

Report of the Strategic Director Children's Services to the meeting of the Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on 15th December 2015

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Subject:

16-19 EDUCATION IN BRADFORD

Summary statement:

This report considers certain key data in respect of young people's engagement in learning and attainment by age 19 including the sustainability of the destinations young people choose.

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Portfolio:
Children & Young People's Services

Overview & Scrutiny Area:
Children & Young People's Services



1. Summary

1.1 Academic year 2013/14 saw the implementation of the first phase of the Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) from 16 to 18 and changes in the funding of 16-19 provision to underpin this.

For academic year 2014/15 there was minimal change to the funding mechanism other than a cap on the funding that could be drawn down for (academic age) 18 year olds.

As ever the funding, and what is expected to be delivered in return for this funding, present a significant challenge to our schools, colleges and training providers, and in addition 2015/16 is the last year in which any protections have been applied. However data on participation indicates Bradford has consolidated the advances of recent years and continues to improve performance, with some encouraging data around qualification outcomes at the end of Key Stage 5.

The quality and financial challenges in particular, and OFSTED's highlighting of these in their recent inspection of the Local Authority has driven the initiation of a review of post-16 in Bradford.

2. Background

2.1 The funding allocations process for all publicly funded 16-19 education and training providers (excluding Apprenticeships), including schools and academies, is managed by the Education Funding Agency (EFA), which is part of the DfE.

2.2 Under the 16-19 funding formula young people are funded to undertake programmes of study rather than separate individual qualifications. Within these arrangements:

- Every full-time young person is funded for a 600 hour programme as long as they reach the RPA definition of full-time (540 hours);
- There is a good deal of flexibility in terms of what counts towards the 540 hours compared to previous funding methodologies, for example work experience and non-accredited learning count as fundable activity;
- Study programmes must however include Maths and English if a Grade C at GCSE has not been achieved; and
- There are four part-time funding bands for anyone that doesn't meet the 540 hour threshold.

2.3 The new funding methodology was linked to the implementation of the raising of the participation age. There was a phased implementation of RPA but both milestones are now in effect meaning that young people now have a duty to participate in either education or employment with training until their 18th birthday.



2.4 The DfE publishes data indicating the number of young people meeting their duty to participate under RPA to complement a range of pre-existing data around participation and NEET.

3. Report issues

3.1 PART ONE - The 16-19 funding formula

3.1.1 The formula generates a 'programme funding' budget based on the following elements:

- Lagged learner numbers
- The national rate per learner
- Programme weighting
- Retention
- Disadvantage
- Area costs

Programme funding is then added to High Needs funding, any Formula Protection and a 16-19 Bursary allocation to give a total funding allocation.

3.1.2 Although there is a protection in cash terms of the base rate of 16-19 funding in the Autumn Spending Review, the concern would be that when the details of how DfE will apportion their budget become clearer there will still be an adverse impact on post-16 funding. It should be noted that where previous adjustments have been made to 16-19 funding it has typically been to other factors in the formula than the base rate. Two points to note that will definitely impact on 16-19 allocations in Bradford are that:

- The reduction in funding for 18 year olds (other than those with high needs) on full time programmes, initiated in 2014/15 continues. The data used for the 2015/16 allocation indicated this impacted the funding of 330 young people in Bradford sixth forms; and
- Formula protection funding, where changes to the funding formula in 2013/14 would have resulted in a reduction in individual institution funding rates per student, will be applied for the final time in the calculation of 2015/16 academic year allocations. Maintained schools received £448,000 of protection his year of which £316,000 was allocated to just three schools.

3.1.3 From September 2014 the condition of funding in respect of English and Maths has been implemented meaning that any young person without GCSE Grade C in either of these subjects will need to continue to study the subject(s) for which they don't have the C Grade post-16. For a young person with a Grade D this continued study must be a GCSE, for anyone with an E or below there are a small number of eligible 'stepping stone' qualifications that they can enrol on to meet the condition. For each young person not meeting this condition a school (or College) loses the equivalent of one learners funding.

3.2 PART TWO - Participation



3.2.1 There are a number of different measures around participation, retention and those young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) that have on the whole been very positive in terms of trends and national comparators for the District. Some of these indicators are briefly discussed below at 3.2.2 – 3.2.5.

3.2.2 The Activity Survey is an annual process undertaken to ascertain the destinations of all young people who were in years 11 to 14 in Bradford schools the previous academic year – i.e. 2014/15 in this case. The Survey focuses on the situation on a particular day (6th November 2015) and historically the focus of the data reported is considered in terms of Year 11 destinations.

The ex-Year 11 headlines for this year were as follows:

- The in-learning number (5,877 young people) and rate (96.2%) are both record highs for the district;
- The NEET number (96) and rate (1.6%) are both record lows for the District; this represents the first time that the NEET figure has been below 100 in the Activity Survey;
- There was a slight shift in the balance of destinations with the percentage going to a sixth form falling slightly (56% to 51%) whilst College (34.6% to 38.7%) and Apprenticeships (2.4% to 3.3%) both increased; and
- Five schools had zero NEET in the survey.

