

Annex C: Response to consultation on 'Raising Expectations'.

1. Introduction

The Local Authority received 10 responses to this consultation and although the number was fairly small, the range of organisations submitting a response was very broad (2 schools, York College, Social Care services, PCT, Police, the YOT, York Training Centre, Learning Support Services and Adult services). This does not make summary easy, and it is acknowledged that what follows does not fully do justice to all of the points being made in the individual responses, many of which were detailed and thought provoking.

The pressure to develop a strategy requires that the attempt is made to categorise young people into groups with broadly similar needs, and, insofar as they were not seriously challenged, the categories in the consultation paper are reasonably robust and provide a useful tool for statistical analysis. Nonetheless, the composition of the 16 – 18 year old population is much more complex than these simple categories allow and some of the responses arrive at different conclusions partly because they interpret the categories in different ways. It is no surprise that the least convincing part of the original Green Paper is the attempt to define the characteristics of particular groups of young people. Locally, it has not proved easy to reconcile different data sets to provide a reliable picture of the cohort and this exercise, by itself, is unlikely to provide a definitive answer to some of the key questions about, for example, the NEET population or the choices being made by young people at 17.

A number of general points were made that must inform the way in which the strategy is developed in York over the coming months and years. These were that:

- Consultation with young people themselves is critical if we are to develop a clear picture of how they are likely to respond to opportunities that are not yet available. It is proposed that a comprehensive survey is undertaken, perhaps seeking funding from Connexions and the LSC as well as the Local Authority, of the current Y10 or Y9 cohort;
- Parents/Carers and young people themselves find it difficult to understand and make choices, particularly between different kinds of provision at Foundation level and Level 1. There is an important message here for the Advice and Guidance services currently provided through Connexions;
- A small but highly visible number of young people are currently falling through the net and providing what is described by one respondent as 'outrage' in the city 'at the level of anti-social behaviour'. This is a major priority for the local authority;
- Action to address the problem of young people who are NEET has to start much earlier than 14 – 19, and be firmly rooted in the nature of the provision made at Key Stage 3 so that 'the years 7-9 are not simply a waiting game for pupils with a vocational bent'.

All the responses recognised that there is potential conflict between, on the one hand, the availability of choice and the economies of scale that can be provided by a single provider serving the city as a whole and, on the other, the accessibility of provision that is made locally by people who are known and trusted by young people. This was the central dilemma that the StAR sought to address, and it must be acknowledged that any solution will be, to a greater or lesser extent, a compromise between these two positions.

2. Target Group 1: Not in Employment, Education and Training (NEET)

Responses to this question revealed significant differences in understanding about the nature of the NEET group. There was general agreement that, as the response from Archbishop Holgate's Schools put it, 'few NEETs are, by definition ready for mainstream employment with training'. York College, which was the only respondent brave enough to hazard a projection of the provision most likely to engage NEETs estimated that only 20% of the current NEET group would be likely to access 'employment with training'.

There was a consensus that, as York High described it 'many of these young people have difficult histories, can be extremely challenging and have other complicated issues'. There is a surprisingly high level of agreement that, for many of the current NEET group, what is needed is something like the 'Stepping Stones' approach delivered in localities. York College estimated that this might be appropriate for something like 60% of the NEET group. At the other end of the spectrum is the response from Archbishop Holgate's school which comments that 'many, perhaps most NEETs could be reached in traditional settings through appropriately flexible courses with relevant curricula and committed, supportive staff'.

Responses from organisations that are particularly attuned to the needs of the most challenging young people in the city provide some important evidence about what is likely to engage them. The PCT focused particularly on the group of teenage parents, commenting that 'this group are particularly vulnerable and remain a priority within health services including public health nursing services and midwifery. Links with Connexions are good in some areas but more work could be done'. The YOT comments that there is 'likely to be a low response from young people to things that 'look like' education or training as our YOT kids have experienced barriers to and are often disengaged from education. They want work and money in their pockets and often don't see the long term benefits of engaging with further education or training. Young people who have been permanently excluded are a problem as they have limited support. Support is the key'. The 11+ group from Children and Families services make the case for 'changing learning styles, being more hands on and visual, having classrooms set up like work spaces and 'trying to prevent the transition at Year 11'.

