

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

12 JULY 2005

CHILDREN & LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL
FINAL REPORT
INVESTIGATION INTO THE AUTHORITY'S PROGRESS INTO THE
14-19 AGENDA

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To present the findings of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel following its investigation into the 14-19 Agenda.

INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE SCENE

2. The Tomlinson Report '14-19 Opportunity and Excellence' presenting recommendations for 14-19 Reform was published in October 2004. The Government's reforms based on this report are set out in the '14-19 Education and Skills' document of February 2005.
3. The reforms aim to offer greater flexibility and choices for learners, emphasising that the choices that young people make between the ages of fourteen and nineteen are crucial.
4. The Government's 14-19 Agenda recognises the strengths of the current GCSE system, in giving young people the elements to provide for a start in the workplace, to gain a place in a College or University and to stay in

learning. Over half of 15 year olds gained 5 A*-C grades last year compared to 37% a decade ago.

5. However, the Report recognises that there are weaknesses in this system. Nearly half of young people do not receive five good GCSE passes and one in twenty leave school without a single GCSE pass.
6. Young people aged 14-19 for a variety of reasons either;
 - (a) Discontinue learning beyond the compulsory age;
 - (b) Are not properly equipped for work and unable to effectively communicate and calculate;
 - (c) Do not have the vocational qualifications to meet the learners and employers needs;
 - (d) Have too much assessment and sit too many external exams; and
 - (e) Find the system confusing and unclear and that some employers undervalue some qualifications.
7. It is also suggested that A Levels do not stretch the most capable of learners.
8. The 14-19 curriculum change is intended to help schools offer programmes that better meet learners' individual needs and strengths, while ensuring they acquire the core of general learning and experience essential to later learning and employment.
9. Middlesbrough LEA recognises the importance of the Government's 14-19 Agenda and the need to address its strategy for 14-19 provision. In addressing its strategy for 14-19 provision, Middlesbrough needs to respond positively to a range of social and economic issues, which could impact on the future life chances of the young people of the area.
10. The OFSTED Area Wide 16-19 inspection of Middlesbrough in 2001 highlighted "a local culture of low expectations and low attainment... particularly in Key Stage 4" and stressed that raising aspirations should be a significant part of local strategies to improve standards. In Middlesbrough Council Education Service schools, the percentage of 15 year old pupils in 2004 that achieve 5 or more GCSEs at grades A* - C or equivalent is 41%, 11.7% below the national average. The LEA target is 45%. The statistical neighbour average is 43%. However, it should be noted that the percentage is rising year on year.
11. Middlesbrough has one of the lowest rates of young people in further education in the country and there is a lack of pre-16 vocational training, amounting to a major skills gap.

12. The new 14-19 reforms are intended to benefit the local economy by creating better skilled, challenged and valued people. An aim is to stimulate investment in the area, because the workforce will be better skilled to deliver, creating a thriving environment that benefits Middlesbrough and its people.
13. The Authority has developed good partnerships, with local colleges and various other partners including the Learning and Skills Council and Connexions. Middlesbrough Learning Partnership has developed and adopted '14-19 Learning Strategy', which is currently being implemented.
14. Current 14-19 providers in Middlesbrough are: -
 - a) Middlesbrough College;
 - b) St Mary's Sixth Form College;
 - c) Cleveland College of Art and Design;
 - d) MacMillan College;
 - e) King's Academy; and
 - f) A number of Work Based Learning Providers, such as James Cook.

OVERALL AIM OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

15. The overall aim of the Scrutiny review is to consider the strategic direction and vision of the Authority's 14-19 Agenda.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

16. The questions which form the Terms of Reference for the review are as follows:-
 - (a) What are the main objectives and vision of the Government's 14-19 Agenda?
 - (b) What are the implications for change in the 14-19 education provision in Middlesbrough?
 - (c) What are the barriers to the 14-19 Middlesbrough population in relation to:-
 - (i) Staying in education?
 - (ii) Moving onto Further and Higher Education?
 - (iii) Better achievement/outcomes?
 - (d) How are the Local Education Authority and the Learning and Skills Council working with key partners to deliver the Government's 14-19 Agenda within Middlesbrough?
 - (e) What good practice exists in nearby Local Authorities in relation to the provision of the Government's 14-19 Agenda?

