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Annual Report on the Implementation of Area Inspection Action Plans

A summary of progress and activity from action plans developed as a result of area inspections 2004–05

September 2005

Of interest to all involved in 14–19 curriculum, widening participation, advice and guidance, learners' achievements, quality improvement

Area Inspections Summary Annual Report 2004-05

Introduction

Area Inspections were introduced in October 1999, covering initially 16 – 19 provision, with Ofsted in the lead. In March 2003, they were extended to encompass provision for learners aged 14 – 19. They look at the quality, coverage and cost-effectiveness of education and training across an area and action needed to raise standards.

Local Learning and Skills Councils and Local Authorities (LAs) are required to work together with key partners to produce area action plans in response to the findings of the area inspection reports as well as coordinate and monitor the implementation of the action plan, and report on its progress to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) National Office and ministers.

Area inspections ceased in the summer of 2005 and are partly replaced by Joint Area Reviews. By that time there will have been 52 16 – 19 area inspections and 33 14 – 19 area inspections.

This report is based on 55 annual area inspection action plan implementation reports, covering 58 local authority areas; 46 of 16 – 19 action plans and 9 of 14 – 19 plans. It is worth noting that there are in addition nine 14 – 19 post area inspection action plans upon which work has begun but which have not yet been implemented long enough to yield an annual report whilst there are eight 16 – 19 action plans where implementation has been completed. In practice the post 16-19 action plans still being implemented now cover 14 – 19 issues. The report largely covers action taken during the calendar year 2004, though there are some references to earlier periods and some aspirations for 2005.

It is important to stress that these implementation reports differ from the Ofsted area inspection reports. The inspection reports are essentially a snapshot in time, while the implementation reports cover a whole year and report on the implementation of key actions in the plan and activity over a longer period. Many of these, of course, derive from recommendations made in the inspection reports.

Executive summary

Key conclusions arising from this year's summary report largely mirror the findings of the reports in 2003 and 2004.

It is worth noting however that the trend towards improving grades in the area inspection reports suggests that there are 14 – 19 issues around strategy and leadership, access and participation, and quality and guidance which are being addressed with growing, though incomplete, success by key partners.

The reports continue to show a shift which first emerged in 2003 from purely process activities to those which make a difference, and a significant feature of the reports is the mounting evidence of improvements in achievement.

Strategy and collaboration

The way in which key partners have worked together to develop and implement coherent 14 – 19 strategies for their area has been a key theme. The main elements of this are highlighted below:

- **Strong partnership between key players, particularly local LSC, local authorities and Connexions.**
- **The development of a 14 – 19 strategy in all areas.**
- **The continuing development of 14 – 19 learner entitlements.**
- **Widespread local collaboration to offer a comprehensive curriculum offer through consortia, clusters, a common post-16 curriculum and joint timetabling.**

Flexible curriculum

Work which will make a difference to learners' choice rests upon grassroots collaboration between providers both within the schools, colleges and training providers' sector and between them. There is evidence of much innovative activity, although the precise impact will vary from area to area.

- **Much curriculum innovation.**
- **The continuing impact of the Increased Flexibility programme.**
- **The development of vocational provision pre- and post-16.**

Widening participation

A key theme from the beginning of area inspections has been the very broad range of initiatives and activities to widen participation post-16 and at 17. In particular much effort has gone into improving the awareness of, and quality of, work-based learning, raising learners' understanding of the world of work and designing programmes to address the needs of those who are not engaged, or likely to become disengaged from education and training.

- **Improvement in post-16 participation.**
- **More substantial improvement in post-17 participation.**
- **Determined efforts to address those who are NEET (young people not in education, employment or training).**
- **The success of the e2e programme in some areas.**
- **The improving management of the work experience programme.**
- **Continued efforts to promote knowledge of and esteem for work-based learning.**
- **Determined efforts to encourage young people to enter and achieve Apprenticeships.**

Advice and guidance

A particular priority for the first 16 – 19 area inspection action plans was to improve the quality of advice and guidance available to learners, parents and carers. The development of quality standards, websites and prospectuses and training for staff recorded in the implementation reports have improved the potential of impartial advice and guidance in terms of the information made available. The extent to which this has ensured that pre-16 learners in particular actually receive impartial advice and guidance is more difficult to measure.

- **Improvement in careers advice and guidance to young people about post-16 choices.**
- **Further improvement of the quality and range of prospectus information available to young people.**

Learners' achievements

One of the most encouraging features has been the evidence of improvements in learners' achievements.

- **Improvement in the percentage of learners achieving 5 A* – C at GCSE.**
- **Improvements in average points scores per student and per entry for A/AS/AVCE, often in advance of national trends.**

Quality improvement

The greater emphasis upon the value of self-assessment/ self-evaluation has led to a clearer focus on quality issues; in particular how the quality of teaching and learning may be advanced, professional development improved, and best practice shared.

- **Initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning.**
- **Promotion of continuing professional development.**
- **Sharing of best practice.**
- **Continued efforts to develop self-assessment and self-evaluation.**

A significant new feature of 14 – 19 area inspections this year has been the good grades achieved in areas where previously a 16 – 19 area inspection was carried out. This suggests that the findings of the 16 – 19 area inspections and the implementation of post area inspection action plans have clearly had a beneficial impact upon the areas involved.

The action plans by their nature embrace very many other local activities, which are the outcome of many parallel initiatives, for example the development of 14 – 19 pathfinders, local authority school improvement strategies, the development of LSC strategic area reviews and the LSC

Apprenticeship programme. The reports also reflect the growing impact of the Connexions service in seeking to improve the quality and effectiveness of advice and guidance. Other significant initiatives highlighted in the reports include the Increased Flexibility programme and Aimhigher. Many of these initiatives closely interrelate to one another.

It is worth noting that the reports were completed at the time the Tomlinson Committee was meeting but before it reported and thus also before the publication of *Education and Skills* in February 2005.

Areas were asked about any difficulties in implementing the plans. Although a range of reasons was given, the two principal were the inability to recruit staff to carry through particular actions and restrictions in funding.