The current providers also have a clear view. York Training Centre offers 'strong support for a new kind of outreach provision especially for the NEET/harder to reach more socially isolated learners'. York College comments that 'College based programmes are most likely to be successful if based on an Individual Learning Plan which starts from a very detailed diagnostic assessment and then develops specific skills and interests. The College currently offers an 'Entry Award' programme to about 40 young people a year who have some classes together and infill on a range of other courses. Outreach may be needed to attract people into education or training in a creative and innovative way which the young person does not associate with previous failure'. York Training Centre comments that 'there is a need for sheltered employment opportunities and strong mentor support for both young person and employer. The e2e programme currently offers pre-apprenticeship support.'

This all suggests that a more radical and different kind of provision is needed. However, this is not a universal view. The YOT manager comments that 'I am not sure that we should rule schools out as the base for more occupationally based provision despite the fact that many youngsters and their parents have poor experiences there. We should think about what we want schools to become rather than what they have been'. Archbishop Holgate's School comments that 'for schools

the challenges are developing an appropriately flexible, appropriately pitched course which is genuinely motivating, engaging and supportive; and ensuring there is a sufficient cohort of pupils for provision to be viable. The way ahead here seems to us to be collaboration between schools, and the closest possible partnership, to ensure that those transferring from other institutions have a structured and extensive programme of transition with emphases similar to those built up in the very best practice in the City for Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 transition, with this programme built in to ensure the smoothest possible start.'

There would seem to be a consensus that although the NEET group is small, it embraces quite a wide range of different needs:

- Some, but by no means all, of the NEET group need carefully tailored provision available close to where they live and if this is not provided there will be a significant gap in the offer made by the city.
- Another group of young people who are currently NEET would access more traditional provision if it were more easily available and more clearly signposted than at present. This could be made on school sites and might, or might not, be made by schools themselves.

Within the NEET group, there is a sub set of young people with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD) who have a very distinct and different group of needs. The consultation sought to establish more about the needs of this group and again, the responses were largely shaped by different understandings about what is meant by LDD. There is a significant difference between the needs of those who are currently in special schools with either SLD or PMLD, to those currently in mainstream education albeit with a statement of SEN.

Responses from those organisations dealing with severe disabilities included the PCT which commented that 'the LDD group are a particularly vulnerable group – The time when many leave education (16-19) often coincides with the time many are moving from the overview of a paediatrician to adult services where they may see a number of specialists but may have no single overview. One 'champion' or named individual at a time of many changes could effectively support the individual through the changes and into effective employment and training'. York Training Centre argued for 'accessible flexible supported provision leading to sheltered/supportive employment opportunities. A third response made the point that the 'biggest problem for those with autism or aspergers who need a personalised and therefore expensive level one package as currently delivered by York College. The key is that they learn to be sociable'.

Most responses addressed the issue of the lack of provision at entry level and level 1 for young people with lower levels of need, identifying a lack of progression in the current offer. York College commented that '25% students at the college currently supported by LSC additional learning support. At the College about 25% of all 16-18 year olds are supported by LSC Additional Learning Support in one way or another across the full range and level of courses offered'.

It is recommended that a more detailed study is undertaken of the needs of young people with statements who will be leaving school at the end of the 2008 and the 2009 school year.

3. Target Group 2: In Employment, with and without Training.

The questions in this section sought to establish whether there was likely to be an increase in demand for provision of this kind and, if so, what work might be needed with employers to expand opportunities.

There was a surprising difference of view in the responses, which leaves the fundamental question unanswered, though it does suggest a pragmatic way forward.