3.2.3 The NEET group is monitored monthly with the DfE particularly focussing on the average NEET rate across the November to January period. Bradford can consistently demonstrate falling NEET rates compared to historical data. In October we had 621 NEET young people – 3.6% of the cohort, which is 1.4 percentage points below October 2014.

In terms of the November to January average for 2014/15 we equalled last year's record low rate of 5.4% for Bradford; the England rate was 4.7% over this period.

3.2.4 At each of the six points that the DfE has published data on the proportion of young people meeting their duty to participate under RPA, Bradford's figures have been better than the England average.

The DfE publishes figures based on three points in the year – December, March and June – for the most recent Bradford was 1.7 percentage points above the national average, which placed the Authority at joint 41st out of 152 LAs.

3.2.5 Bradford has clearly made significant progress at engaging young people at different points in the academic year. Indeed the DfE's NEET Scorecard ranks Bradford in the top quintile for reengaging NEET young people. However it is clear from the funding discussion that from an organisational perspective there is now a financial imperative that young people make the right choices first time.

The 'Destination Measures' that DfE publish assess the degree to which a young person remains in their initial post-KS4 and post-KS5 destinations and thus they give an indication of how effectively young people are making their choices.



In the provisional data for 2013/14 Bradford had 89% sustained destinations compared to a national figure of 90% and 6% of our young people did not sustain an education destination compared to 5% nationally. The remainder were either classified as 'Destination not sustained/NEET' or 'Not captured'.

The Key Stage 5 data is based only on those young people completing a Level 3 qualification but is positive for Bradford with 64% of that cohort moving into a Higher Education (HE) destination compared to 58% nationally. DfE then segments the data further in to "Top Third HE", Russell Group and Oxford/Cambridge – for each of these Bradford is below the national figure, however 7% of national destinations are not sustained compared to only 5% for the Bradford cohort.

3.2.6 In addition to the national data, Prospects (the contract holder for Connexions in Bradford) undertook a survey of a sample of students currently in learning to assess learners' satisfaction with their course choices now that they are on programme. Only 9% of the students surveyed were not happy with their current course, whilst 88% said they were on what had been their first choice of course.

Six percent of those surveyed had started a different course prior to their current programme but there was a spread of reasons that did not indicate a particular trend that would require specific action. These reasons included the difficulty of the previous course, poor staff/student rapport, not liking the course and inability of the student to meet the criteria to remain on the course.

3.2.7 In each of these datasets, as would be expected, there are certain disadvantaged and vulnerable groups whose data is not as positive as that of the cohort as a whole. This is data that is also regularly monitored and reviewed and there have been clear successes. For example 6 of the 7 vulnerable groups monitored have better NEET rates than at the same month last year, with particular progress amongst Young Carers where this has fallen from 65% in October 2014 to 39%. As the NEET group as a whole contracts there must be a clear focus on these groups to ensure that their participation rates increase to close any participation gap compared to the rest of the cohort.

3.2.8 There are also Wards and other areas that form NEET hotspots. There was a pilot of geographically focussed intensive partnership activity in Keighley under the banner of 'NEET-free Keighley' which has seen the number of NEET young people reduce by more than half across the previous six months. Partners are looking at how now to build on and implement this approach in other NEET hotspot areas.

3.2.9 There is however a risk to the progress that has been made.

Bradford (as part of the Leeds City Region devolution deal) was in one of three areas nationally that delivered under the 'Devolved Youth Contract' approach which gave us significantly greater flexibility in terms of delivery and client group than the rigid national Youth Contract model. This was been a great success in Bradford and had a real impact on reducing NEET however the recruitment to this programme has now ended as the funding ceased this year.



Similarly concerning is the gap where European Social Fund (ESF) funding provided engagement provision for NEET young people due to delays with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) commissioning the next round of funding this provision. It is also understood that when this is commissioned it will fund fewer places than the previous ESF rounds.

3.3 PART THREE – Attainment rates at age 19

3.3.1 There is some relatively positive data in respect of post-16 outcomes at Level 3 as both A Level points per entry and per candidate have increased in the provisional 2015 results and the gap to national figures has decreased although it is still considerable, as is shown below:

	2014	2015
Bradford points per entry	201.5	202.6
England points per entry	215.6	215.4
Gap Bradford to England	-14.1	-12.8
Bradford points per candidate	735.0	739.4
England points per candidate	787.1	771.3
Gap Bradford to England	-52.1	-31.9

3.3.2 Provisional vocational performance data also improved at Level 3 and Bradford extended the gap over national figures, increasing from 218.0 to 225.8 while England increases from 216.6 to 219.3. It should be noted that vocational qualifications are undergoing significant reform post-16 so this may impact future performance in this area.

Clearly though this only applies to a section of the year group rather than its whole.

3.3.3 In terms of data that does relate to the whole cohort's performance across the 16-19 phase the government annually publishes Local Authority level information on attainment of Level 2 and Level 3 by age 19.

