

**Children's Services Scrutiny Committee  
Wednesday 29 November 2006**

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**THE WILTSHIRE STRATEGY FOR 14-19 EDUCATION & TRAINING**

**Introduction**

1. The purpose of this paper is to report on progress in the delivery of the Wiltshire Strategy for 14-19 Education & Training, highlighting achievements to date and areas of future challenge.

**Action Required of the Committee**

2. The Committee is invited to consider and comment on this update report.

**Background**

3. The Wiltshire Strategy for 14-19 was published in September 2005. The Strategy was developed in collaboration with our key strategic partners the Local Learning and Skills Council and the Connexions Service. The Strategy was developed through extensive consultation with a wide range of partners, providers and young people. The strategy establishes a set of goals which is supported by a series of principles and entitlements.
4. A key principle underpinning the delivery of the strategy is the development of local area plans. These plans are formulated and driven by groups of providers and local area services working together to identify and formulate strategy and provision which meets the needs of young people in the area.
5. The 14-19 phase is an area of national focus. In the last year a range of national policy developments have led to increased focus and activity. This activity is now driving, at a relentless pace, fundamental reform and change within the phase.

**Progress and developments in the last twelve months**

6. The key driver was the launch of the White Paper 14-19: Opportunity and Excellence, which set out an ambitious Government agenda for changing patterns of learning and assessment. Its proposals include reducing the requirements of the national curriculum, increasing the range and nature of vocational qualifications from age 14, changes within the current A' Level qualifications, the introduction of functional skills within and alongside the current GCSE maths and English qualification, and the establishment of a new national entitlement. These reforms are accompanied by changes in the current funding methodology and system reform within the structure of

the Learning & Skills Council. They have also led to the introduction of an audit of the statutory agencies leadership of this 14-19 change agenda (called the Progress Check). The Progress Check is conducted by the Government Office of South West. Wiltshire had its first Progress Check in September 2006.

7. **The introduction of the Specialised Diploma** as an entitlement for all young people within the qualification framework, across all three levels of attainment and within the 14 areas of activity by 2013, is creating significant opportunities for young people and planning challenges for providers. The first five diplomas are to be introduced in September 2008. It is clear that no single institution will be able to offer all diplomas at all levels, so partnerships of providers are being asked to apply to go through the 'Gateway' assessment process. Currently applications are being prepared within all four of our partnerships to offer a range of the first five diplomas in 2008. All areas will have to be able to offer all diplomas by 2013.
8. **The development of area plans** is now underway in all four areas of the county. The table below outlines the partnership groups as they currently stand. Three of the groups have appointed a part-time local co-ordinator to support the delivery of both the local area plan and to manage the development of the new specialised diplomas. One area has undertaken specific research to understand the implications of the growth it is experiencing, especially within the Post 16 sector. Partnership planning is focusing on the needs of current groups and future cohorts of young people. This planning work covers the needs of all young people, but is focusing on those who are considered to have become disengaged from education and those who are in danger of becoming so. It also takes account of how the needs of those who are amongst the most able are met. This learning and qualification activity often takes the form of learning off the school site and can be on both a full time and modular basis. There are a number of current providers of this more specialised provision; it particularly includes vocational learning at Further Education Colleges, Springfield School and Avon Valley College.
9. **The West Wilts Federation of Secondary Schools** has been selected to join the DfES/NCSL national field trial for developing 'Next Practice Leadership which goes beyond the single institution'. The particular focus of the federation for the field trial is to develop area-wide governance and leadership of 14-19 provision. It is exploring how to establish a leadership and accountability framework which secures the development and delivery of provision that meets the needs of learners, delivers the new 14-19 entitlements and which secures the very best outcomes for all young people and the community. The Federation in this context consists of ten Specialist Schools, a FE College, Training Providers and the Chamber of Commerce working together to establish economic well-being for young people, thus increasing achievement and reducing the number of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). Several

colleagues within the Department are working closely with the Federation and DfES/NCSL as the practice develops.

The current 14-19 area partnerships:

North Wilts	Salisbury	Salisbury Plain	West Wilts
Abbeyfield School	Bishop Wordsworth's Church of England Grammar School for boys	Avon Valley College	Lavington School
Bradon Forest School	Exeter House Special School	Castledown Foundation School	Matravers School
The Corsham School	St Edmund's Church of England Girls' School	Pewsey Vale	St Augustine's Catholic School and Technology College
Devizes School	St Joseph's Catholic School	The Stonehenge School	St Laurence School
Downland School	Salisbury High School		The Clarendon College
Hardenhuish School	South Wilts Grammar School for Girls		The George Ward School
The John Bentley* School	The Trafalgar School, Downton		The John Bentley* School
Malmesbury School	Wyvern College		The John of Gaunt School
Sheldon School			Warminster Kingdown
Springfields School			Larkrise School
St John's School & Community College			Rowdeford School
St Nicholas School			
Wootton Bassett School			
Wiltshire College	Salisbury College	Salisbury College	Wiltshire College

\* John Bentley is operating in 2 areas.