The conventional view, advanced in the Green Paper, was most eloquently expressed by York College which commented that ‘the Green Paper gives insufficient attention to Apprenticeship opportunities and does not link up well with the recommendations of the Leitch Review to increase the number of Apprenticeships over the next few years. Apprentices who are employees are gaining both accredited qualifications (many to the same level as a full-time 16-18 year old learner), the skills development needed and the maturity which comes with the responsibility of employment. York College recommends that the Raising Expectations strategy should include a major drive to increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities with local employers’. This was supported by the comment that ‘this (apprenticeship) is usually the preferred destination of someone who drops out of education and training. The experience helps them to take stock and mature before trying a different programme. It is also encouraged by parents. It is the only opportunity that is available at any time of year’ and it is ‘likely to be an important route as many young people are ready for the responsibilities and challenges of employment at 16. They also want to get away from the constraints and controls of school.’

However, an alternative, and balancing view was put that ‘the vast majority of young people want to continue some form of study/training. Our feeling is that, if the new Diplomas are pitched correctly, pupils will find these a good springboard for skills development from which they can then move into employment or further education... Apprenticeships are one pathway following completion of Level 1 or Level 2 on a Diploma course. Clearly the apprenticeship route is a very specialised one, suitable for a select number of pupils. Unless learners have been able to accrue experience outside a school context, it is only likely to be genuinely successful if those individuals are able, to engage with employers and experience the work based environment at first hand’. This view is supported by York Training Centre which makes a similar case based on the belief that young people will prefer vocational routes if they are available and of sufficiently high quality.

Almost all of the respondents point to the considerable challenge that is likely to be presented by a decision to expand apprenticeship opportunities and engage more employers in training of this kind. Responses from a number of organisations cite the cost, the lack of capacity (particularly in SMEs) and the lack of incentives for employers, particularly to make provision for the most disengaged young people in the city.

The force of these arguments is sufficient to suggest that considerable caution should be expressed about seeing a major expansion of employment with training as making a significant contribution to the supply of appropriate placements for young people at 16, though it may be that, for 17 and 18 year olds, there is a strong case to be made.

4. Target Group 3: In Education and Training.

There is broad agreement that almost all of the young people in the city that have the qualifications to start Level 3 courses do so, and that there is unlikely to be any growth in overall demand. The implication of this is that the decline in the size of the cohort is likely to be matched by an increase in the number achieving the minimum qualification needed to start a course at Level 3. Any growth is likely to be at Level 2, and this is likely to be in vocational applied learning.

There is a generally held view that specialised diplomas are likely to prove attractive for quite a wide range of young people which include some of those who are currently NEET, those who are currently following inappropriate courses at Level 2 and those who want something different at level 3. The YOT does not just speak for 16 year old level 2 learners when it comments that 'specialised diplomas are likely to benefit some of our under 16 kids who, for whatever reason, struggle with academic/classroom learning but would engage more successfully with more vocational styles of learning'.

The key issue is about where and how these courses should be made available. On one side of the fence are those that argue for a tightly managed system for the authority as a whole that seeks to achieve a close match between demand and supply. This includes:

- York College which argues that 'all the Level 3 Diplomas seen so far incorporate some very specialised elements. In order to provide choice of options economically it is unlikely that there will be sufficient interest for more than one centre for each Diploma. Specialised resources and staff are also needed. Therefore it is highly likely that the Colleges will be best-placed to provide the bulk of post-16 Level 3 Diplomas. Specialisation at level 3 will probably mean only 1 course at one centre. The critical mass to provide the full range of choices is unlikely to be reached if more than one centre offers the provision at both level 2 and level 3'.
- York Training Centre which comments that 'post-16 specialised diplomas provision (should be) delivered by citywide providers, possibly linked to specialisms or existing LSC contracts'.
- The YOT which makes it into a matter of principle, 'There is an issue with young people in the City not wanting to travel to other parts of town i.e. Tang hall kids reluctant to go to Westfield. This needs to be overcome as a cultural change'.