Originally action plans were funded from the LSC Standards Fund and subsequently from the Local Intervention and Development Fund (LID) with top slicing to fund key actions. Although funding has come predominantly from the LSC, other partners, particularly local authorities, have also contributed. Area inspection action plan funding is now integrated within the LID budget. This raises the issue of how initiatives begun under the action plan will be continued as pressures on local LSC discretionary funding increase. Difficult decisions will have to be taken at a local level between the key partners as they try to maintain activity.

Issues not yet resolved

- **Still relatively little work on value for money.**
- **Further improvement of learner success, especially in work-based learning.**
- **Some difficulty in evaluating the impact of specific initiatives in action plans.**
- **Uncertainty about the overall impact of curriculum innovation.**

These issues are not new. Separating the specific impact of the implementation of the action plans from other initiatives has always been difficult, although action plans have often been instrumental in integrating the many initiatives for the benefit of 14 – 19 learners. Similarly, areas have had difficulty in addressing value for money issues before, though the clear trend of improving achievements is a positive feature. Although significant progress has been made with learners' success much remains to be done, particularly, but by no means exclusively, with work-based learning. The definition of success and achievements in work-based learning is an area being reviewed as part of the New Measures of Success.

It is particularly important to stress that initiatives generally take time to have impact, even with the full commitment of partners. Collaborative activity is costly in terms of staff time. One seemingly simple example illustrates the point. A common sixth form curriculum between clusters of neighbouring schools requires key decisions on the following elements:

- How are the initiatives to be funded and how will the partners share this?
- How can a common timetable be devised and what will be the impact upon the whole school timetable?
- How much time needs to be allowed for staff and learners to travel between the partners?
- How are monitoring reports on learners created and who is responsible for them?
- Where does the tutorial responsibility for learners lie?
- How will achievements be reported?

These are issues which require resolution before the partners' curriculum offer can be decided. And if, as expected, cooperation ranges across partners in different parts of the sector these issues become more demanding.

In summary these reports indicate, at the very least, significant progress in cooperation between partners on strategy, entitlement and in enhancing learners' participation and success. There remains much to be done to develop and consolidate the outcomes described here, but it is clear that areas have responded positively to the challenges identified through inspection.

A. Strategy and Collaboration

14 – 19 strategy

1. A key feature of the reports is the further progress made in the development and implementation of 14 – 19 strategies for education and training. The high level approach to strategy has been characterised by close working between the key partners particularly the local LSCs and the local authorities but also often involving the Connexions partnerships. This in turn has been strongly underpinned by the widespread development of various kinds of local consortia and other collaborative activity between education and training providers in a local area. Whichever approach has been taken, it has been marked by close working between the key partners.
2. Strategies are often underpinned by curriculum audits and learner entitlements, which can only be fully delivered if the strategy ensures learners' ready access to courses best suited to their past achievements, aptitudes and aspirations and to local skills and community needs. The development of a 14 – 19 strategy has strong links with the completion of local LSC strategic area reviews (StARs) although specific references to StARs are limited; Enfield, Hartlepool and Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea all show an effective linkage .
3. Partnership continues to grow. Local LSCs, local authorities and Connexions partnerships have strengthened their understanding and ability to work together in the interests of learners. In all areas the 14 – 19 strategies have been reviewed and developed, but the extent to which this has led to structural changes varies in each context. In contrast with earlier annual reports where there was a greater emphasis upon striking structural reorganisation, such as Brooke House Sixth Form College in Hackney and Longley Park College in Sheffield, the emphasis is more upon reshaping the relationships between existing providers.
4. More radical restructuring options are still being worked out in some areas, for example Bristol, where the development of the new North Bristol Institute has been approved. There are examples of other national initiatives, such as the Crossways Academy in Lewisham. In North Tyneside the merger of North Tyneside and Tynemouth Colleges has extended the choice and range of local progression routes up to foundation degrees. Haringey has received approval for a new Sixth Form Centre to replace four small school sixth forms in the east of the borough.
5. Some areas have specifically concluded that the existing mix of provision does not require radical restructuring. Rotherham has carried through the successful merger of Rotherham College of Art and Technology and Rother Valley colleges and has sustained its three excellence partnerships, which are carrying forward the 14 – 19 agenda and has concluded that further restructuring is not required. In

Stoke-on-Trent it was agreed that following Staffordshire LSC's review of 14 – 19 provision, post-16 restructuring was not needed. It appears that effective partnership is not necessarily dependent upon the outcomes of major changes.

6. In all areas a high level strategy has been underpinned by operational arrangements to maximise choice and minimise duplication: the key themes within these are geographical consortia, common timetabling and curriculum offers and a commitment to a learner entitlement for the area. Curriculum audits have been helpfully underpinned by agreements to share data on recruitment, retention and achievement across an area.
7. The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea for example has a sub-group to review and refine procedures for collecting and using performance data and reports annually on achievement, progression and participation across the borough. Salford has a Partnership Information Officer in post to assist with data exchanges and arrange protocols. The development of an interactive curriculum map in Suffolk is reported to be at an advanced stage.
8. In a number of these areas the working out of strategy has also led to reconsideration of the way in which the implementation of the action plan is carried forward. St Helens has consulted on cross borough collaboration clusters, has produced a borough curriculum map and agreed to review 14 – 16 vocational provision across the area. In Waltham Forest a draft 14 – 19 strategy is out for consultation. The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is revisiting its 14 – 19 Education Strategy to set out an agreed vision with appropriate actions and targets to direct work from 2005 onwards.
9. Improving the effectiveness of the strategy has led to reshaping of the structures. For example in Birmingham and Solihull the 14 – 19 strategy management group has superseded the 14 – 19 policy forum to enable a closer alignment of the local authority and the LSC and to ensure closer working with representatives of both schools and colleges. Underpinning this are the collegiate associations of providers in geographical areas to ensure maximum choice and to minimise duplication. Wolverhampton, like Birmingham, has reviewed its 14 – 19 groups to develop a 14 – 19 strategy. Wirral has also taken the route of geographical learning collaboratives within an agreed framework. The Isle of Wight has restructured with the establishment of an executive group, a 14 – 19 service group and a 14 – 19 providers' group.
10. In Bath and North East Somerset, there has been an overall review of the 14 – 19 process. This has led to the strengthening of clusters and consortia and the development of a new 14 – 19 centre. In Greenwich, the first stage of the GPlus initiative to restructure all post-16 education has now been completed. The changes have had a positive impact upon students' retention and achievements, have widened curriculum choice and have improved efficiency, with average group sizes in sixth forms rising from six in 2000 to 13.44 in 2004. Wandsworth has