MEMBERS OF THE PANEL

17. The membership of the Panel was as detailed below:-

Councillors L Wilson (Chair), Mrs H Pearson OBE (Vice Chair), M Booth, M Carr, D Davison, J McPartland, C Rooney and B Taylor.

Co-opted Members: Father G Holland, N James, K Massey, and M White.

METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

18. Members of the Panel met formally between 1 February 2005 and 7 June 2005 to discuss and receive evidence relating to this investigation and a detailed record of the topics discussed at those meetings is available from the Committee Management Systems (COMMIS), accessible via the Council's website.
19. A brief summary of the methods of investigation is outlined below:-
- (a) Detailed Officer reports supplemented by verbal evidence;
 - (b) Evidence received from the Learning and Skills Council;
 - (c) Evidence received from representatives from the 14-19 Education team;
 - (d) The views of Headteachers from local schools and colleges;
 - (e) Examination of good practice with Durham Local Education Authority in relation to their service provision;
 - (f) Evidence received from representatives from Connexions;
 - (g) Evidence received from representatives from Tees Valley Work Based Learning Network;
15. The Panel also obtained a variety of guidance documents to assist in the Scrutiny Process.
- (a) DfES publication entitled '14-19 Opportunity and Excellence';
 - (b) February 2002 Green Paper entitled '14-19: Extending Opportunities, Raising Standards';
 - (c) February 2005 White Paper entitled '14-19 Education and Skills'.
 - (d) DfES 'Every Child Matters' publications;
 - (i) Every Child Matters: Change for Children; and

- (ii) Every Child Matters: Green Paper;
- (e) Middlesbrough Learning Partnership's Strategies:-
 - (i) Middlesbrough Learning Partnership's 14-19 Learning Strategy for 2004;
 - (ii) 14-19 Action Plan for 2004; and
 - (iii) 14-19 Area Framework for Inspection;
- (f) OFSTED Inspection framework for the 14-19 Agenda.

THE FOLLOWING SECTION ANSWERS EACH OF THE QUESTIONS CONTAINED WITHIN THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Q.1 WHAT ARE THE MAIN OBJECTIVES AND VISION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S 14-19 AGENDA?

17. The Working Group on 14-19 Reform, which was chaired by Sir Mike Tomlinson, reported their findings to the Government in October 2004. The Government responded to this report in its White Paper entitled '14-19 Education and Skills', which was produced in February 2005.
18. The aim of the Government is to transform secondary and post-secondary education so that all young people achieve and continue in learning until at least the age of 18. This will require a radical reform of the system of 14-19 education.
19. The White Paper, as anticipated, announced that GCSEs and A Levels would remain, supplemented by vocational courses offering more relevant work-related courses, resulting in diplomas for 'personalised learning'.
20. The aim of the 14-19 Agenda is that Level 2 (5 A*-C at GCSE) should not be the end of a young person's education, but the starting point for lifelong learning. An individual learning plan consisting of academic and vocational education is a requirement for all young people.
21. An education system that is focused on high standards and more tailored to ensure that the talents and aspirations of young people are catered for is proposed. This is intended to create greater flexibility in the ways young people can study and when and where they can gain qualifications. The Government's proposals are:-
 - a) To tackle low post-16 participation by increasing it from 75% to 90% over the next 10 years;
 - b) To ensure that every young person has a sound grounding in the basic skills of maths and English. This is at the heart of the 14-19 phase as these qualifications are essential for learning in other subjects and also essential for future employment prospects;

