems and frameworks of lesson observations, surveys, and data analysis. Analysis of learner surveys and data on retention, attendance, achievement and destinations will be collected by all partners to contribute to an overall evaluation of each provider. External, Inspection and Quality information about a provider and course will be collated and made available to participating schools.

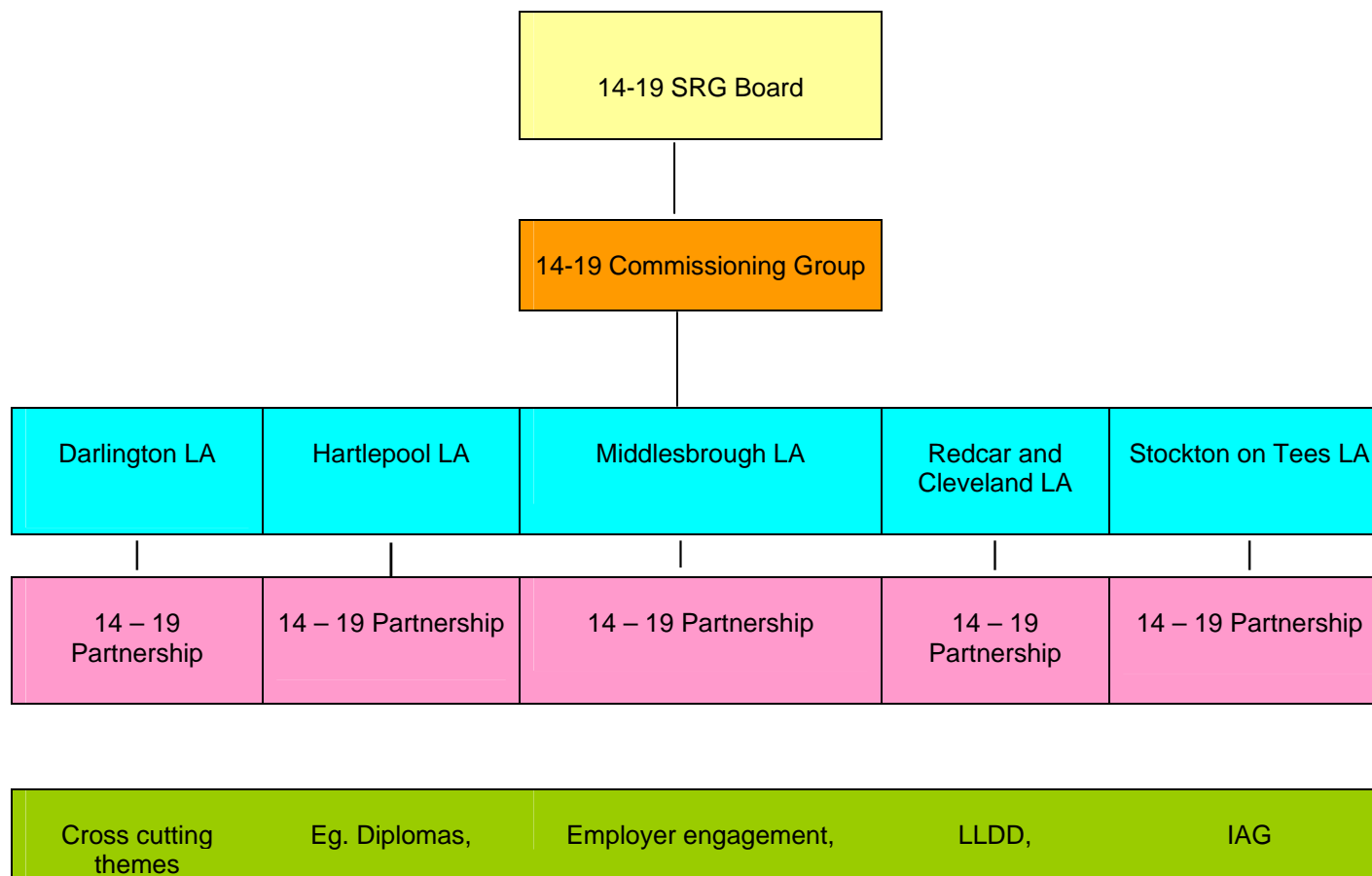
7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The Tees Valley authorities enjoy a strong and effective partnership across a wide range of areas, as evidenced by their common vision, vastly improved outcomes and ambitious MAA. As high performing local authorities with a strong track record of partnership working they welcome the opportunity to take a leader role through the 14-19 SRG, in strategically commissioning high quality provision so that all young people are able to access suitable learning opportunities and reach their potential. This resonates with the region's vision for regeneration and growth.

Appendix 1 – CURRENT TEES VALLEY UNLIMITED GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



Appendix 2 - The Tees Valley Sub Regional Group Structure



- 14-19 Board - membership comprising Directors of Children’s Services
- Commissioning Group - membership comprising representatives from each LA , along with representatives from FE, SFC, Schools, WBL
- Each LA would produce its own commissioning plan working with their 14-19 Partnership