reviewed its 14 – 19 forum to take the lead in sharing good practice. Enfield's strategy has also taken the route of high level collaboration strongly led by close working between the strategy teams and senior staff in colleges, schools, including special schools and Connexions. Nottingham has taken account of the need to plan across local authority boundaries and the strategy group comprises the LSC and both the City of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire local authorities. A 14 – 19 transition manager has been charged with ensuring the effective use of Progress File to enable information upon learners' achievements to be smoothly transferred between education and training providers in Greater Nottingham.

11. The high level commitment by key partners to overall local approaches to improving learner choice is supported by much evidence of practical work on the ground to implement the strategy. The implementation of the 14 – 19 strategy in Rochdale is being supported by the development of sub-groups on quality, data sharing, curriculum and inclusion. Likewise in Oxfordshire, the 14 – 19 strategy group has established sub- groups for data, special educational needs and learners at risk of disengagement. Within the county, specific projects are looking at three alternative options for Banbury and also consortia in Oxford.
12. Sefton is taking a strategic view on possible alternatives to explore – collaboration, consolidation and rationalisation. In Sandwell a high level strategic board has been established to help decision-making and ensure that the 14 – 19 learning offer enjoys the support of both key stakeholders and young people. It has developed a Partnership Working Toolkit to encourage collaboration and further off-site initiatives. Sandwell's ambitious approach shows some of the inherent difficulties in moving ahead rapidly, even when partners are working well together.

*Three consortia have been set up, two are working effectively but the third is falling significantly behind with developments. Delays in appointing the Curriculum Development Adviser meant that the team was unable to provide sufficient support to guide and develop. The timescales within the plan for the consortia are probably a little optimistic to achieve concrete and transparent collaboration.
(Sandwell)*

13. In Bath and North East Somerset, the 14 – 19 Norton Radstock cluster has been reviewed while in the city of Bath, the collaborative is moving to a common option block and 28 City of Bath College students have taken part in a new consortium course. The area is working towards the production of a convergent timetable in 2005-6.
14. Wolverhampton's city-wide offer will ensure all relevant information is passed to schools at one time. Students are moving from their home schools to access provision across the city. The practical impact of enhanced collaboration is also reported. In Enfield, 430 Key Stage 4

learners are now involved in school/college collaborative programmes, an increase of at least 150 on the preceding year. Wandsworth offers a range of collaborative activities between schools and work based training providers. Collaboration in Greenwich is reinforced by joint work not only on the restructured post-16 provision but also in collaborative bidding for the Pathfinder and sharing of specialist expertise and facilities between schools and colleges and some joint marketing.

15. The establishment of collaborative partnerships to develop and implement strategy is a universal feature of all reports, even if the membership, purpose and structure vary from place to place. Manchester's strategy is being realised through six collaborative districts each with its own action plan. However implementation of the district strategy is still at a relatively early phase. Suffolk has established 13 local partnerships and collaborative curriculum development has extended joint working well beyond previous levels.
16. A similar collaborative approach to 14 – 19 strategy is being realised in Liverpool where the Community College, in cooperation with local secondary schools is working to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum offer across the city, which is linked to an entitlement statement. Six of the collaboratives began in September 2004 and a seventh begins work in September 2005, although the form this will take is still under discussion. This is being reinforced by the development of common post-16 option blocks between the Community College and most collaborative groups. In particular this should improve access to minority subjects and to those subjects which some schools find difficult to staff. In Leeds, different alternative options are being explored. These include collaborative working by all providers on the one hand, and a review of all further education with a view to rationalisation, to include mergers and federal models, on the other. Even so collaboration across the city is not complete – 28 of 41 high schools are collaborating on 14 – 19 provision.
17. In Lewisham, the College collaborates with all local providers; a 14 – 19 strategy group for young people has been established and the 14 – 19 pathfinder has established a virtual learning environment which links all providers and enables the sharing of best practice and resources. In Lincolnshire and Rutland, with its dispersed population, one issue is that of small sixth forms: here seven local clusters are working to promote a better offer for young people. Leicester has been divided into three geographical zones under a post-16 board that includes both Connexions and work-based learning (WBL) representation. Implementation of the common approach has now moved forward to agreement on planning and entry criteria and qualifications for Level 2. Westminster's 6F partnership comprises seven schools and two colleges. It continues to develop built-in progression routes and has a shared 16-19 quality assurance network.
18. In Islington, the Pathfinder has been valuable in prompting partnership and has helped to strengthen the joint working between Connexions,

schools and colleges. A key theme is evidenced by Halton where cooperation between the sixth form college and the further education college has minimised duplication. In Hackney, the 14 – 19 strategy group has been reshaped into four task groups and a collaborative cluster approach is now being developed.

19. Those areas approaching the end of their action plans are looking to maintain and consolidate progress resulting from the plans. Doncaster Education City (DEC), for example, is seen by partners as the vehicle to transform 14 – 19 across the whole of Doncaster and will carry forward outstanding and ongoing elements of the action plan within the DEC Implementation Plan. As a result of the impact on 14 – 19 activity in the area, Salford has seen the value of continuing to fund the role of 14 – 19 Adviser through mainstream funding.