- c) To provide better vocational routes, which equip young people with the knowledge and skills they need for further learning and future employment. By introducing greater choice of what and where to study, making it easier to combine academic and vocational learning;
- d) To retain GCSEs and A Levels as the cornerstones of the new system. By working with employers and universities, identify how to add value to existing courses to challenge A Level learners further;
- e) To stretch the ability of young people; and
- f) To re-engage the disaffected, by breaking down the barriers to achievement. To achieve this the Government published a green paper entitled Every Child Matters in 2003.
- g) The Government's aim in this report is for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, to have the support they need to:
 - Be healthy ;
 - Stay safe;
 - Enjoy and achieve through learning;
 - Make a positive contribution to society; and
 - Achieve economic well being.
- h) To do this every organisation involved with providing services to children - from hospitals and schools, to police and voluntary groups - will be teaming up in new ways, sharing information and working together, to protect children and young people from harm and help them achieve what they want in life. Children and young people will have far more say about issues that affect them as individuals and collectively.
- i) Every local authority will be working with its partners, through children's trusts, to find out what works best for children and young people in its area and act on it. They will need to involve children and young people in this process, and when inspectors assess how local areas are doing, they will listen especially to the views of children and young people themselves.

Q.2 WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR CHANGE IN THE 14-19 EDUCATION PROVISION IN MIDDLESBROUGH?

22. Middlesbrough is one of the most deprived areas in the country. In some neighbourhoods, unemployment is as much as five times higher than the national average. The town contains some very deprived areas on all measures of multiple deprivation, with high unemployment and high free school meal percentages across the town.

23. The economy of Middlesbrough has undergone substantial changes over the last 40 years, with the decline of the area's heavy industry and the growth of the service sector. Whilst employment in the service sector has grown, there are low rates of new business formation and survival, when compared with the national averages and this limits the ability of the regional economy to rejuvenate through not creating enough opportunities to exploit the skills and knowledge of its indigenous workforce.
24. In the 14-19 age range, there is below average academic performance compared to other regions. The achievement of 14-19 year olds in Middlesbrough, as measured by examination and test performance, staying on and progression rates compares adversely to national averages, despite year on year improvement. The 2001 OFSTED area wide 16 – 19 inspection identified a culture of low aspirations of both the young people and of their parents that need to be addressed.
25. Educational achievement in the adult population of the town is also lower than regional and national levels; for example, 21.6% of the working age population in Middlesbrough have no qualifications, compared to 18.4% in the North East and 15.6% nationally. This low attainment level is again reflected in the number of learners achieving 5 Grade A* - C at GCSE level, which at 40.8%, is well below the national average.
26. According to Connexions Tees Valley the number of 16 year-olds in Middlesbrough continuing their education and training is increasing. In 2003 this figure was 74.1%, up from 70.2% in 2000. The figure for 17 year-olds at 78.1% is close to national rates. The provision of the Education Maintenance Allowance has had a positive impact on this figure, by offering financial support to young people wishing to continue their education and training.
27. The Tees Valley Learning and Skills Council has £130m budget to spend in Middlesbrough on supporting education and training.
28. The Panel was advised that the involvement of employers providing work-based learning is insufficient.
29. The Panel heard that the tracking of young people and their 'value added' achievement needed to be improved.
30. Many opportunities on how the 14-19 Education provision may be developed in Middlesbrough were presented, these being:-
 - (a) The plan for the four existing colleges in Middlesbrough moving to Middlehaven to form one new college;
 - (b) The Building Schools for the Future programme, which might lead to a number of new secondary schools being provided in the town;
 - (c) The proposed new development for Cleveland College of Art and Design;

- (d) The new Children, Families and Learning Service area of Middlesbrough council; and
- (e) The future merging of St Mary's Sixth Form College with the town's two Catholic Secondary Schools, to form one large 11-18 Catholic School.

31. The issues that need to be addressed in this Authority at Post 16 are:-

- i) Insufficient employer involvement;
- ii) Slow implementation of Middlesbrough's 16-19 Area Wide Action Plan (AWAP);
- iii) Identifying and addressing gaps in the curriculum provision;
- iv) Variation in achievement levels;
- v) Poor quality of teaching in some areas; and
- vi) An unsatisfactory level of tracking of young people.

