

Regional Statement of Priorities for young people for 2010/11

October 2009

Introduction and context

- 1 This Statement sets out the regional priorities for young people's learning in the academic year 2010/11, informed by the key issues and challenges faced by the region which we identified as the outcome of the strategic analysis we have undertaken.
- 2 The Regional Statement of Priorities, together with the National Statement of Priorities, and the Local Area Statements of Need will inform a Regional Commissioning Statement for young people's learning for 2010/11, published in November.
- 3 We have structured the presentation of the regional priorities under two headings: they are the strategic aims of **Raising the Participation Age** and **Narrowing the Gap**. But a number of the priorities will contribute to both agendas. Note that the focus on Narrowing the Gap is broad-ranging, encompassing the need to address all barriers to participation and attainment. It is not solely focussed on those young people identified through measures of deprivation.
- 4 The development of regional priorities for young people's learning is set in the context of the wider '**Every Child Matters**' agenda and the **14-19 Reform Programme**.
- 5 It is also set in the context of rapidly **changing economic conditions**. The recession has had a significant impact on the North East economy. In the short term it has affected employment opportunities for young people and will present a challenge to us in meeting our ambitious Apprenticeship targets. While the economy is now showing signs of recovery, it is difficult to predict the rate or strength of this recovery with any certainty.
- 6 Long term projections indicate that there will be growth in employment in the region (although the majority of employment opportunities will come from the need for employers to replace staff lost through turnover and

retirement). The structure of the economy and the nature of jobs will continue to change regionally and nationally. There will be fewer jobs which require no skills or low skills, and more jobs requiring higher skills. It will be increasingly important for young people, as the future workforce, to have the appropriate skills and qualifications and to have the capacity to continue to learn. Raising aspirations of all young people to engage in and stay in learning and to achieve is central to ensuring that all young people can fulfil their potential in the world of work.

Raising the Participation Age

Issues and Challenges

Overall participation

- 7 Participation rates of young people at 16 and 17 in the region compare favourably with the national position. Latest data shows participation of 16 year olds at 89 per cent compared to 88 per cent nationally. Participation rates fall significantly at age 17 (78 per cent in the region – at the national rate) and again at age 18. This ‘drop out’ may reflect: an inappropriate choice of route at 16; completion of the planned programme and a desire to start paid work; or difficulties in other areas of the young person’s life.
- 8 A significant increase in 16 year old and particularly 17 year old participation rates is necessary if we are to achieve **full participation by 2013 and 2015** respectively.
- 9 The Government’s commitment to Raising the Participation Age (RPA) means that local authorities will have a duty to promote effective participation of all young people in their area and will need to ensure that there is the provision and support to cater for all needs and all participation routes.

Demographic changes and travel to learn patterns

- 10 We also need to ensure that planning for increased participation rates among young people is done in the context of demographic change in the region and that it reflects travel to learn patterns.
- 11 While total population is projected to increase slightly, the 16-18 cohort is projected to decline by 13% between 2009 and 2013, a faster rate of decline than is projected nationally. This decline will be seen in all local authority areas although it is projected to be more significant in some: Middlesbrough and Sunderland are expected to see the greatest rates of decline in the region.
- 12 Travel to learn flows in and out of the region are relatively small, but flows are of greater volume and complexity at the local authority level within the region. Local authorities and sub regional groupings will want

to consider the planning and commissioning implications associated with the import and export of learners and the overall decline in the population of young people.

The Guarantee and NEET levels

- 13 A key tool in building towards full participation of 16 and 17 year olds is the **September Guarantee**. Performance in the region on the September 2008 Guarantee compared favourably with the national performance and progress on the September 2009 Guarantee is encouraging. There is a robust process in place in the region to monitor progress and deal with issues promptly. But it is important that in meeting the Guarantee in the region the offer is the right one for the young person concerned. For this reason high quality, impartial information advice and guidance that enables young people to make informed choices is vital.
- 14 Raising participation towards 100 per cent means that we will have to engage those **young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)**. The proportion of young people who are NEET in the region has fallen recently, reflecting concerted efforts by local partnerships, and local examples of good practise in multi-agency working.
- 15 But the proportion of young people in the region who are NEET remains high at 9.8 per cent (9,010 young people) in the period November 2008 – January 2009, compared to 6.7 per cent nationally. It is the highest of all English regions.
- 16 NEET rates vary significantly between local authorities, from 6.3 per cent in Northumberland to 13.2 per cent in Sunderland (identified as a hotspot alongside Redcar & Cleveland). We should ensure that good practice at the local level in reducing NEET is identified and shared across the region. The most successful interventions have been provision which is targeted and locally defined. ESF funded Youth Participation projects in each local authority are aimed at delivering such provision, and form a key part of the strategy to reduce NEET in the region.
- 17 NEET rates also vary considerably between different groups of young people. This is discussed further under *Narrowing the Gap*.

