

**Select Committee on Children's Services – 19 June 2008**

**Report of the Director of Children's Services**

**14 - 19 Update**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To update the Committee on the work that is taking place for children and young people aged 14-19.
2. Briefing on the 14-19 Phase of Education  
Education in the 14-19 phase is of crucial importance as the achievements of young people at this stage have a major influence on their future lives and capacity to enjoy economic well being. In addition to this, government reforms in this area, such as the introduction of specialised diplomas and the raising of the education leaving age to 18, are increasing the focus on the 14-19 agenda. Therefore the purpose of this report is to brief elected members in Dudley about the borough's progress in 14-19 developments.
3. Standards and Achievement  
Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 have continued to improve between 2005 and 2007 for both 5A\*-C (52.7% to 56.9%) and 5A\*-C including English and Maths (40.8% to 43.6%). These results are broadly in line but slightly below the national average. When compared with our geographical neighbours across the West Midlands GCSE 5A\*-C is ranked 4th, GCSE 5A\*-C including English and Maths is second, and our average points score is ranked third. Post-16 progress in GCE/A/AS level is good in terms of both average point scores and average point scores per entry and puts Dudley in the top quartile of areas nationally.
4. Participation and attainment in work based learning has also risen above the national average. Achievements in both apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships have improved significantly in 2006/07. The overall success rate increased from 51% in 2005/06 to 64% in 2006/07. During this period apprenticeships increased by 13% to 67% and advanced apprenticeship increased by 5% to 60%.

5. Take up of post-16 education and training is below the national average but improving.
6. Movement into post-16 education has risen steadily over the last 5 years from 62% of Year 11 pupils in 2000 to 78.0% in 2007. Overall 89.2% of the Dudley Year 11 cohort entered post-16 education, work based training or full time employment in 2007.
7. At the end of March 2008, only 63 of the 4,851 16-year old leavers entitled to and wanting a place in learning did not have an offer mainly because they could not be contacted.
8. Provision to help young people aged 14-19 to prepare for working life is good and improving as a result of co-ordinated action by the LA, LSC, schools, colleges, Connexions, the Black Country Training Group and work based learning providers. Curriculum range including work related opportunities is good and expanding.
9. Learners in the 16-19 age group are well provided for in Dudley as a result of the effective work of schools and colleges and planning decisions that have been taken over the last 30 years. Our young people benefit from being able to access a wide range of good quality provision at a local college. We do not suffer from the problem of having small sixth forms that are unable to provide a sufficiently broad curriculum offer. As with 14-19 generally there is good collaboration between partners.
10. Entries for vocational qualifications in Key Stage 4 have more than doubled between 2005 and 2007. We have developed set and bespoke programmes available to all Key Stage 4 learners, including events such as mock interviews and industry taster days. All Dudley schools actively involve Key Stage 4 students in at least one selected programme.
11. The delivery of specialised diplomas commences in autumn 2008 with diplomas in Creative and Media, and Society Health and Development being made available. In autumn 2009 further diplomas in Construction, Engineering, Hair and Beauty and Information Technology will commence. Dependent upon DCSF conditions being met 2009 will also see the introduction of Hospitality and Catering, and in 2010 Business Administration and Finance.
12. The availability of impartial information, advice and guidance on post-16 opportunities is good and improving.
13. In April 2008 the funding for the Dudley Connexions service was returned to the local authority. Two recent reports that we have commissioned on the service

(SQW Consulting 2007 and the University of Derby 2008) have identified numerous strengths and also given us the basis for an improvement plan.

14. We have our local 14-19 area prospectus in place covering all post-16 courses and many in the 14-16 phase. We are also working towards the introduction of a common post-16 application process across the borough in order to make the application system more straightforward for young people.

15. Planning and Co-ordination of 14-19 Education

Planning and co-ordination is overseen by our 14-19 strategic partnership. This consists of representatives of all the main stakeholders in the 14-19 phase. Co-operation and collaboration between the LA and its partners is good. Extensive work is being done to engage employers in reforms for this age group so that the curriculum on offer to young people is as relevant to the needs of the economy as possible.

The next steps will be to:

- continue working with secondary schools to make the curriculum more interesting and relevant to the work place in order to encourage more young people to stay in education post-16;
- develop systems that make staying on post-16 easier for young people e.g. a common application process to Dudley colleges;
- continue to target young people in vulnerable groups, and specific areas of the borough, in order to provide as much support and encouragement as possible to continue in education and training post-16.

## **Finance**

16. There are three main funding streams being used in Dudley to support 14 -19 activity. They are all external grants and they come from:

- the Learning and Skills Council;
- the DCSF and;
- the Higher Education Funding Council;

This means that our work in this area is vulnerable to the removal or reduction of one or more of these grants. The total value of these grants varies from year to year but is in the region of £600,000 per annum.

## **Law**

17. The law relating to the information contained in the report is contained in the Education and Children Acts.

### **Equality Impact**

18. The most significant impact of our work in this area is to create an equal opportunity for all young people to achieve economic well being through participation in the post-16 education and training system. At the end of March 2008, 4,788 out of the 4,851 16-year old leavers entitled to and wanting a place in learning were made an offer.

### **Recommendation**

19. It is recommended that the committee note the report and support the development of this work.



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