Q.3. WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO THE 14-19 MIDDLESBROUGH POPULATION IN RELATION TO STAYING ON, MOVING ONTO FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION AND BETTER ACHIEVEMENT / OUTCOMES?

32. To gain the views of local schools and colleges in Middlesbrough the Panel visited four education establishments. These were Ormesby School, MacMillan College, Middlesbrough College and St Mary's College.

33. Barriers identified at these visits were:-

- a) Lack of educational support and guidance from home. In order to try and counter this the Panel heard that there was a strong mentoring system established in some schools providing informal advice and guidance on aspects of a student school life, behaviour, aptitude, etc;
- b) A National trend, which is reflected locally, is that there are economic problems to staying on in education but that the Education Maintenance Allowance was slowly removing this barrier. The Panel also heard that due to economics more learners were choosing to attend their local universities, which was good for the region.
- c) That some learners were working part-time to help with family finances. This affected how many subjects a student studied and some learners studied fewer A Levels.
- d) That some learners choose the wrong course but do not seek advice on ways on how this can be rectified and subsequently leave the course.
- e) Some establishments felt that there was a cultural problem in relation to staying in education and that the parents of some young people who have had a poor education themselves do not see the benefit in their child gaining qualifications. One college was trying to redress this

problem by offering educational opportunities for parents including free basic literacy and numeracy courses for adult learners.

- f) Despite all these difficulties, all colleges had learners who had successfully applied for Oxford and Cambridge. Also Middlesbrough College had four learners who were successful in receiving sports scholarships to Universities in the USA.
34. Some schools had been offering vocational courses for the last five years, but others felt that a purely academic approach was best due to not wanting to duplicate the efforts of other establishments.
 35. Also, in the case of St Mary's Sixth Form College the governing body of the college wished that it maintained its academic focus and does not further diversify into vocational education.
 36. Ormesby School has a very successful and close partnership with Middlesbrough College in delivering GNVQ courses to their learners. It was felt that this was working very effectively and that the learners involved had gained confidence in their abilities and future prospects.
 37. Another view was that multi-college based courses did not work, citing logistics, costs of travel, loss of control and different college working hours as being the main problems.
 38. Some establishments informed the Panel that they relied heavily on Connexions for student information about what happened to their learners once they had left the school or college.
 39. Members heard from Ormesby School that they are working very hard to deliver a vocational curriculum and some teachers were writing the units for BTEC courses run by Middlesbrough College.
 40. Middlesbrough College is the only fully inclusive post-16 college in Middlesbrough, offering a whole variety of courses from basic education to foundation degrees.
 41. Members heard that it is crucial that young people value work and money and that employment should be a core part of the 14-19 Agenda.
 42. MacMillan College informed the Panel that their learners are offered work experience opportunities in conjunction with Learn2Work, but felt that their learners lacked connections that some more affluent learners may get from less deprived backgrounds.

Opportunities

43. A number of ways in which the 14-19 Education provision can be changed in Middlesbrough were presented to the Panel:-

- (a) Continued Partnership working to ensure, for example, that Partners such as Connexions work with target groups.
- (b) Increased participation of schools, colleges and training providers to ensure that no young person becomes disaffected.
- (c) Improving standards, quality and achievement in all areas.
- (d) A varied range of curriculum choice for both pre and post 16 years of age, ensuring flexibility of the opportunities on offer.
- (e) The development of Centres of Excellence.
- (f) The development of good pastoral support.
- (g) To act on the Ofsted Inspection report of the 14-19 provision which will identify areas for further improvement

Q.4. THE KEY PARTNERS IN DELIVERING THE 14-19 AGENDA WITHIN MIDDLESBROUGH?

- 44. The Panel was informed that the key partners involved with the local authority in delivering the 14-19 Agenda are the Learning and Skills Council and Connexions as well as the local schools and colleges.
- 45. A partnership between the Authority and these agencies exists and this partnership agreed what strategies are to be adopted in delivering the 14-19 agenda.