Work without training

- 18 The proportion of **young people in jobs without training** in the region has decreased in recent years but at November 2008 there were over 3000 16-18 year olds in jobs without training to Level 2. It is important in preparation for RPA that these young people are identified and we work with them and their employers to convert, where appropriate, jobs without training into Apprenticeships.

Creating the right learning opportunities

- 19 If we are to engage young people who are NEET, and if we are to raise participation towards 100 per cent, we must ensure that there are sufficient and appropriate high quality learning opportunities to meet their individual needs, supported by impartial information, advice and guidance and appropriate learner and learning support. A key challenge for the region will be to broaden the offer to young people as a platform for the **curriculum entitlement** to the four learning pathways by 2013:
- Meeting the **Apprenticeship** entitlement for 2013 and meeting the regional and local targets for Apprenticeship starts by young people pose significant challenges. Opportunities currently available reflect the level of employer take up across the region: this needs to be increased, but to do this represents a particular challenge in the current economic climate. This is at the heart of the mission for the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) in the region, which will expand the Apprenticeship offer by driving up employer engagement, stimulating high quality demand from individuals, whilst targeting those sectors (such as the public sector) which present the greatest opportunities for expansion.
 - There has been good progress in securing **Diploma** approvals through the Gateway process but take up of Diplomas to date has been lower than planned. There are also concerns about the lack of progression routes through from Level 1 to Level 3 Diplomas. A key challenge for local consortia will be to meet the challenge of the planned numbers for Diplomas and to ensure that there is sufficient range and breadth of Diploma provision to meet the entitlement.
 - A sufficient and coherent **Foundation Learning** offer is crucial for supporting increased engagement and progression of young people with learning needs below Level 2. In 2008/09, 25 providers in the North East were involved in the developmental delivery of post-16 progression pathways. Early signs are that delivery of Foundation Learning will increase in 2008/09. In 2010/11 it will be necessary to ramp up delivery on a trajectory which will ensure that Foundation Learning is the primary offer for all learners below Level 2.
 - **General qualifications** are a well established route for young people. There is a comprehensive offer of GCSEs and A levels across the region delivered in General FE and Sixth Form Colleges and in School Sixth Forms.
- 20 There are currently a number of established qualifications available for young people outside of the four national learning routes which have high learner take up in the region. These include BTECs, OCR Nationals and those from City & Guilds. DCSF are currently working with the Awarding Organisations that offer these high take up qualifications to

develop plans for these qualifications as the four national routes evolve and expect to provide greater detail on these plans by the end of 2009.

- 21 In summary, meeting the young person's entitlement presents a key challenge for local authorities, sub regional groupings and 14-19 partnerships in the region. Success will rest on effective 14-19 partnership planning and on effective links with employers. It will also require an appropriate delivery infrastructure able to assist and foster collaboration not just within local authorities but also across local authority boundaries. This will ensure access to the full entitlement for all young people, will maintain quality and will deliver economies of scale.

Raising the Participation Age Priorities:

- * Accelerating progress in meeting **NEET** targets and raising participation as a platform for full participation through increased multi-agency activity – improved identification and tracking, aided by improved data sharing, and targeted, personalised intensive interventions. Identifying and sharing across the region good practice in reducing NEET.
- * Developing a **broad, high quality curriculum offer** that meets the individual needs of all young people on a trajectory to meeting the entitlement to the 4 qualification routes- Apprenticeships, Diplomas, Foundation Learning, and General Qualifications by 2013. Ensuring that there are clear progression routes between levels and to higher levels and the appropriate support is in place at points of transition.
- * Accelerating progress in establishing a sufficient and coherent **Foundation Learning offer**, vital for the engagement and progression of young people with learning needs below Level 2.
- * Ensuring that young people and their parents/carers have access to up-to-date, high quality, contextualised, impartial **information, advice and guidance** about the full breadth of opportunities available to help them make the choices that are right for them and reduce the chance of them dropping out of learning. This support must be responsive to the changing circumstances of young people, in particular at **points of transition**. Integral to IAG will be the continued development of the on-line 14-19 Prospectuses in all 12 local areas with links to the Apprenticeship vacancies on-line and the introduction of a common application process and on-line individual learning plans.
- * **Increasing Apprenticeship opportunities** for young people, as a step towards the Apprenticeship entitlement and in support of the Government's ambitions for Apprenticeship take up through increasing

engagement of employers, including where appropriate, those employers with young people in jobs without training. Ensuring a range of progression routes into Apprenticeships including from the Young Apprenticeship programme, and routes from Apprenticeships into higher level skills

- * Ensuring **effective 14-19 partnership planning** for the delivery of the young person's entitlement and preparing for the raising of the participation age.
- * Ensuring the most **appropriate delivery structures** are in place to assist and foster collaboration, both within and across local authority boundaries.
- * Developing an effective mechanism for **collaborative working with employers** to maximise the impact of their contribution to the development and delivery of 14-19 curriculum.