Learner entitlement

20. The vision of a learner entitlement is central to the 14 – 19 agenda. Learner entitlements first emerged with the early 16 – 19 action plans and have continued to develop and now focus on the 14 – 19 age range. Fourteen areas specifically reported on the development of an entitlement and this does not include those where it has been integral to the 14-19 strategy or is already well-established. The phases of development range from consultation to launch and are broadly aligned to the length of time over which the action plan has been implemented. The vision is realised through the availability of readily accessible high quality provision, which is tailored to learners' prior achievements and aspirations. Entitlement places the learner first. Realising the entitlement is however more difficult. It can be affected by such factors as scattered provision in rural areas or the existing range of provision, which may reflect past patterns of demand and supply or providers' planning and aspirations rather than those of learner needs.
21. Effective entitlement needs to have an integral link to strategy. In Gateshead, a strategy review event determined that future planning should be approached in terms of a learner entitlement. The Manchester entitlement's development was influenced by much consultation with young people, parents/carers, providers and support agencies and is seen as a focus for all Manchester 14 – 19 developments. Tees Valley has developed an entitlement across all its boroughs and the first draft takes its outcomes from *Every Child Matters* and translates this into the 14 – 19 context. Sefton's draft 14 – 19 minimum entitlement has been accompanied by a learner entitlement statement, which in particular assesses how far the existing curriculum matches the entitlement. The wide-ranging consultation here included elected members, parents and student groups. A long version of the entitlement has been distributed to education and training stakeholders while a shorter more user-friendly version is being produced for parents and students.

22. In Bristol a draft learner entitlement, which will establish common minimum standards for all, *Learners in Bristol*, has been established. The Isle of Wight has similarly begun work on establishing an entitlement for 14 – 19 learners with key emphasis on access to curriculum pathways, to high quality and inspiring learning environments fit for purpose, and continuous improvements in learning. In Wirral, the learner entitlement is now in the second phase and consultation has been extended to include the views of learners and parents. Suffolk's *Goals* project plans to develop access to a full entitlement and is linked to new modes of learning for Key Stage 4 and preparatory work for student Apprenticeships. An entitlement framework for special education is also being developed. The Lewisham Pledge is an entitlement for all 14 – 19 year olds, which offers a range of accredited programmes with QCA approved points. Discussions are under way with school and college senior managers to agree the nature of the offer.

Lincolnshire and Rutland's rural nature raises a particular challenge for developing a comprehensive learner entitlement, which can offer ready access to learners. The way forward here is through the development of learner entitlement clusters. This involves visits to schools where a fully integrated 14 – 19 offer has already been implemented so that the nature and costs of implementing such an entitlement in other areas can be evaluated. Awareness of skills issues has brought consultation with the local Business Forum. A minimum learner entitlement was presented to a conference attended by parents, young people and employers. The entitlement or learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has a high profile and this was redrafted after consultation with relevant groups. (Lincolnshire and Rutland)

23. In London, entitlement has been addressed through the September Guarantee in which London Connexions Partnerships and the London local LSCs will issue a guarantee which enables every year 11 learner to be supported with an offer of an appropriate learning programme or employment by the end of September. This is being introduced in September 2005 and the first cohort is the current year 11. This is particularly important as it acknowledges that learner entitlement should not be constrained by administrative boundaries.

B Flexible curriculum

24. Entitlement is also linked to the development of a flexible curriculum, which ensures that the curriculum available particularly meets learners' needs. A frequent starting point is a curriculum audit across an area. But this is underpinned by more thematic approaches, such as the development of work-related learning and the strengthening of the vocational curriculum. Reports for previous years have tended to

highlight the development specifically of post-16 Level 1 and 2 provision. There are only a few examples this year, notably Bristol, Bromley, North Tyneside, Salford, Stockport and Sefton, where there are specific references to increasing provision. However in practice, much of the curriculum innovation reported does concentrate on developments of provision at these two levels.

25. Many areas have been engaged in a 14 – 19 curriculum audit. These have, for example, been completed in Camden and Bromley. As a result, Bromley launched its Options Extra with 400 students in a Key Stage 4 alternative curriculum offer. In Liverpool there has been a review of demand for, and capacity to provide, vocational courses. In Shropshire, a county-wide curriculum analysis was carried out and a curriculum map for 14-19 providing a guide to current opportunities was created. The review of level 3 provision led to an improved vocational offer at levels 1 and 2 and a broader vocational offer in the area's four geographically-based local forums.

*Shropshire's North West Forum's broader vocational offer includes the decision to offer from September 2005 new courses in Hospitality and Catering NVQ Levels 1 and 2, Health and Social Care GCSE, Applied GCSE in Performing Arts, BTEC Sports Diploma. It also reviewed progression routes, training and development linked to a vocational offer and extension opportunities for the most able learners.
(Shropshire)*

26. There are very many examples of curriculum innovation where the priority is to strengthen vocational provision. These range from increasing the number of vocational GCSEs to the development of Apprenticeships. Sandwell's Extended Pathways programme offers a curriculum ranging from entry level to fast track AS level at Key Stage 4. Neighbouring Wolverhampton has continued to develop Level 2 courses post-16. Bristol has seen joint work by school/college modern foreign language staff to develop a vocational language course, the piloting of an outdoor education enrichment programme for post-16 learners and the extension of pre-16 vocational networks in business, health and social care. Developments in Waltham Forest include the joint delivery of health and social care courses, Level 2 BTECs in performing arts, public services, construction, sport and business. In Wandsworth the City Learning Centre and three schools have collaborated on 3 BTEC pre-16 courses. Evaluation after the first term indicated that students enjoyed the different teaching style and access to professionals when working on creative and practical assignments.
27. The Isle of Wight has established a 20 per cent common timetable between the college and the five high schools on the island and three schools have established 100 per cent common blocking of sixth form subjects. In Haringey, the commitment of partners to broaden the curriculum offer and to align timetables, has led to a significant increase in a range of pathways offered at Key Stage 4. Bath and

North East Somerset is developing five or six curriculum pathway models in two schools, which extend vocational and personalised provision: other schools in the area have a three-pathway model. In Stoke-on-Trent post-16 curriculum offers are in place between schools and colleges: for example the local Catholic college and Stoke-on-Trent College are running a single award AVCE in business. The same area provided a joint key skills residential for AVCE students from the college and two schools.