Learning and Skills Council (LSC)

- 46. The Learning and Skills Council has 47 local offices and Tees Valley is one of them, covering the five areas in the Tees Valley.
- 47. The LSC does not provide services itself, but works through various local schools, colleges and organisations.
- 48. The LSC fund all of the colleges and work based providers and also work with all secondary schools and City Academies and all work-based learning providers in the Tees Valley.
- 49. In 2001 the Government announced the Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVES) initiative, a national network of specialist Centres that would facilitate close links between colleges, business partners and other employment interests. CoVES provide a resource to enable colleges to be more flexible and responsive, and sharply focused on meeting the skills needs of employers at local and sectoral levels. The Centres build on existing excellence and provide leadership in the development of future excellence, a good example of

this being the opportunities provided to hospitality learners at Middlesbrough College.

50. The LSC recognised that there are logistical problems that need to be addressed so learners can move between colleges to obtain the courses they required. In order to do this, educational institutions have to cease being self-contained and open up to allow access to learners on a more flexible basis. This is an essential element of the development of personalised learning and currently there are over 1,000 learners in Years 10 and 11 who spend one day per week out of school undertaking vocational courses.

Connexions Tees Valley

51. The Panel was advised of the work undertaken by Connexions Tees Valley in relation to the 14-19 Agenda. This work follows on from The Social Exclusion Unit report 'Bridging the Gap: New Opportunities for 16-18 year olds not in Education, Training or Employment' of July 1999. This report raised concerns around the effectiveness of the transition of those with special educational needs from school to other post-16 provision.
52. Connexions Tees Valley was set up in September of 2003 and is owned equally by the five local authorities. Each local authority has its own Local Management Committee.
53. It is governed by a multi-agency Tees Valley Board, with representatives from key partners such as Local Authorities, Local Management Committees, the business community, police, health, probation and the Learning Skills Council.
54. The core objectives of Connexions are to reduce the number of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and to reduce the number of 16-18 year olds who are not known to the service.
55. The current NEET figure in the Tees Valley (November 2004) is 2366 (10.9%), and the Middlesbrough NEET figure is 636 (14.6%).
56. Also, the current figure for 16-18 year old young people who are not known to the service in Tees Valley (February 2005) is 2944 (11.7%), of which 686 (12.9%) are from Middlesbrough.
57. Connexions is a universal service for all 13-19 year old young people, working with 14,500 young people across Middlesbrough from a number of different environments.
58. To deliver the service Connexions consists of:-
 - a) 22 Personal Advisors.
 - b) A One-Stop Shop deals with 800+ young people per month and consists of 6 Personal Advisors. This service is also used by partner agencies including City Centre Training and the Youth Offending Service, etc.

- c) Connexions staff in schools and colleges deal directly with young people. A team of Personal Advisors in 9 schools, 3 colleges.
 - d) Current strategic issues include the 2005 Ofsted 14-19 Inspection, preparing the relevant post Ofsted Action Plan, the government response to the Tomlinson Review and the forthcoming Youth Green Paper, which was a follow-up to the 'Every Child Matters' programme.
59. Connexions also help vulnerable young people in achieving better outcomes. Connexions targets for these are:-
- a) For 60% of young people aged 16 to achieve the equivalent of 5 GCSE's at grade A* - C.
 - b) Improve school attendance levels by 2008, by reducing truancy by 8% compared to 2003.
 - c) Increase the number of 16-17 year olds participating in education and work based learning.
 - d) To reduce the under 18 conception rate by 50% by 2010.
 - e) For 60% of 16-19 year old mothers to be in education, employment or training by 2010.
 - f) To reduce the harm caused by drugs and alcohol, by substantially increasing the number of drug misusing offenders entering treatment through the criminal justice system.
60. The Connexions organisation is entering a period of change and is awaiting the outcome of the forthcoming Youth Green Paper.