10. The growth in the number of learners and in those choosing to remain in education is leading to the **need for post 16 capital growth**. This is now the responsibility of the Learning & Skills Council. The authority's officers have been working closely with the staff of the local Learning and Skills Council to support the planning and delivery of new buildings, especially for

the schools. Abbeyfield School in Chippenham has successfully gained LSC funding for the development of its new sixth form. Wootton Bassett School has recently submitted an application to support post 16 expansion as a result of their growth and an application for capital to support the growth in learner numbers by Sheldon School is planned in the coming weeks. These capital plans are taking account of the planned curriculum changes as a result of the introduction of the specialised diplomas.

11. In response to the need to provide young people with increased knowledge of what courses and programmes are available to them and to secure their future entitlement, **an on-line prospectus is being developed**. This on-line area based prospectus will be live in early 2007, for post 16 learners, covering provision which is relevant to them; it is anticipated that key stage 4 provision will be added in due course.
12. A pilot is also currently underway **developing on-line individual learning plans**. The pilot is called Plan-it and is being delivered by a commercial company, S-Cool. The individual learning plans will provide young people with a framework to plan and track their progress through the qualifications framework and the 14-19 phase and will support their personal progression.
13. To ensure that Wiltshire meets the needs of some of the most vulnerable, with regard to those young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training, **a countywide NEET strategy has been developed**. This is being led by the Connexions Service and is drawing all the key agencies and providers together to establish both accuracy of data and information, coupled with a range of activities which target the specific needs of the range of young people who find themselves categorised as NEET.
14. **Progress Check Outcome:** the statutory agencies (Local Authority and the Local Learning and Skills Council) are now subject to an audit assessment against fourteen performance indicators. It is likely that the progress check will be undertaken more than once a year and its outcomes will contribute to the Authority's Annual Performance Assessment. The performance indicators are a mixture of objective (data driven) and subjective (value based) judgements. Although benchmark comparative data is not yet available it would appear from the feedback indicators that the authority is making good progress. Where our performance is indicating improvement is required, specific action plans are being drawn up with partners. This plan is being integrated within the 14-19 Implementation Plan which is driving the delivery of our overall Strategy.
15. The Government has established a target that **50% of young people should access a Higher Level qualification**. In most cases this will require that they attend a higher education institution. In order to support this target and to develop closer working relationships between Schools, Further and Higher Education, the Aimhigher Programme was launched. Within the local area we have two partnerships, 'Aimhigher West' and 'Aimhigher Life'. The West partnership covers the schools in the North,

West and some of the Kennet schools. The Life partnership covers the schools in the South and on Salisbury Plain. The Aimhigher West partnership has been particularly successful and is able to show a positive impact on young people and as a result funding into the partnership has been increased. Attached to this report is a detailed profile of activities under this programme.

### **Challenges to be addressed**

16. Whilst standards at Key Stage 4 and post 16 remain above the national average the **rate of improvement has slowed**, especially at 5+ A\*-C, level 2. This is adding to the relentless drive of not only improving the quality of teaching and learning, but also developing and changing the curriculum offer to ensure it is more personalised, while meeting the needs of both young people and the qualification framework.
17. **Transport:** with the introduction of an entitlement to access the new specialised diplomas for all young people and the acknowledgement of specialist providers leading the offer for young people across the area, the demands on transporting young people to more than one provider will increase. Work continues in finding effective and sustainable solutions; this will however remain a substantial demand on budgets in a large rural authority.
18. As the provision within the 14-19 phase continues to undergo significant change and becomes more responsive to learners, there is a significant need for providers to have **different staff expertise and skills**. As a consequence programmes of staff development need to be established and in some cases the profile of staff within institutions will need to change.
19. **Funding:** the current funding streams to both deliver existing provision and secure future developments are constantly changing. Whilst there is funding to meet need the complexities regarding the way in which it is routed through to providers and partnerships adds to the complexity of securing sustainable provision and future development. Officers of both the Local Authority and the Learning and Skills Council are working with providers to support and manage this. However the ability to engage with long term strategic planning within a short term funding regime is a constant frustration.

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