In Stockton-on-Tees curriculum flexibility cluster groups are linked to applied GCSEs. There are now six (Engineering, Health and Social Care, Leisure and Tourism, Art and Design, Science and Business). This has been helped through joint funding from both the post area inspection action plan and the 14 – 19 pathfinder. This led to a significant increase in 14-16 students accessing the flexible curriculum at school, college and a training provider. Indeed 659 young people 14-16 are taking part in courses in a training college or provider in 2004, in comparison with 60 in September 2002. (Stockton-on-Tees)

28. Wandsworth also has seen much imaginative curriculum development deriving from the mapping and planning of coherent learning pathways for all learners. Initiatives have included the Trailblazer, a vocational learning pathway in Construction, work to map vocational pathways in the creative and cultural sector, and a series of initiatives to include the curriculum offer at Key Stage 4, particularly at intermediate level.
29. There are many examples of specific vocational provision, which broaden the curriculum offer. To some extent this has been influenced by the discussion around the Tomlinson Report, but vocational developments have been going on for some years. In South Tyneside, an engineering pathway was developed between the local colleges, seven secondary and two special schools. This enabled 149 learners to work towards various engineering qualifications, for example Intermediate GNVQ/ NVQ/Level 1 Engineering.
30. In Salford, Eccles College is now offering a horticultural course supported by a base room for students with appropriate resources and equipment and the development of a range of courses covering new vocational qualifications at Levels 1 and 2. Curriculum development in Rotherham has included the Learning Grid, which delivers broadband as a virtual school. A Centre of Excellence in new technologies has developed CAD/CAM, fibre optics, CISCO Academy and new working qualifications, and has been nominated for a national training award.
31. Rochdale's curriculum networks in five vocational areas have brought together practitioners from schools, training providers and the college to offer mutual support in the development of the curriculum offer. The Health and Social Care Network has been particularly successful in ensuring all providers are involved and curriculum materials have been developed and shared on the e-portal. Sheffield has moved forward through the use of sector intermediaries with the development of eight

key vocational areas, which include engineering, construction, care and business. Fifty-five employers have signed up to support Learning for Life activities.

32. In Redcar and Cleveland, the Local Authority has led in raising awareness of vocational pathways with schools practitioners and bridging the gap between 14 – 19 providers in relation to curriculum support. Nottingham's Made in Nottingham Technicians (MINT) partnership is planning a course which leads to qualifications in theatre technical skills, lighting, sound engineering and scenery underpinned with Open College Network accreditation and a student Apprenticeship scheme.

The City's Pathfinder has had a useful impact. For example, the sports and education partnership, focusing particularly on leisure and tourism, placed young people with local employers for half a day a week over a 12 month period. There are many developments in, health and social care where partnership working has developed an enhanced GCSE curriculum programme; 400 young people are having the opportunity to experience care and occupational pathways.

(Nottingham)

33. North Tyneside has developed work-based learning pathways in engineering and has set up eight teacher networks to support vocational programmes, including applied GCSEs. Newham has seen the development of a 14 – 19 schools/college collaborative with 150 Year 10 students from 9 schools taking up a two year skill supported vocational integration programme which mixes GCSEs and vocational courses. The Let's Build building crafts facility in Canning Town has raised young people's awareness of careers in construction, including Girls into Construction. It now plans to support these young people in accessing training/Apprenticeships. In Middlesbrough a virtual learning environment rolled out to three colleges and seven school sites now has motor vehicle and health and social care courses online for school pupils. The Pertemps People Development group in Middlesbrough is working on a neighbourhood pilot, which enhances vocational opportunities for young people in a deprived ward through a basic construction skills programme.

Manchester's Key Stage 4 carousel programme offers taster vocational courses at colleges in Year 10, followed by specialisation in one area and work towards a vocational programme in Year 11. About 800 learners attended courses at City College and Manchester College of Arts and Technology with school pupils attending courses to enhance their insight into post-16 education.

(Manchester)

34. Young people in Hartlepool were encouraged through the Steps into Health Care initiative with entitlement to quality placements within the health/social service sector, which involved 30 Year 10 pupils and 20 Year 12 students. Hackney's approach to professional development encouraged providers to work across sectors and introduce vocational programmes related to school specialisms, especially in vocational areas, for example health and social care, which begins in September 2005. A programme of negotiating placements for specific skills sectors was also underway in the same area. In Bradford the Education Business Partnership has supported the development of vocational aspects of the curriculum with 940 students being able to access accreditation and training in key skills, health and safety, work experience and basic vocational qualifications.

Apprenticeships

35. The major national initiative to promote the growth of Apprenticeships is also reflected in the reports. The LSC's Young Apprenticeship (YA) programme provides a high quality route at Key Stage 4 to combine the practical application of skills and knowledge in a vocational context. It seeks to strengthen Apprenticeships from age 14.
36. Many areas report involvement in the development of Apprenticeships to strengthen the vocational offer. Examples of these include 30 places on the Young Apprenticeships programme in Leeds in business administration and motor vehicle maintenance, which involved a partnership embracing the City Council, colleges and a training provider. In Hartlepool a Young Apprenticeship Scheme in Engineering led by the college, in partnership with five schools and local employers, who provide quality industrial placements, has begun and 12 Year 10s, who having been selected, are reported to be positive and realistic about the placement element.
37. Gateshead has developed its Young Apprenticeship pilot which recruits 30 apprentices aged 14 plus to two occupational areas - business administration and engineering. The initiative has involved two secondary schools and two work-based learning providers. In Bath and North East Somerset, the Young Apprenticeship pilot, managed by Norton Radstock College, offers Level 2 vocational learning in engineering and business administration. Improved information on Apprenticeships is being planned in Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham. Birmingham and Solihull has also encouraged progression through its own vocational programme, which has similarities with the Apprenticeship programme. This has secured 300 employer responses especially from SMEs in construction, engineering and the electrical sectors – with 160 employer visits and 20 new Apprenticeship starts. At Key Stage 4 an Apprenticeships framework has been developed for young people on Level 2 qualifications with a choice of 13 vocational areas. By the end of December 2004 there had been 158 referrals across Birmingham and Solihull and 74 young people had already started on programmes in 10 vocational areas.