Tees Valley – Work Based Providers/NACRO

- 61. Members were advised that NACRO specialise in working with disaffected youngsters. They aim to reduce crime by working with local and national organisations and Tees Valley partners such as Future Steps, Manpower, Learning Skills Council, etc, to target the 16+ Sector.
- 62. NACRO also work with the Middlesbrough Lifelong Learning Partnership to bring together all the Middlesbrough providers.
- 63. They help young people address such issues as alcohol and other substance abuse. It was stressed that alcohol is beginning to be seen as a greater problem with young people than drugs.
- 64. NACRO help to deliver Work Based Learning and this is based on the Every Child Matters programme and the Learning Entitlement. This involves

working closely with the Local Education Authority and being formally involved with the 14-19 Agenda.

65. Work Based Learning is a genuine choice for young people, called 'Entry to Employment' (E2E). It is a major programme to target young people at Level 2, but not yet ready for an apprenticeship, especially those not attending school on a regular basis.
66. Members were informed that Middlesbrough Council is also to be a Work Place Learning provider, with HBS.
67. The panel was advised that a Final Report was due to be published in June 2005. This is to include a mapping exercise for all schools to be able to develop an appropriate curriculum within their schools and to cater for all levels of abilities and talents.

Q.5. WHAT GOOD PRACTICE EXISTS IN NEARBY LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN RELATION TO THE PROVISION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S 14-19 AGENDA?

DURHAM LEA

68. During 2002 the Government selected 39 Local Authorities to become '14-19 pathfinders', with three of those being based within the North East (Gateshead, Durham and Stockton-on-Tees). The main objectives of the pathfinders are to:-
 - (a) Test out a range of ideas and discover new ones;
 - (b) Develop best practice in 14-19 education and training to guide the steps to and pace of a stage national rollout;
 - (c) See how 14-19 policy will fit with other policies, identify barriers to a coherent 14-19 phase and design ways to overcome; and
 - (d) Show that a coherent 14-19 phase can be achieved nationally in a variety of locations with different social circumstances and different mixes of schools and colleges.
69. The Panel visited Deerness Valley School in Durham, one of the Government selected '14-19 pathfinders', to compare their progress and share their experiences and good practice in their delivery of the 14-19 Agenda.
70. Members heard that Deerness Valley School had been awarded Special College Status for Business. The school entered into a partnership with a local building contractor, The Esh Group, who are made up of twelve smaller companies.

71. Supported by Connexions, this partnership provides 20 jobs (Modern Apprenticeships) in the construction industry, gaining experience in fields such as business support, CAD engineering, accounts, quantity surveying, etc.
72. Members learnt that at phase one, 100 carefully selected learners went to The Esh Group on a one-week work placement. learners could then apply for the next week's intensive training course (phase two) of which only 50 places were available. In the final phase 30 learners were involved in real-work type atmosphere and given tasks to complete. From this phase 20 modern apprenticeship places were given to the most potential of learners, of which these learners have to achieve 5 A* - C grade. This proved to be a huge incentive to learners.
73. Some teachers felt that the system was disruptive to the school timetable but it was felt that the benefits of this outweighed the disadvantages. In addition the school had noticed a significant improvement in attendance and truancy figures and schoolwork had increased as learners began to realise that there are opportunities available to them.
74. For learners who missed schools lessons whilst on the work placements, a website (www.fit4employment.co.uk) was developed. This enabled learners to catch up on work that they had missed. After school lessons were also organised for this purpose. Both of these were used successfully by the learners.
75. Problems arose initially when teachers were reluctant to accommodate learners who had gone on placements, but as most learners returned more dedicated, staff gained more confidence in the programme and it is now actively supported. This proved to be a massive development for teachers as well as learners.
76. This programme was opened up to learners of Durham Trinity School, a Special Needs School on the provision that the learners achieve the GNVQ Level 2 requirement.
77. The school is also offering a Young Apprenticeship in Business and Administration from September 2005, in addition to a GCSE in Construction and an NVQ in Hospitality and Training. Connexions are running a similar scheme in Stockton and this has resulted in 5 learners obtaining employment.
78. The current scheme 'Aspire' is linked to the construction industry. The school is looking at expanding this to other areas, once funding is sourced, with potential new areas being health and social care and tourism.
79. The scheme has proved to be very successful and many learners have obtained employment. It also benefited the learners who decided the scheme was not for them by realising that they actually wanted to further their education. This improved the GCSE results of the school.

