

From: Shellina Prendergast, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills
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To: Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee – 19 July 2022

Subject: Update on the 16-19 review and future plans

Classification: Unrestricted

Electoral Division: All

Summary:

This paper will:

- Provide a background for the 16-19 Review
- Update on the activities of the review.
- Summarise the content of the completed review.
- Give information on next steps.

Kent County Council's [KCC's] 2021-25 Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent required its Children, Young People & Education Directorate to lead a review of 16-19 education within Kent.

The overall aim of the Review was to improve the options and life chances of Kent's young people by enhancing the education, skills, and training opportunities available to them. To achieve this, it sought to develop a deeper and shared understanding of the issues facing both young people and providers.

The Review was therefore delivered in collaboration with providers from across the sector, and with the involvement of young people, their parents, and key stakeholders.

The process was overseen, guided and supported by Steering and Working Groups with representation from across the sector and from stakeholders and providers.

Work commenced in summer 2020 and the report, Pathways for All, was published in April 2022.

Recommendation:

The Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report and future plans.

1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update on the 16-19 review it will:

- Provide a background for the review
- Update on the activities of the review.

- Summarise the content of the completed review.
- Give information on next steps.

2. Background – Context and factors impacting on the sector

2.1 KCC has a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient, high -quality educational places available for the 16-19 age group and must take the strategic lead to ensure that young people can participate in 16-19 education and training in the way that best suits their aspirations and abilities. As in other areas, the 16-19 education sector in Kent is diverse, with a number of providers all of which have their own organisational priorities. A review was commissioned to gain a deeper understanding of the current picture and to make recommendations for change and improvement. Alongside this local action, there is also a strong Government policy focus on 16-19, which is leading to considerable change in the sector. This combination of nationally and locally driven change, requires clear leadership to ensure that the opportunities to better meet the needs of Kent's young people are maximised during this time of transition. This section of the report provides an over-view of the complex range of factors which impact on the 16-19 landscape.

2.2 Raising of the Participation Age (RPA):

Government legislated to raise the participation age (RPA) so that young people are required to continue in education, employment or training until the age of 18. These duties came into effect for 16-year-olds in September 2013 and for 17-year-olds in September 2015. These RPA duties are set out in Schedule 2, para 4 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 and S10 and 12 of the Education and Schools Act 2008. In order to meet these duties, LAs are required to:

- Promote the effective participation in education or training of all 16- and 17-year-olds resident in their area;
- Make arrangements (an effective tracking system) to identify young people resident in their area who are not participating;
- Provide strategic leadership to ensure support is available which encourages, enables and assists the participation of young people in education, training and employment;
- Liaise with education providers to identify children under the age of 16 who are at risk of not participating post-16 and provide intensive support to remedy the situation. This is important in relation to children with SEND;
- Offer a suitable place to every young person who reaches the age of 16 or 17, by the end of September, to continue in education or training the following year.

2.3 Statutory Duties of the LA

Sufficiency:

- Ensure that sufficient primary, secondary and further education is available to meet the needs of their population (Section 13, Education Act 1996);
- Ensure that LA education functions are exercised with a view to promoting high standards, ensuring fair access to opportunity for education and learning and promote the fulfilment of learning potential;

- Secure that sufficient schools for providing primary and secondary education are available for their area (Section 14, Education Act 1996).

2.4 Fragmentation of the Sector

Due to a lack of overall co-ordination, there has been a high level of fragmentation in the sector. Institutions work to ensure they perform well against their own accountability measures, but this does not necessarily lead to a coherent system that meets the needs of all young people. There is also competition between education providers for learners and resources. The consequence of this is that there are large gaps opening up in the offer for young people and a lack of meaningful pathways for many of them to progress through education and beyond.

2.5 Wider policy/legislation

I. Qualification reforms

The government has announced that it wishes to simplify post 16 qualifications and ensure they provide good quality progression into education or employment. A review of “Level 3 qualifications” (broadly equivalent to A levels) has taken place and the recommendations are that the qualifications of choice for 16–19-year-olds should be A levels or the new T levels (Technical-Levels are new 2-year courses which are taken after GCSEs and are broadly equivalent in size to 3 A Levels. Launched in September 2020, these courses have been developed in collaboration with employers) with some specialist qualifications where a subject is not covered by these two routes. Many qualifications that do not meet these criteria, such as BTECs, will be defunded from 2024. Many of our 6th forms currently rely on these qualifications which places them and their students at risk.

