
Meeting of Executive Members and Children's Services Advisory Panel

22 January 2007

Report of the Director of Learning, Culture and Children's Services

Specialised Diplomas

Summary

1. This report is to update members on developments that have taken place in preparation for the introduction of specialised diplomas in September 2008 and to seek support for changes planned.

Background

2. The 14-19 Partnership has completed a submission to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) which indicates a willingness to offer access to 4 of the new diplomas to small numbers of students at levels 1, 2 and 3 in 2008: *Construction and the Built Environment*, *Creative and Media*, *Engineering and Information Technology*. The suggestion is that the 5th diploma, *Society, Health and Development*, will be offered to larger numbers of students because of the work that has already taken place across the city on the *Health and Social Care* Diploma pilot, led by York College.
3. The 14-19 partnership's self-evaluation led to the decision that there is the capacity in York to start work on all 5 diplomas in 2008. Schools, colleges and training providers have agreed that each will be involved according to its capacity to embrace this particular curriculum change. Collectively, there is a commitment to learn on behalf of each other and to pilot innovation on a scale which is manageable but which moves the city's education providers into a strong position to offer the national entitlement of access to all 14 diploma lines in 2013.
4. The 14-19 Partnership, through the work of its Planning Group, has completed applications to offer the first 5 diploma lines in September 2008. Every secondary school has indicated an interest in helping to design and deliver at least one of these diplomas. York College, Askham Bryan College and Providers in Partnership (the local consortium of work-based learning providers) are all fully engaged with the planning process.
5. Five separate diploma development groups prepared their submissions in time to meet the DfES' deadline of 11th December 2006. Each group consists of representatives from providers interested in delivering elements of a

diploma in 2008 and each is chaired by a senior leader from a school or college, as agreed with college principals and headteachers. All 5 submissions have been endorsed by the Local Authority (LA) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) (*annex 1*) and are accompanied by a joint capital bid to the DfES (*annex 2*).

6. All submissions will be considered during January and February and there is an expectation that announcements indicating which areas have been successful will be made in March 2007. The Government Office panel which will make decisions about bids from the Yorkshire and Humberside region is scheduled to meet on 20th and 21st February and local partnerships will be notified of the outcome in March at the earliest.
7. All areas will eventually be successful with their gateway applications because there is an expectation that all planned diplomas will be available for all 14-19 year olds from 2013. However, it is generally understood that many applications to start in 2008 will be turned down. It is anticipated that the DfES, through Government Office, will seek to invest in success and limit the extent of participation in tranche 1 of the diplomas (ie 2008 start)
8. Success in this application to offer access to diploma lines in 2008 will trigger an intensive programme of work and development during the academic year 2007-8. This will include working closely with awarding bodies to gain their approval; a very focused programme of staff development and capital investment in equipment and facilities in line with a successful capital bid.

Consultation

9. The introduction of specialised diplomas is a key priority of a partnership strategy developed by the Lifelong Learning Partnership and endorsed by the Children's Trust. There is full support from members of both partnerships. Throughout the Autumn term 2006, there has been ongoing consultation between all members of the 14-19 partnership. Headteachers, college principals and work-based learning managers have been involved at all stages of this process and the submission made to the DfES was clearly informed by consultation with all key partners.

Options

10. Not applicable.

Analysis

11. Not applicable.

Corporate Priorities

12. The introduction of specialised diplomas will make a major contribution towards the corporate priority of "improving opportunities for learning and raising educational achievement for everybody in York". The authority has

identified a number of Corporate Improvement Statements, one of which includes a commitment to 'increase people's skills and knowledge to improve future employment prospects.' Actions to achieve this improvement include increasing the 'number and variety of vocational courses for 14-19 year olds.' In addition, the Local Area Agreement includes two relevant outcomes:

- 'to engage more young people in education and training' and
- 'to improve the skills of 16 and 18 year olds'

Implications

Financial

13. The Lifelong Learning Partnership is committed to finding £150k contribution if the capital bid is successful. The Local Authority could be required to underwrite this from the schools' formula capital budget but, in the first instance, contributions will be sought from the range of partners – LSC, colleges and the schools' delegated capital budgets. A direct schools' grant has been allocated for the financial years 2006-2008 to build capacity within schools to support the introduction of specialised diplomas (total of £461k). The cost of seconding a secondary headteacher to manage this project for the calendar year 2007 is being shared by the LSC and the LA. As this fixed term secondment comes to an end, it may be that partners identify a continuing need for a 14-19 Development Manager. If this is so, it is understood that central funds will not be available and that partners such as schools and colleges would have to fund the post from within their financial resources.

Human Resources (HR)

14. There are no HR implications arising out of these proposals at this stage. Should future roll out of this national initiative have HR implications, the HR service will be consulted and all the applicable HR policies and procedures will be followed.

Equalities

15. There are no implications for equalities.

Legal

16. There is a statutory duty upon LAs and LSCs to ensure that in 2013 there is adequate provision across the city for all 14-19 year old learners to access any one of the 14 new diploma lines. Although the changes that are planned for 2008 are not statutory, there is an expectation that LAs will move in this direction and that it will feature in the Children and Young People's Plan. Evaluation of progress made towards the introduction of diplomas is central to the Government Office performance management arrangements.

Crime and Disorder

17. There are no implications for Crime and Disorder.

Information Technology (IT)

18. There are no implications for IT

Property

19. There are no implications for Property.

Other

20. There are no other implications.

Risk Management

21. In introducing the new diploma lines, there is a range of risks that need to be managed. These include:
 - the level of collaborative working between partners needed to deliver the programme may not be achieved
 - the funding may not be sufficient to underwrite the full cost of the programme, including travel and tutoring costs
 - the training programme may not prepare staff adequately to deliver high quality courses
 - the courses themselves may not attract sufficient numbers of students to be viable

These risks are being managed as follows:

- the strategy has been pursued through partnership arrangements, rather than a single agency, with explicit sign up at every stage, including the submission to the DfES
- whilst ear marked funding will be available for the programme through the bid, the vocational standards fund can be used as a contingency as can school and college core budgets
- the training programme will be delivered in close collaboration with the Specialist Schools and Colleges Trust (SSAT) and the Learning and Skills Network (LSN)
- estimates of demand have been based on considered advice from schools and colleges. This has been supported by the fact that young people involved in the development of the 14-19 strategy have expressed considerable enthusiasm for the idea of schools and colleges working together to offer a wider curriculum choice at 14+.

Recommendations

22. The Executive Member is recommended to consider and comment upon these proposals and to approve the plan for the introduction of specialised diplomas.

Reason: working towards requirements which will be statutory in 2013.

Contact Details

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Report Approved **Date** 10.1.07

Specialist Implications Officer(s) *List information for all*

HR
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Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None

Annexes:

Annex 1: 14-19 Gateway: Local Authority Statement
Annex 2: Capital Bid – City of York Partnership