80. In addition to the scheme the school delivered a wide range of vocational courses, including Health and Social Care, Business Studies, Performing Arts, Hospitality and Catering, Leisure and Tourism, Construction, etc. The school is also linked to New College Durham to deliver courses in Hairdressing, Motor Vehicle Maintenance and Bricklaying.
81. As part of the Durham LEA pathfinder bid the school is developing a CD of Life Skills, including CV and video shots of learners. Each student could then use his or her CD to gain employment.

CONSIDERATION OF THE OFSTED REPORT

82. The Children & Learning Scrutiny Panel delayed the publication of its Final Report so it may consider the contents of the Ofsted Inspection Report into the 14 to 19 service. The Inspection Report was published on 6 June 2005 and the Panel considered the Inspection Report on 7 June 2005.
83. The Panel noted that the Inspection Report fundamentally judged the 14-19 service as satisfactory. Members learnt that the Middlesbrough Learning Partnership 14 to 19 Learning Strategy 2004 has been successful in acting as a catalyst for productive partnership working and that structures are in place which promote useful collaboration. The Panel was also pleased to learn that in the view of Ofsted, the LEA and Connexions provide strong and effective leadership. Further to that, the LEA has a well thought out strategy for school improvement and good use is made of data in reviewing quality of provision.
84. The Panel heard, however, that the Inspection Report also contained significant criticisms of aspects of the 14-19 service. Specifically, it felt that there is insufficient prominence given in the Middlesbrough Learning Partnership 14 to 19 Learning Strategy 2004 to raising achievement and increasing participation. There is a limited range of apprenticeships available. The Panel heard that there are around 40 kinds of apprenticeships on offer nationwide yet only three or four were offered in Middlesbrough. The OFSTED Area inspection report specifically referenced two strategic recommendations and these are replicated below
 - Ensuring that rising achievement and increasing participation figure prominently in the 14-19 learning strategy and other relevant plans; and
 - Developing a coherent strategy for 14-19 education and training in Middlesbrough which meets the needs of all learners based on an analysis of curriculum provision and learners' and employers' needs

85. There is too little provision at entry level and level 1 for learners and insufficient high quality provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities outside special schools. The Panel also noted with concern that whilst there are some good achievements at Key Stage 4 and post-16, too many learners are not making progress expected of them.

CONCLUSIONS

The Panel had intended to complete this investigation and submit its findings to an earlier meeting of the Board. However, the Panel considered it was essential that it received information regarding the findings from the recently undertaken OFSTED inspection. Consequently, awaiting this report has unavoidably delayed the Panels submission to the Board.

The Panels main conclusions are presented below:-

86. That due to a history of poor educational attainment in Middlesbrough the 14-19 Agenda is vital to the young people of Middlesbrough and its future and therefore the LEA needs to work with its partners on a number of issues.
87. That there is a requirement to review and evaluate the current roles of key parties including the LEA, Learning Skills Council, Connexions, educational institutions, employers and work-based providers.
88. That the profile of vocational learning needs to be raised to strengthen the understanding of the education, training and benefits of the 14-19 Agenda.
89. That the Authority's current policies and initiatives need to be re-evaluated for effectiveness.
90. To further develop providers, they receive additional training and support to deliver a 14-19 Curriculum and that this change needs to be fully supported by the Authority.
91. That a personal learning development plan is needed for all learners to track and develop progression and immediately identify when problems may arise. Tracking of learners is currently undertaken by Connexions, with the information being available to schools when requested. However, some schools experience difficulties in accessing this information.
92. That greater collaboration between pre and post 16 educational institutions is needed, to ensure that the potential routes remain open for the duration of the student's education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel has taken evidence from a wide range of sources to assist in this review. The Panel identified that the Service Area is already contributing greatly to the 14-19 Agenda and that this curriculum change would

benefit Middlesbrough and its young people. The Panel recommends to the Executive the following:-

