



Post-16 education and training in Bradford and the need for change

Foreword from Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe and Michael Jameson

At the heart of our Education Covenant for Bradford District is the belief that strong schools, colleges and other post-16 settings are essential if we are to have strong communities, economic growth and a healthy society.

This is a really important time for the future of post-16 education and training in the Bradford District. In spite of the hard work and commitment of all involved in 16-19 teaching, the need to accelerate improvements in both the quality and choice for learners is accepted by all.

We know there are some excellent examples of post 16 education in the district, but the world of work is changing and we want to make sure that all our young people have access to a wide range of high standard A level and technical vocational qualifications. We must provide excellent learning pathways so young people can progress into employment and further and higher education.

We know that what is on offer for young people now has not delivered enough improvement in Bradford's learning levels right across the board. We must take this opportunity to re-organise our current post-16 offer so that it delivers excellence and is financially sustainable.

In 2015, the Council led a review of post-16 education and training. We carried out the review jointly with schools, colleges and industry so we could set a direction to make sure that the post-16 learning young people receive is relevant to today's and tomorrow's job market.



This document has been produced by Bradford Council to outline the case for change in how we deliver post-16 education in Bradford, but more importantly it describes the Council's view on the future options for post-16 education as a response to the review.

Our role as leaders for Bradford Council is to champion the needs of young people, families, schools and colleges. We now have a clear plan on how we will work with our partners to drive this change so that young people in our District have access to the best post-16 education we can offer.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Susan Hinchcliffe".

Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe
Leader of Bradford Council

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Jameson".

Michael Jameson
Strategic Director of Children's Services

Reviewing post-16 education

Post-16 education is changing: National reforms are changing the curriculum, how post-16 education is funded and will significantly expand the apprenticeship programme. Alongside this, the organisation of education is more diverse with the growth of multi-academy trusts and the introduction of free schools, university technical colleges and institutes of technology.

The way that post-16 education is offered in Bradford, both its quality and its financial viability, was criticised in Ofsted's 2015 report on school improvement in Bradford. In addition, the Government is reviewing the financial viability of colleges in West Yorkshire as part of a national programme.

To make sure we can meet the needs of our young people, and deliver the skills needed by the local economy now and in the future, Bradford Council led a review of post-16 provision across the District.

The review was undertaken in partnership with schools, colleges, the University of Bradford, West Yorkshire Learning Providers and the Workforce Development Advisory Committee.

While the role of the Council is changing as all secondary schools move toward academy status, it has an important role to play as a champion of young people, parents, carers and families, and educational excellence. The review was an important first step to accelerate the improvements needed across the District.

We view the Council's champion role as crucial to making sure that change has a direct and positive impact on learners and their families. Championing is about local leadership; influencing and creating a common purpose; and challenging providers to deliver excellence and provide support.

The case for change is clear

The post-16 review found that the current way we deliver post-16 education in Bradford needs to change. It needs to do this rapidly to meet the future needs and demands of its learners, communities and employers, and to make sure that it is sustainable in a period of reducing public funding.

An important strand of Bradford's economic regeneration focuses on skills development to maximise employment opportunities. To support this objective post-16 education needs to offer learning and training that is fully aligned to, and shaped by, the needs of local employers and growth sectors in the local economy.

The review found that:

- **Outcomes need to rapidly improve for all young people in all settings.**

Overall the outcomes for young people by the age of 19 do not compare well to national and regional figures. Level 2 (equivalent to 5 GCSEs at grade A*-C) and Level 3 (equivalent to 2 A Levels) performance at age 19 can be described at best as stabilising, and at worst as declining.

Our young people's results are below average and they also achieve fewer qualifications than the national average. Fewer of Bradford's A Level students achieve three A Levels than is the case nationally.

There are also significant differences in performance levels in post-16 education depending on where learners live and their backgrounds. This is not just in the levels of outcomes achieved by young people but also because of the range of course options available and in the quality of learning that young people experience.

