

RAISING EXPECTATIONS: ENABLING THE SYSTEM TO DELIVER

PROPOSAL FROM DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

1. Proposed Grouping

- a. It is proposed that the County Council becomes a sub-regional group in its own right.

2. Rationale for Grouping

- a. County Durham has the largest population of any local authority in the north east (c500,000), and is the second largest authority in the region in terms of area. Its geography is diverse, extending from isolated rural settlements in the Durham Dales and Pennines to the former coal mining settlements of central Durham and the north east coast. From 1 April 2009 it will become one of the largest unitary councils in England.
- b. Within County Durham there are 4 Further Education Colleges, 36 secondary schools (15 of which have 6th forms), 8 special schools (4 of which cater for students 16-18), 3 independent secondary schools with 6th forms, 12 providers of work-based learning and 9 providers of Entry to Employment.
- c. Commissioning arrangements for the future provision of 14-19 education and training should reflect travel to learn patterns (see below for detail). Within the north east these flows are complex but do provide a sound rationale for a County Durham approach to strategic planning and commissioning of 14-19 education and training.
- d. The County borders on to the two major city regions of the north east ie Tyne and Wear and Tees Valley. The individual local authorities in these two city regions wish to develop their own sub-regional groupings. There are substantial travel to learn flows between both of these urban areas and County Durham. This movement involves many learners travelling in to the County, as well as out of the County, for their education and training. However, the physical geography and pattern of settlement of the area means that there is very little travel to learn between County Durham and neighbouring authorities not in the two city regions (ie Cumbria and North Yorkshire). Commissioning will be most effective when sub-groups relate

closely to travel to learn patterns and alignment with one or other of the two sub-regions (ie Tyne and Wear and Tees Valley) would not adequately reflect these. Thus, it is proposed that Durham County Council forms its own sub-region. The scale of the County, the travel to learn patterns referred to above and detailed below, make this a sound proposal.

3. Travel to Learn Patterns

- a. In 2006/7 there were 7,183 16-18 year olds resident in County Durham participating in FE colleges, 3,557 participating in School Sixth Forms, 2,188 participating in work-based learning (average in learning) and 750 young people commencing Entry to Employment.
- b. In 2006/7, travel to learn data (which is based on 'instances of learning') indicates that approximately 25% (1842) of County Durham FE learners accessed provision in other local authority areas in the NE Region. Almost 46% (847) of that number travelled to Darlington in the Tees Valley, 15% (274) to Sunderland in Tyne and Wear, 13% (234) to Newcastle (Tyne and Wear), 10% (187) to Hartlepool (Tees Valley), and 7% (120) to Gateshead (Tyne and Wear).
- c. The percentage of 16-18 year olds learning in FE colleges in County Durham in 2006/7 from outside the LA area accounts for 12% (734) of the cohort. Of those, the largest percentage travelled from Sunderland (Tyne and Wear) at 30% (218), 11% (78) from Gateshead (Tyne and Wear), 10% (71) from Hartlepool (Tees Valley), 8% (60) from Stockton (Tees Valley) and 7% (55) from Darlington (Tees Valley).
- d. In 2006/7, only 6% (218) of the total 16-18 year old County Durham residents participating in School Sixth Form provision did so outside the LA area. Of those, 42% (92) travelled to Gateshead (Tyne and Wear) and 26% (57) travelled to Sunderland (Tyne and Wear).
- e. The percentage of 16-18 year olds learning in School Sixth Forms in County Durham in 2006/7 from outside the LA area accounts for 11% of the total (390 out of 3,588 instances of learning).
- f. In 2006/7 approximately 70% of 16-18 year olds resident in County Durham participating in work based learning did so in the County. The remaining young people participated in provision delivered in Gateshead (Tyne and Wear), Darlington (Tees Valley), Sunderland (Tyne and Wear), Newcastle (Tyne and Wear) and Hartlepool (Tees Valley).

4. Delivery of the new curriculum offer

- a. County Durham is a coherent sub-region within which to plan and commission 14-19 learning provision, with over three quarters of young people aged 16-18 living and learning in the County.
- b. County Durham has a well established 14-19 Partnership, led by the County Council, which operates within the context of the County's Children's Trust arrangements. The partnership is responsible for ensuring the delivery of the new curriculum offer, including planning for the delivery of Diplomas, Foundation Learning Tier, Functional Skills, Apprenticeships, and new A levels. The Partnership has developed successful bids through Diploma Gateway 1 and 2 and is confident that further progress will be made through Gateway 3. Successful Diploma delivery is being supported through a county wide approach to common timetabling and through the development of quality assurance protocols between delivery partners.
- c. The 14-19 Partnership is working to underpin the new curriculum offer and prepare for the Raising of the Compulsory Participation Age by the implementation of the County's IAG Strategy, Increasing Participation Action Plan, Employer Engagement Strategy, and through implementation of the September Guarantee. The Building Schools for the Future programme, aligned with LSC capital investment, will transform the County's education and training infrastructure.
- d. The County has an on-line prospectus in place and work is currently underway to build upon this through the development of a common application process and electronic Individual Learning Plan for all young people in the county.

5. Work with Neighbouring Authorities

- a. County Durham has a track record of working with Local Authorities in Tees Valley and Tyne and Wear through the city region partnerships and other fora. Given the movement of young people in and out of the County to learn it will be important to strengthen these existing relationships. The establishment of sub-regional groupings focusing on 14-19 commissioning within Tees Valley and Tyne and Wear, together with the Regional Planning Forum, will provide the mechanism to do this.

- b. Discussions take place with the sub regional groupings of Tees Valley and Tyne and Wear or their nominated lead authority at all stages in the planning process. All authorities in the region have worked together, and with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and One North East, to establish the Regional Planning Forum which is already active in taking forward the Machinery of Government changes, and in developing mechanisms to ensure coherence in sub-regional commissioning plans through over-arching work at the regional level.

6. Compatibility with Other Local and Regional Priorities, Plans and Proposals

- a. The proposals for 14-19 commissioning in the County will align well to other local and regional priorities and plans. County Durham is working increasingly closely with its neighbouring authorities to respond to the regional and sub-regional challenges of economic development and regeneration and to tackle the associated skills agenda. The County Council has engaged with the development of multi-area agreements in the two neighbouring city regions and contributes to the achievement of targets in these multi-area agreements, such as those relating to training and skills and the reduction of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).
- b. As a single authority sub-region there would be complete compatibility and alignment with other County wide plans and strategies, notably the County Economic Strategy, the 14-19 commissioning plan and the over-arching Children and Young People's Plan together with the latter's associated locally led activity eg implementing the County NEETs strategy.

7. Commissioning Model to be Adopted

- a. The County Council wants to ensure that the local and regional priorities for education and training are closely aligned to the economic and employment needs of the County and of the region, and that commissioning also takes place within a framework of democratic accountability. For these reasons it is the County Council's current intention to adopt "Model B" as its commissioning model from September 2009. The Council, has, however, noted that for this to be effectively managed and implemented there will need to be an appropriate provision of resources, via transfer from the LSC or otherwise. The County Council looks forward to LSC resource in the first instance being closely aligned to those of the County Council to enable the preparations for this transfer of responsibility to take place. It

would expect there to be a more formal provision of resource from the LSC or elsewhere soon after.

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25 September 2008