An alternative case is put by Archbishop Holgate's School which argues that roughly 40% of the cohort might eventually decide to follow a vocational route. They analyse the provision that is needed in some detail: 'If 40% of pupils may be expected to study the Diploma, the expansion of the College to deliver all lines of learning might be unrealistic, and would create a division between those who remained in a school setting to study a traditional academic curriculum, and those who decided to opt for an applied curriculum available only on the edge of the city. Some Diplomas, Land Based and Environment being an obvious one, have such specific requirements for facilities, etc, that it makes pragmatic sense for there to be only one specialist provider serving the whole city. In the case of some other Diploma lines, Hair and Beauty for example, the city may wish to take the view that one, or at most very few, centres would be sufficient to meet the city's needs and that over-provision in this area would be unhelpful. Some Diplomas will inevitably attract very low numbers: if the Public Services Diploma, for example, turns out to be focused on the uniformed forces, demand may be so low that limited supply will be sufficient. As a general principle, however, there seems to us to be good merit in the proposal by the 14-19

Planning Group that each cluster should be accountable for ensuring that all lines of learning are available either locally or on citywide basis. Local delivery within each cluster will then depend on sufficient numbers to be viable, and appropriate expertise and facilities. Diplomas which may be expected to fall into this category are many, including most or all of the 2008 and 2010 groups and smaller numbers of the 2009 group. We are conscious that provision across the City in this way may mean there is some duplication between York College and schools. The key to this seems to us to be for York College to be linked with each of the clusters. If we are serious about raising the esteem of applied learning it seems essential that traditional academic learning and applied learning are available on a comparable basis in each part of the city'.

The final question asks about the scale of demand that is likely to be generated by increasing the availability of the International Baccalaureate (IB). This is clearly a question which most respondents find very difficult to answer. All those that ventured a response acknowledged that the IB requires a certain critical mass to be viable. York College suggests that 'a minimum of 35 young people is needed to provide the choices across the different specialist areas'. Archbishop Holgate's School essentially concedes the same point in commenting that 'the IB is most attractive when there are choices within each of the main 'domains'.

York College explains the need for a substantial cohort. 'The International Baccalaureate will appeal to able all-rounders. The need for good ability in Modern Foreign Languages may be a limiting factor given the changes to Key Stage 4 requirements although a college in Lancashire has chosen to offer Spanish ab initio to overcome this problem'.

The College estimates that it is unlikely that more than 50 to 70 young people per year across the City would opt for the International Baccalaureate. Archbishop Holgate's makes the point that it all depends upon how it is marketed and that if it is positively presented 'our judgement is that there is likely to be sufficient demand for the IB for it to be run in a small number of centres in the foreseeable future'. The school proposes a model for the delivery of the IB which is collaborative on a number of different sites.

5. Summary and recommendations.

Within the current NEET group (about 5% or roughly 85 young people in any one cohort), there is a significant group of young people who are only likely to be reached by provision of the kind described in the *Stepping Stones* proposal. This should be made available in those areas of the city where the concentration of NEETs is highest (Tang Hall, Westfield and, perhaps, Clifton). The city should learn from the success of provision at Entry level/level 1 in a non school setting both in York and elsewhere.

Of the NEET group, a proportion (between 20% and 50%) may be attracted to more conventional provision (at Level 1 and Level 2) that is provided either in a school or a college setting as at present, though there is a need for the offer to be much more clearly marketed.

There is unlikely to be a huge increase in demand for or supply of apprenticeship opportunities, and the city should plan for only a modest increase. However, this is a particularly attractive option for improving retention and efforts should be made to engage employers to make provision for young people who, at 17, might have

considerable ability but are unlikely to remain in conventional (classroom-based) education and training.

Specialised diplomas at Level 2 and 3 are likely to prove popular for anything up to 40% (between, say, 400 and 800) of those young people currently in Education and Training. However, there is a real danger of creating an over supply of places unless provision for each diploma line is concentrated on a limited number of centres, each of which are able to make high quality provision and establish viable groups. A start should be made by looking at how institutions which already offer Level 3 contribute to the entitlement already.

Demand for the IB, at least for the foreseeable future, is likely to be relatively modest (say 5% of the cohort or a maximum of 85 young people), not least because there is a real risk of failure for a significant number of young people associated with such a broadly based qualification.

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