There is a cohort of students who pass their GCSEs but without strong enough grades to be successful at A levels. These students have often been directed towards the qualifications which are now likely to be defunded. In the future this means that there is likely to be a group of young people without a good progression route post 16.

Colleges are investing heavily in the new T levels but most schools will not be able to offer them due to logistical challenges.

These issues mean that dramatic change will be needed in the post 16 system in Kent. Particularly, many of our small non-selective 6th forms will have to find a new way of working if they are to be sustainable over time.

A government review of qualifications below level 2 is currently taking place and officers will be considering the implications for the sector when this is published.

II. Skills for Jobs White Paper

This predominantly focuses on making further education more relevant to the needs of employers and ensuring that careers education helps young people navigate the rapidly changing system.

III. Levelling up White Paper

The paper sets out several educational initiatives but they are largely region specific. Some national initiatives may impact on Kent.

IV. Apprenticeships

There has been an increased focus on higher and degree level apprenticeships. Nationally we have seen a huge range of different apprenticeship standards being created to match the demand from employers across all sectors. This has had a major impact on Kent.

V. Schools White Paper

With the stated aim of improving outcomes for all, the need for a range of post 16 pathways is even more important.

- 2.6 In response to these complexities, KCC commissioned the 16-19 review to ensure that the system provided the best possible outcomes for Kent's young people.

3. The local 16-19 Review

- 3.1 Kent County Council's [KCC's] 2021-25 Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent required its Children, Young People & Education Directorate to lead a review of 16-19 education within Kent.
- 3.2 The vision for the Review was that it should improve the options and life chances of young people in Kent by:
- Providing better education, skills and training opportunities for all Kent's young people
 - Enabling KCC to develop a clear understanding of the issues and the barriers to participation and progression
 - Allowing KCC to understand, support and provide direction to the sector in the county.
- 3.3 Specifically, the purpose of the Review was to:
- Hold a mirror up to 16-19 education in Kent by developing a deeper understanding of the sector
 - Identify key far-reaching and systemic issues, and particular areas of under achievement or need in the post-16 sector
 - Identify, explore and understand good practice in the sector to encourage its wider take-up
 - Identify the gaps, issues and barriers that need to be, and can reasonably be, addressed by the sector
 - Be a platform for KCC and its key partners to develop strategic leadership in the Kent post-16 system

- Provide advocacy for young people in the 16-19 sector
- Develop a sector-wide collaborative approach to driving success in the post-16 system
- Ensure that young people in post-16 education and training in Kent are well prepared to deal with the challenges caused by Covid-19.

3.4 A collaborative approach

No one organisation has the responsibility, authority or resources to transform the 16-19 sector in Kent and this can only be achieved by working collaboratively. From the start, the review aimed to encourage the collaboration necessary to drive forward improvement the sector. This was reflected in the way the review was carried out. The Review was led by a steering group made up of representatives from across the sector; a very wide range of organisations and individuals were consulted; and the report was not issued until the sector had a chance to comment on draft versions. As we move into the next phase, this collaborative approach will continue to make best use of the resources and goodwill in the sector.

4. Process of the review

4.1 The review aimed to ensure that the experiences of all students were considered. The following groups of young people were identified, and research covered all groups.

<i>Strand</i>	<i>Descriptor</i>
1	Learners holding a full Level 2 and seeking to follow an academic pathway
2	Learners holding a full Level 2, and seeking to follow a fully or partly technical or vocational pathway
3	Learners not yet holding a full level 2, but with the potential and a level of engagement with learning that will enable them to do so
4	Learners not holding a full level 2 whose additional difficulties (including a lack of engagement with education) mean that they may need additional support if they are to reach their potential.

4.2 The review took place mostly during Covid and therefore had to be modified accordingly. The following stages took place.

1.	Exploration and informal consultation. Identification of key partners.	Spring 2020
2.	Data identification and collation leading to the identification of key themes, issues and questions for the focus groups	Summer 2020
3	Convene Steering group and appointment of external expert support	Winter 2020
4.	Design and test research process, accommodating Covid	Spring/Summer 20/20
5.	Interviews, focus group discussions and wider qualitative research and soft consultation	Autumn/Winter 2021
6.	Collating and writing up the full review's findings	Spring 2022

7.	Publication and promotion of findings	April 2022
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4.3 Fieldwork

48 provider institutions interviewed. This was spread across all districts and learning provider types and represents about 25% of the sector. There were generally two, one and a half to two-hour interviews per school or organisation to understand the perspective of pre and post 16 staff.

21 Key leaders and sector partner interviews from representative bodies such as KCC, youth support agencies amongst others.