- a) Because of the importance of the 14-19 Agenda to the town the LEA should develop a local vision for it. This is to include the development of collaboration between agencies, educational institutions, employers and other associated parties which will address the local barriers to further education. Such a vision should ensure that raising achievement and increasing participation figure prominently as priorities on Middlesbrough's 14 to 19 Learning Strategy Action Plan.
- b) The LEA should review and evaluate the current roles of key partners including the LEA, Learning Skills Council, Connexions, educational institutions, employers and work-based providers, to deliver the Government's 14-19 Education and Skills Strategy. This review should address the support available for young people at risk of disengaging from mainstream education and ensure that this is a key priority for all agencies.
- c) With the involvement of the schools and colleges a regional marketing plan should be developed that will raise the profile of vocational learning and strengthen the understanding of education, training and benefits of the 14-19 Agenda.
- d) The local implications of the Tomlinson Reforms need to be assessed. Once identified the implications may require further development of the 14-19 Agenda in Middlesbrough.
- e) To identify the training needs of providers, which will enable them to deliver the 14-19 curriculum and when identified to develop a plan that will effectively deliver the required training.
- f) To ensure that all learners have a personal learning development plan and that schools, colleges and work-based providers have access to this, to track and develop learners progress and immediately identify when problems arise. Also to ensure that this plan takes into account the needs of each student, their level of ability and the working environment.
- g) To undertake a review of the curriculum available across all providers (pre and post 16) and create a greater collaboration between pre and post 16 educational institutions ensuring potential routes remain open for the duration of the student's education.
- h) That the LEA and partners broaden the range of apprenticeships on offer for learners and increase the number available at an advanced level.
- i) That the LEA and partners review the learning difficulties and/or disabilities service provision for learners post 16 and implement plans which offer a good quality provision across Middlesbrough.

- j) The LEA should work with schools to ensure that learners achieve at least the standards expected of them at Key Stage 4 and that performance is close to the national average.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

93. The Panel is grateful to all those who have presented evidence during the course of our investigation. We would like to place on record our appreciation, in particular of the willingness and co-operation we have received from the below names:-

Rosemary Morris, Andy White, Kate Brown, Kevin Buckle – Middlesbrough Council's Education Services

Pam Eccles and Nick James – Learning and Skills Council

Peter Robinson – Durham County Council

Ken Fraser - MacMillan College

Colin Algie - Ormesby School

Don Lillistone – St Mary's College

John Hogg – Middlesbrough College

John Keelty, Hazel Clark – Connexions

Brian Rowcroft – Tees Valley Work Based Learning

94. As Chair, I would also like to personally thank the Scrutiny Officer for her help and support with the Panel's work on this Scrutiny topic.

COUNCILLOR LINDA WILSON

CHAIR OF THE CHILDREN AND LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

30th JUNE 2005

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- (a) Remit and Work Programme – Investigation into the Authority’s Progress into the 14-19 Agenda – Report of the Scrutiny Officer to the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel of 1 February 2005.
- (b) Setting the Scene/Overview of 14-19 Agenda - Presentation of the Head of Education Standards, Education to the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel of 1 February 2005.
- (c) The 14-19 Agenda at a Local Level - Presentation of Executive Director, Learning and Skills Council (Tees Valley) to the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel of 1 February 2005.
- (d) Issues at 14-19 Agenda for Middlesbrough – Report of the Head of Education Standards, Education to the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel of 17 March 2005.
- (e) 14-19 Agenda – Report of the Director of Services to Young People, Connexions Tees Valley to the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel of 11 April 2005.
- (f) Fit for Employment – Report of the 14-19 Pathfinder Co-ordinator, Durham Local Education Authority of 7 April 2005.
- (g) Minutes of the Meetings of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel held 1 February 2005, 17 March 2005 and 11 April 2005.

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