3.3.4 In a break with recent positive trends in this data both the Level 2 and Level 3 rates in 2014 showed a small decrease compared to 2013 and, for both these measures, the gap to the national rate has increased slightly as shown in the following table:

	2013	2014	Variance
Level 2			
<i>Bradford</i>	80.5%	80.3%	-0.2pp
<i>England</i>	86.2%	87.0%	+ 0.8pp
<i>Gap</i>	5.7pp	6.7pp	+ 1.0pp
Level 3			
<i>Bradford</i>	51.1%	50.6%	-0.5pp
<i>England</i>	59.1%	59.9%	+0.8pp
<i>Gap</i>	8.0pp	9.3pp	+1.3pp



As part of the release DfE also reports attainment of Level 2 with A*-C in English and Maths by age 19. The headline figure for Bradford shows a slight increase from 55% in 2013 to 56% in 2014, however the national figure increased from 64% to 65.8%, widening the gap from 9 percentage points to 9.8

3.3.4 Considering the data over the five year period 2009-14 indicates some progress however the speed of this in terms of closing the gap is a cause for concern. During this period there had been a steady decrease in the gap between Bradford and England at Level 2 however this year's outcomes have reduced the impact of this progress and the gap is now wider than in 2012.

3.3.5 Over the same five year period there has still not been significant progress made in terms of the difference in performance at Level 3 or of Level 2 including English and Maths, with these gaps essentially the same as in 2009 (both being 0.2 percentage points smaller).

3.3.6 The lack of progress in these measures for 2014 means Bradford has a low, and falling, ranking nationally:

- Level 2 at 19 – 142nd of 152 LAs nationally (134th in 2013)
- Level 2 with English and Maths at 19 – 146th of 152 LAs nationally (144th in 2013)
- Level 3 at 19 - 130th of 152 LAs nationally (125th in 2013)

4. Options

4.1 Bradford Review of Post-16

Bradford needs to consider its approach to sixth forms and the wider Further Education (FE) provision post-16 to ensure it meets the needs of our young people. The recent OFSTED inspection of school improvement arrangements clearly identified issues with the quality and value for money of the current pattern of post-16 provision in Bradford.

There is also a national programme of Area Based Reviews of FE, and Bradford is included in the West Yorkshire review that will report in March 2016. Bradford clearly needs to feed in to and influence this process so that any solutions proposed by the West Yorkshire review are considered appropriate by local partners.

There are also a number of factors that need to be considered for Bradford post-16:

- Quality of provision;
- Appropriateness of curriculum;
- Financial viability and value for money;
- School place planning;
- Use of data across the District; and
- Strategic Partnerships post-16

To address these factors and ensure the District is able to effectively inform and influence the national process, Bradford is undertaking a Review of post-16. The next phase of this will be a two day workshop in early December for key leaders across the District to



develop a set of principles and a roadmap for both a long-term strategy for post-16 in Bradford but also to optimise performance for those young people currently in the system.

The Aimhigher Research and Consultancy Network has been commissioned to support and facilitate this process and an interim report from the workshop will be available before the end of the calendar year.

4.2 Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) service re-tender

One of the critical factors for young people to succeed is the guidance they are given to ensure they are on the right course at the right level as soon as possible and excellent, impartial IAG that can signpost a young person to a range of pathways is essential.

Given that performance in the KS4 destination measures is close to that of the national cohort and at KS5 is better than nationally, and also the re-engagement of NEET is in the top quintile, the current arrangements have clearly had some success.

Currently 30 education providers and the Council jointly commission IAG to meet the needs of young people and our respective organisational statutory duties. This arrangement has generally been perceived by partners as being successful however we are in the final year of that contract and the Council is working to ensure that the new service when tendered is as comprehensive and effective as possible.

This must also be aligned with the Bradford Pathways programme to ensure that we give young people the best possible chance of progressing through the 16-19 phase into employment and Higher Education, and will also be considered within the post-16 review in Bradford.

5. Contribution to Corporate Priorities

5.1 Improving Educational Attainment: Understanding the implications of changes to funding will inform the planning of the curriculum offer and the delivery of high quality outcomes to all young people.

5.2 Support for the District's economy, jobs, skills and city centre regeneration: Higher skill levels among young people mean that more of them can access employment, contribute to the local economy, support themselves and their families and access Higher Education to achieve further qualifications and higher level jobs.

5.3 Supporting the most vulnerable adults, children and families and Reducing health inequalities

Monitoring the participation and progression of our most vulnerable groups will inform targeted interventions to achieve the best educational, health and care outcomes for young people facing serious and often multiple barriers to learning and independent living.



6. Recommendations

- (1) That the Committee receive a report on the Bradford Review of post-16 in January 2016.
- (2) That the partnership work taking place in relation to participation post-16 be commended and that the Committee receive a report on the development of arrangements for an Information Advice & Guidance (IAG) service to meet Council and partners' statutory duties.
- (3) That the Education, Employment and Skills Team work with partners to implement the good practice from the "NEET-free Keighley" approach in other geographical NEET hotspots.

7. Background Documents

[Funding Study Programmes for 16- to 19-year-olds](#)

[Raising the Participation Age \(RPA\) Regulations](#)

[Area Based Reviews of FE](#)

[NEET Scorecard](#)

[Bradford Pathways](#)

8. Not for Publication documents

None

9. Appendices

None