- **Young people need to be better supported when choosing what they want to do.**

All students need to access learning suitable for their needs and for which clear progression routes are

understood. Data shows that too many of our young people are making the wrong choices at key transition points. This shows there is a clear need for informed and unbiased information, advice and guidance (IAG) in all settings and better transition support.

- **The current choice for students is limited.**

Currently many of our schools' sixth forms are small and the academic and vocational pathways they provide offer a limited choice for young people. The colleges provide mainly vocational programmes but also some significant A Level provision.

The approach is not joined up and as a result is costly, duplicates learning opportunities, does not provide high quality learning experiences and ultimately impacts negatively on outcomes for learners.

There are clear gaps in the range and types of qualifications and programmes at all levels and the A Level offer does not match local economic need.

- **The current offer is not financially sustainable.**

Population projections show an increase in youth population and there is a pressing need to create additional capacity in secondary school for ages 11-16 years old. This is at a time when the Government is consulting on the future of 11-16 funding and this will mean increasing pressures on school budgets.

Allied to this there are 18 schools which have sixth forms with less than 250 young people. Studies demonstrate that sixth forms with less than 250 students can be inefficient. Those schools with small sixth forms face increasing challenges to be able to afford to deliver a viable sixth form offer. Research has also identified an association between the size of a sixth form and its A Level results; which may explain in part why many of our smaller sixth forms have poor results.



Future priority areas for action and change

The Council has four key priority areas for action and change and we will work with our partners to:

1. Deliver sustainable post-16 provision

We will do this by:

a. Developing sustainable 16–19 education across the District.

We will work with schools, particularly those with school sixth forms with fewer than 250 young people, to develop viable solutions for offering high quality 16-19 education. This may involve collaboration with a partner school or college

b. Collaborating based on geographical factors, communities of interest or provider strengths.

Schools and colleges must work together to broaden their curriculum offer and deliver economies of scale.

c. Collaborating within multi-academy trusts (MAT).

We would like to see MATs reviewing and considering the future of their sixth form provision strategically

across the whole trust, with a view to combining their provision into a single sixth form centre or to stop offering sixth form provision.

d. The development of new sixth form colleges and post-16 free schools.

This needs to be done through a coordinated approach that considers geographical factors to ensure equality of access for all our young people and avoids unhelpful competition impacting on financial security. We want to see the development of four new sixth form colleges that offer a wide range of high quality academic pathways, with two located within the city centre and two located in the north of the District.

e. Develop a financial modelling tool to enable sixth forms to stress-test what they offer.

2. Champion and support better leadership

To do this we will:

- a. Develop geographical partnerships to develop and share expertise
- b. Set up peer-to-peer support for teachers and leaders

- c. Intervene where leadership lacks the skills or capacity to improve
- d. Provide robust data on performance to highlight good and outstanding practice
- e. Provide robust data on what our local economy needs now and in the future.

3. Promote networks and partnerships that can raise standards

To do this we will:

- a. Signpost and broker relationships
- b. Support collective approaches that tackle underachievement
- c. Work with schools and colleges to direct

- resources to where they are needed
- d. Bring schools and colleges together to work to raise aspiration
- e. Work with schools and colleges and intervene at an early stage to tackle areas of concern.

4. Continue to focus on 16-19 outcomes at all levels

To do this we will:

- a. Develop a post-16 action plan to improve standards
- b. Develop a post-16 partnership to focus on improving educational standards and outcomes
- c. Develop an effective transition process between Year 11 and all post-16 destinations
- d. Make certain independent information, advice and guidance (IAG) is available to all our young people

- and families to inform their decision making
- e. Champion the view that vocational and academic choices have equal value
- f. Implement Bradford Pathways so that young people have access to a learning pathway that gives them a rich and balanced curriculum linked to their career goals
- g. Promote teaching which aims to shift performance for all students.

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