38. A number of other programmes have elements to encourage learners to consider progression to Apprenticeships or employers to offer them. In Nottingham work-based training at a community college aims to introduce 75 Year 11 pupils to training providers over a period of five days and to encourage them to consider entry to Apprenticeships. This followed an earlier successful event in March 2004, which led to pupils signing up for Apprenticeships. In Waltham Forest, employer engagement activity, which has focused on developing employer links for e2e and Apprenticeships has led to 23 employers showing interest in Apprenticeship and e2e programmes. Greenwich's Neighbourhood Renewal Funding has identified potential capacity for increasing Apprenticeships but this has not yet been implemented. South Thames College in Wandsworth has 50 Apprenticeships in four vocational areas. In North Tyneside, collaborative work in clusters is supporting Apprenticeship routes across all five clusters in the borough.

Work-related learning

39. The development of Work-Related Learning (WRL) commonly involving work experience is important in encouraging young learners' awareness of the world of work. The introduction of the statutory requirement for WRL at Key Stage 4 has reinforced this. Many reports give examples of the development of WRL/work experience with the very substantial involvement of employers. In Wakefield 18 schools and the two colleges have been working on a plan to deliver WRL. Stoke on Trent's WRL coordinator works closely with local schools. A target for work experience/WRL has been developed and a programme of work experience pilots is in progress. Manchester has written a draft WRL policy, supported by the Education Business Partnership and the Manchester Education Partnership, for one of its districts (Wythenshawe), which will subsequently be extended to others.
40. In Enfield the 14 – 19 strategy team has been working with the local Education Business Partnership to promote work related learning: this has involved 11 of 17 secondary schools. Wandsworth benefited from London Central's Best programme which placed over 1,000 students in work experience across an area where all boroughs are implementing action plans. In Greenwich, a work-based learning subgroup has concentrated on the work-related curriculum and over 2,500 pre-16 students have participated in work experience. The Isle of Wight held a conference on WRL in schools and how to increase employer engagement with learners. The establishment of a Young Chamber of Commerce in one of the high schools has supported the development of WRL and has improved the knowledge of business practices. It has also enhanced the motivation of the students who took part.
41. The Wirral's in-service training on WRL to schools' 14 – 19 representatives enhanced knowledge of WRL opportunities and increased the curriculum offer available. Bristol has produced a WRL directory 14-16 for distribution to schools, the local authority and Connexions for distribution of up-to-date information on work-related

vocational and flexible learning opportunities. The AP4LWEX scheme in Bath and North East Somerset enables young people to search and plan their work experience online.

42. Leeds and Rochdale have ensured that all work-related learning must lead to an accredited qualification. Rochdale's borough-wide approach led to the participation of 480 14 – 16 year-olds in WRL provided by the college and training providers. In Stockton-on-Tees 2,449 pupils in 2004-05 from 17 schools and colleges and 866 employers participating have been involved. Enhanced work placements in 2004, one day per week for 12 weeks, were provided for 22 young people in the motor vehicle and health areas.
43. Westminster has issued a WRL guidance document to students, parents, teachers and employers outlining the statutory requirements for WRL in schools, the WRL offers in Westminster itself, and the arrangements for safeguarding young learners.
44. In Nottingham, a work-related learning prospectus has 1,823 places on offer and the number of training providers offering courses has increased this year. The schools there have adopted a learning pathways curriculum that includes greater opportunity for work-related learning leading to a city achievement award. Halton has developed a 14 Plus pilot with an extended work experience programme. This has been evaluated and will now be offered to all schools. All these examples underline the widespread and concerted drive to improve the volume, quality and awareness of work experience programmes available to learners.

Increased Flexibility

45. The Increased Flexibility (IF) programme has developed further with the second and third cohorts in September 2003 and September 2004 respectively and has proved particularly valuable in enhancing understanding of pre- and post-16 routes across the sector. It has also built collaboration between schools, colleges and training providers. In many areas the numbers of young people involved in these programmes are significant. For example in Stockton, 659 young people are accessing provision through a college training provider. In Rochdale, numbers have increased with cohort 2 recruiting 50 young people in September 2003, and cohort 3 127 in September 2004. All those in cohort 3 are working towards accreditation over two years. There has been similar growth in Redcar and Cleveland (cohort 1 273, cohort 2 269 and cohort 3 376), where a particular feature has been the strong achievements on the programme. In Bath and North East Somerset, 40 young people are on the IF programme with a greater range of learning, work and life experiences for students. An external evaluation commended the Salford IF programme and particularly the emphasis on making the new applied GCSEs truly vocational.
46. There have been similar developments in Manchester with 230 students benefiting from the City College partnership and a further 207

benefiting from the MANCAT consortium. Seven courses were available and 14-19 staff development opportunities in vocational areas were enhanced. Hartlepool's two IF partnerships are supporting the schools in delivering vocational qualifications. Over 300 14 – 16 young people have taken part. A notable activity has been an online initiative with the sharing of e-learning materials. Stockport has developed an Options Broker Service and a website to provide improved opportunities for 14 – 16 year olds.

47. In West Cumbria, 835 Key Stage 4 learners are engaged on IF programmes in the current year. In Halton the established programme in Widnes has been extended to Runcorn with 166 starts in September 2003 rising to 223 in September 2004. The IF programmes in Hackney have involved half of all schools. This has involved collaboration between providers, including timetable adjustment to enable pupils to travel to other providers. Progression rates of IF students to continued education or work-based training were 87.8 per cent in 2004. Croydon is actively assessing the success and impact of IF with a planned review including a report on perceptions of teachers and learners and case studies.
48. Nottingham's experience of the IF programme has been mixed. The Ofsted report in July 2004 praised the strong management of the provision by New College and the good partnership working and the testing ground for future collaboration. However the report on IF at People's College noted that the pilot programme for cohort 1 did not meet the DfES or college targets. This was partly due to the fact that not all students were placed on the most appropriate course for their needs. There was some tendency both here and in other Nottingham colleges for schools to use the IF programme as an alternative route for under-achieving pupils. Overall however the programme has built healthy partnerships between schools and colleges.