30 young peoples' focus groups from across a range of 22 learning providers. Engagement Officers from the Education People facilitated the groups asking young people to express their opinions on the same issues explored with staff plus anything else they felt was relevant.

5. Summary of the review

5.1 The review set out to cover both all student groups and the full breath of the young person's journey through the sector. This determined the following areas of focus for all the fieldwork.

- The offer
- Location, access and structure
- Equal opportunities
- Pre-Year 12 decision making
- Transition into post-16 provision
- Delivery
- Outcomes
- Post-Year 13 decision making and transition
- Future viability of provision
- Collaboration
- The impact of Covid-19

5.2 Key Findings

From all the fieldwork and quantitative analysis of data, 11 significant issues were identified. There is a rich analysis of these key issues and any subsidiary issues in the review report.

In summary, the issues fall into:

- Lack of aspiration, particularly among disadvantaged students
- Uneven support for transition at 16+ and 18+
- Costs of travel affect learner choice
- Shortage of resources
- Small sixth forms restrict choice and opportunities
- Concern about level of support for pupils with mental health issues
- Threats to Applied General Qualifications and International Baccalaureate Careers Programme in sixth forms arising from Level 3 reforms
- Careers Education independent Advice Guidance only partially effective and not covering all options

- Polarised provision plus little collaboration plus pupil inertia (that is to say, pupils being unwilling to leave their present schools at 16+ even when it would improve their chances to do so) equals missed opportunities
- Provision below Level 2 needs bolstering, with better identification of pathways to higher level study
- Apprenticeship shortages for 16–19-year-olds – more general difficulties gaining employer support

5.3 From these issues, there are eight Principal Recommendations

1. Improve outcomes through establishing a comprehensive benchmarking programme and promoting the adoption of a life skills curriculum
2. Raise young people's aspirations through promoting a model Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) curriculum and ensuring all young people are supported to consider a range of options
3. Develop a comprehensive local offer, implemented via collaboration, to widen what is available and enable young people to exercise their choice
4. Enhance provision below Level 2 by putting provision on a more stable footing, addressing the issue of young people Not in Employment, Education and Training (NEET) and providing for progression
5. Improve early support for students with mental health issues to promote well-being and remove a barrier to achievement and progression
6. Improve access to post-16 provision by prioritising travel support to those who most need it to and by lobbying government to support post -16 travel
7. Learn from lockdown to improve support for remote learning and retain more young people in some form of learning
8. Establish a Strategic Board to take these recommendations forward and provide strategic oversight of provision.

6. Proposed Way Forward

6.1 Collaboration

The review was carried out as a collaborative piece of work with the 16-19 sector in Kent. This needs to continue so that solutions to the issues are jointly developed and owned by the sector as no one organisation can bring about the changes need to improve outcomes for young people.

6.2 Strategic Board

As there is no one organisation overseeing the sector, a board is needed to prioritise activity, cascade recommendations/information out to partner organisations, lobby relevant national and local bodies, and ensure the ongoing relevance of activities. The board will have an independent chair. It will make recommendations to the sector and KCC to shape policy and activity across the county. It will not have decision/enforcement powers.

6.3 Action Plan

A detailed action plan will be developed addressing all the issues and recommendations. This will be the responsibility of the Strategic Board.

6.4 Resources

It is planned that responding to the review's recommendations can commence via utilizing current KCC and TEP resources. The collaborative approach to supporting the sector will encourage in kind contributions from the sector. Further to the development of the Action Plan, there may be other resources that are needed for KCC to deliver against its statutory duties to lead the sector as well as for delivering against the other review recommendations.

6.5 Governance

The 14-24 Learning, Employment and Skills Strategy, 2017-2020, is out of date but is still KCCs key policy document for the sector. The Review provides updated intelligence about the sector and indicates a way forward that builds on the now outdated policy document. Consideration of the policy will be given as the Review's next steps are taken and cross referencing will be undertaken.

6.6 Feedback to CYPE Cabinet will be via the Director of Education and Cabinet Members as appropriate.

7. Conclusion

7.1 The Review has set a challenging agenda for improving the provision available to 16–19-year-olds in Kent; there is much to do. However, the Steering Group has been heartened by the commitment from all parties involved in the Review to ensure that effective pathways to future progress and attainment are identified and made available to all Kent's young people, and that they are supported to achieve their aspirations and potential. The recommendations identified in the 16-19 Review, as they are implemented, will go a long way towards achieving this goal.

<p>Recommendation: The Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.</p>

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Background Documents:

Appendix 1: "Pathways for All": Executive Summary