Narrowing the Gap in participation and attainment while improving outcomes for all

Issues and Challenges

Participation

- 22 The participation rate of young people varies significantly between different groups of people. Among those who are more likely to be NEET are young people who:
- Have learning difficulties or disabilities
 - Are looked after
 - Are care leavers
 - Are teenage parents
 - Are supervised by Youth Offending teams
 - Live in a deprived area
 - Have no or low qualifications
- 23 These young people are often the hardest to reach, face complex barriers to learning and require the greatest support to engage and stay in learning. It is important to raise the aspirations of all young people, regardless of their backgrounds to participate and progress in learning. There are examples of good practice in the region where local programmes have been successful in engaging vulnerable young people. It is important to continue to identify such examples and to share them across the region.

Attainment at Level 2

- 24 Attainment of Level 2 at Key Stage 4 in the region has been improving at a faster rate than nationally and at 66.4 per cent¹ is now above the national average. Regional attainment of Level 2 at Key Stage 4 including English and maths, however, has not improved as quickly, and at 44.9 per cent remains below the national average.
- 25 Attainment at Key Stage 4 varies by local authority. Attainment also varies between different groups of young people: pupils with special educational needs; looked after children; and pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are among those who are less likely to achieve. Variations in achievement can also be seen by gender and ethnicity.
- 26 Increasing attainment of Level 2 at age 16 has fed through to increased attainment of Level 2 at age 19 in the region. At 76 per cent in 2007/08 attainment of Level 2 at 19 was just 1 percentage point below the national average and on a trajectory to exceed the national target of 82 per cent by 2011.
- 27 All local authorities in the region have seen improvement in attainment of Level 2 at 19 but differences remain: from 67 per cent in Middlesbrough to 75 per cent in Stockton.
- 28 Attainment of Level 2 at 19 also varies by gender, ethnicity and between those young people who have learning difficulties and /or disabilities and their peers.
- 29 There are also significant differences between those young people who are from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who are not. Attainment of Level 2 by age 19 by those eligible for free school meals at 54 per cent in 2007/08 was some 26 percentage points behind attainment of those not eligible. The gap is narrowing however, although not as quickly as nationally.
- 30 The attainment gap at local authority level in 2007/08 ranged from 20 percentage points in Gateshead to 34 percentage points in Stockton. 2007/08 data suggests that the gap has widened since 2006/07 in some areas².

Attainment at level 3

- 31 Attainment of Level 3 at age 19 has improved in the region and the gap with national performance has reduced very slightly. But at 44 per cent in 2007/08 attainment of Level 3 at age 19 is lower than any other region and there is considerable improvement to be made to match the national target of 54 per cent by 2011.

¹ 2007/08 5 or more A*-C GCSEs or equivalent (maintained schools)

² Note that local trends can be difficult to ascertain due to statistical effects related to small numbers of young people eligible for FSM in some local authorities.

- 32 There is considerable variation in Level 3 at 19 attainment within the region, from 36 per cent in Middlesbrough to 49 per cent in Stockton in 2007/08.
- 33 Attainment at Level 3 varies by gender, ethnicity and between those young people who have learning difficulties and /or disabilities and their peers.
- 34 Attainment also varies significantly between those young people who are from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who are not. Attainment of Level 3 by age 19 by those eligible for free school meals in 2007/08 was some 28 percentage points behind attainment of those not eligible. The regional gap is narrowing, but only very slightly.
- 35 At local authority level the attainment gap in 2007/08 ranged from 20 percentage points in Gateshead to 34 percentage points in Stockton. 2007/08 data suggests that the gap has widened since 2006/07 in some areas³.
- 36 Our analysis highlights that significant inequalities remain in participation and achievement in the region. For this reason it is important to prioritise targeted activity to improve outcomes for vulnerable groups and those who are most at risk of failing to succeed or disengaging, with a view to reducing the differences between these groups of young people and their peers.

Narrowing the Gap Priorities:

- * **Raising aspirations** of all young people, regardless of their background, to engage in and stay in learning to get the skills and qualifications they need to fulfil their potential in the world of work.
- * **Narrowing the gap in participation** between vulnerable young people and their peers through increased multi-agency activity. This includes improved identification and tracking, aided by improved data sharing, and **targeted, personalised intensive interventions**. Identifying and sharing across the region good practice in reducing NEET amongst vulnerable groups.
- * Raising attainment at **Level 2 including English and maths at Key Stage 4** and **narrowing the gap in attainment** between those young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers from more affluent backgrounds.

³ Note that local trends can be difficult to ascertain due to statistical effects related to small numbers of young people eligible for FSM in some local authorities.

- * Raising attainment at **Level 2 and in particular Level 3 at 19** and **narrowing the gap** between those young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers from more affluent backgrounds. Ensuring that for those young people without English and maths, attainment of functional literacy and numeracy underpins their learning.
- * Increasing the capacity within the region to deliver high quality local provision and supported employment opportunities for **young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities** (LDD). Improving **equality of access** to and experience of post 16 learning for young people with LDD compared to their peers without LDD. Ensuring a smooth transition for young people with LDD between schools, FE, and Apprenticeships through improved multi agency working and data sharing.