Work-based learning

49. Initiatives to encourage and support work-based learning (WBL) continue to be a strong feature of the reports. Indeed these reach back to the first 16 – 19 area inspection reports which were commonly critical of the quality, knowledge and esteem in which WBL was held. Much effort has been expended in increasing learners' and parents' awareness of the WBL route. The reports give examples of three main approaches; the development of local networks of training providers, projects to increase learners' and parents' awareness and the development of new provision.
50. In Shropshire, the LSC has set up a WBL forum to support both quality improvement and collaboration between providers. Wakefield is seeking to increase the range of, and access to, work-related opportunities through a WBL provider network. In Stoke-on-Trent the Staffordshire Association of Work-based Learning Providers aims to increase school awareness through support for work-related learning

and through this to increase the numbers who progress to WBL. In Sefton, providers are working to coordinate their approach to initial assessment though the impact upon trainees has not yet been analysed. Feedback on Bristol's joint information on work-based learning and Apprenticeships indicated that attendees were better informed than previously.

Lincolnshire and Rutland has appointed a WBL coordinator to increase collaboration between work-based learning providers, schools and colleges, to increase knowledge of work-based learning and to establish a WBL presence to be a 'face' in each major town in the area and develop a WBL offer at all stages of a learner's career 14– 19. The two WBL coordinators are working closely with the 10 learning entitlement clusters to ensure their awareness of WBL issues.

(Lincolnshire and Rutland)

51. Leicester's analysis of WBL needs has led to the development of new provision, closely linked to a promotional campaign to increase the numbers of Apprenticeships and knowledge of WBL routes. Knowsley's forum for WBL providers supports the local LSC and Connexions aims to share best practice in meeting the needs of employers and learners and is planning a major review across the area. An interesting feature here has been the setting of targets to convert learners who have participated in New Deal to progress to Apprenticeships. Sunderland has engaged consultants to undertake a local labour market study describing employment patterns, growth areas and skill needs to be used to influence curriculum planning across all sectors.

C Widening Participation

Participation

52. National statistics upon participation do not make trend analysis easy. In particular the information available for participation at 16 and 17 for the period 2001-03 includes only post-16 participation in full time education and work-based learning and does not include the wider definition of post-16 participation which includes employer funded training and other education and training. This information is available nationally, but not by local authority area, which is the best basis for measuring the impact of the implementation of post area wide inspection action plans. It is however welcome that more up-to-date information on post-17 participation is available and local areas have reported provisional information on participation for 2004 which shows a similar upward trend to the figures from national sources.
53. All areas report initiatives to raise participation, often with success. The principal means of improving participation have been improved advice and guidance with particular emphasis on targeting those learners least likely to stay in education and training post-16, general

efforts to address the issues raised by those who are NEET and the success of the e2e programme in re-engaging disaffected learners, allied with efforts to reduce the numbers of those whose outcomes post-16 are unknown. Reports from several areas also indicate that the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) has helped to raise post-16 participation in education and training. Suffolk attributes a rise of 4 per cent to the impact of the EMA and IF programmes.

54. There is however a distinction between the groups which EMA has encouraged, that is those with some willingness to continue education and training post-16 but held back by financial pressures and the NEET group where willingness to proceed to education and training post-16 is often low, whether due to inclination, the nature of their school experience or sometimes lack of knowledge of post-16 opportunities. It is important to remember that these groups include many with sometimes multiple disadvantage – low family income, involvement with crime, ill health in various forms, drug dependency, as well as poor educational achievement. Thus, encouraging them to progress to education and training post-16 is a task not only for education and training stakeholders, but also for joint activity with many other agencies.

Participation at 16

55. The national figures for participation in full-time education and work-based learning indicate a slight upward movement from 71 per cent in 2001 to 72 per cent in 2002 and 2003. Participation trends by action plan area show a more patchy picture. In 2002, of 57 areas, 33 equalled or bettered the 2001 performance. The remaining 24 saw a fall. Less surprisingly, given that the majority of these areas have had a history of weak participation post-16, 20 of the areas were equal to, or better than, the England average, 37 were below. Similar figures were true of 2002 where 15 were equal or better than the national average. Between 2002 and 2003 participation improved or was equal to the previous year in 35 areas. In 2003, 24 areas were equal to or better than the national average. It was pleasing that participation in Inner London boroughs, many of which are implementing action plans, was comfortably above the national average for all three years.

Participation at 17

56. The national figures for participation for 2001, 2002 and 2003 indicate a similar slight upward movement as those for post-16 participation, from 58 per cent in 2001 and 2002 to 59 per cent in 2003. Turning to individual areas, the trend is rather better than that for post-16. In 2002, participation remained the same or improved in 32 areas and fell in 25 areas. The improvement from 2002 to 2003 was more substantial, 45 areas remained the same or improved while 12 fell. In 2001, 28 areas were above or equalled the national average, in 2002, 24 areas and in 2003, 27 were above or equalled the national average.

Initiatives to increase participation

57. Much effort has gone into guidance initiatives to encourage participation post-16 and to ensure that learners at Key Stage 4 in danger of ceasing all education and training at 16 are encouraged to progress. The key strategies have been to identify and support those in danger of not progressing at Key Stage 4 and efforts to improve learners' transition between pre- and post compulsory education and training. In addition there have been some interesting individual initiatives to encourage those who have dropped out at 16 to re-enter education and training. Improved guidance has commonly taken the form of close collaboration between the local Connexions partnership and schools with a key role played by their personal advisors (PAs).
58. In Wakefield, for example, a partnership agreement has been made between providers and Connexions West Yorkshire to ensure the more effective deployment of resources to support learners. In the same area research is being carried out into the guidance and support needs of young people and into means of raising their aspirations. In Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Connexions has targeted personal advisor support to 50 students in Further Education in danger of dropping out and has offered support to a further 50 students. The aim is to keep them in education and training. Transition support can also be important in supporting increases in post-16 participation.

Rotherham has used six transition advisors, each of whom has been allocated to two schools and the two special schools involved in the project. This initiative has supported 129 young people, of whom 120 are still supported. Of these young people, 56 have proceeded to college, four to a school sixth form, 16 to Modern Apprenticeships, 10 to e2e programmes and 21 to employment.

(Rotherham)

59. In Redcar and Cleveland, transition mentors and personal advisors at a new school worked together to examine and prioritise the needs of the whole Year 11 cohort at the end of the summer. Through this action, the school received feedback on the destinations of their young people and the students received earlier targeted intervention. The schools received feedback on the effectiveness of the mentoring. In Doncaster, transition mentors have also been helpful. Of 129 young people supported, 107 have positive progression outcomes to education and training post-16. In one sixth form college in the Royal Borough of Kensington the development of a structured guidance and support programme involving senior staff, the learning mentor and a Connexions PA has increased support for Foundation level students.

The hard to reach

60. Many efforts have been made to encourage and engage those in danger of slipping out of education and training at 16. In Middlesbrough, the LA Pledge Partnerships brokered vocational

programmes for individual students. Lincolnshire and Rutland has revised its assessment procedures to provide details of learner aspirations and needs for current Year 11 pupils with a statement and school action plan, followed by Year 9 and Year 10 pupil information. In Leeds, young people have been involved in the design and delivery of the Connexions programme, including the redesign of a Connexions centre. The number of personal advisors has been increased and 23 Connexions access points have been developed across the city. In addition, personal advisors have been working with young offenders.

61. In Hull, four schools with post-16 progression rates below the city average have been working in collaboration with Connexions since 2002-03 and three of the four have now increased post-16 progression. In Bristol, easy transport access to schools and colleges is seen as significant in sustaining participation. Workshops held with schools have emphasised the value of a whole school approach to transport planning. Birmingham and Solihull's local inclusion programmes have included youth engagement on Apprenticeships, the development of learning in outer estates, tackling gun and gang culture, and programmes to support teenage parents, young offenders, refugees and homeless young people. About 1,400 young people have been targeted.
62. South Tyneside has developed its e2e 'Little Bruvver' to work with disaffected young people aged 14 – 16. Projects developed by the Video College at the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea have targeted those who have missed out on education and use drama as a means of encouraging young people to explore and express ideas with the aim of developing skills and encouraging young people into high-quality training and work.

NEET and post-16 destinations unknown

63. Much attention has focused on the early identification of young people who could be NEET - not in education, employment or training - reducing those at risk of dropping out and offering programmes to engage these young people, including e2e programmes. Evidence from reports suggests a good degree of success in addressing this issue. Closely allied to this have been efforts to improve information about those whose post-16 progression is unknown. In St Helens, the number of not knowns is already small at 1.4 per cent. But beyond this the borough has been successful in tracking 100 per cent of school leavers in 2004 (2,341 young people). The Isle of Wight managed to obtain outstanding destination statistics with just four of the circa 1,750 young people leaving Year 11 remaining unknown by the end of October 2004.
64. Connexions in South Tyneside have sought to identify young people most likely to drop out of education and training and drift into the NEET category. A similar approach in Redcar and Cleveland links those identified to a personal advisor. Of the 142 young people who have

been supported by the Kick Start programme, approximately one quarter have subsequently moved into work, education or training. Stockport has developed an 'At Risk of Disengagement Group' to work with Connexions in order to work with vulnerable young people. Barking and Dagenham has a Lift into Employment project where young people at risk of dropping out of Year 11 receive a short course in employability skills. Young people have responded positively to this and all have completed the course successfully.

65. Vocational tasters with OCN accreditation at Waltham Forest College with core skills support have been aimed at young people at risk of disengagement. The tasters had OCN accreditation. Of those taking part 83 per cent completed with full/partial achievement of accreditation and 56 per cent were retained in education. In Croydon work between schools and post-16 franchisers has developed vocational provision particularly aimed at those learners who are in danger of becoming NEET. Stockton's Learning Wards initiative has provided additional support in five of the most disadvantaged areas of the borough through a personal advisor working on an outreach basis. Leicester has a city-wide partnership to support those who are NEET. A distinctive feature in Hull is that a consortium of voluntary and community organisations has set a target which aims to re-engage a minimum of 150 NEET young people aged 15 – 19. The consortium has particular expertise in working with hard to reach young people.

In Hartlepool, a distinctive project tracked those who have left school apparently without entering further education or training and sought to re-engage them in education and training. Of 186 traced and contacted, 40 were in employment, 28 in education and 36 in training. Of the remainder, 51 were still being supported while despite continuing approaches and maintaining contact, 45 refused to engage in education or training.
(Hartlepool)

66. A number of areas indicate success in reducing the numbers in the NEET category. In Nottingham, Connexions and the local LSC have worked together and have been successful in reducing the proportion of those who are NEET to 7.9 per cent. Bath and North East Somerset's NEET target was 4.9 per cent, but the area managed to reduce the figure to 4.3 per cent. The target for those whose destination was unknown was 5.0 per cent; in fact this was reduced to 4.2 per cent. Islington noted in particular the reduction of 14 per cent in those in the NEET category aged 17. In Manchester area-wide tracking has supported the funding of young people in the NEET category and additional outreach provision has been created to meet their needs. The number of young people whose destination is unknown has fallen slightly from 4.97 per cent in 2003 to 4.38 per cent in 2004 while the number of young people in the NEET category has fallen from 12.18 per cent to 9.65 per cent.

e2e

67. A further major feature in raising participation is the provision of post-16 courses suited to those with lower achievements at Key Stage 4. An important part is played here by the e2e programmes upon which many areas have reported. Given that these programmes address the needs of many with poor achievements at 16, and offer a new start in terms of education and training, they are significant in promoting participation. For example, in St Helens there were 310 e2e starts and of these 40 per cent proceeded to positive outcomes – 23 per cent into employment, 12 per cent to work-based learning and 5 per cent to further education. Initial assessment has been reviewed, as have all those learners who have been on programme for more than 22 weeks. In Redcar and Cleveland e2e achievement was 65 per cent (from 73 starters). In Knowsley, 40 per cent of the 700 taking e2e provision progressed to further education and training. Oxfordshire's e2e Partnership has conducted research into companies, which will accept e2e learners, and participation was high with positive outcomes. Leeds has promoted e2e through a city-wide work based learning partnership with 235 new learners since August, while in 2003-04, 882 learners took part in the programme.
68. LSC funding support to Camden to improve e2e provision led to more starts and a wider range of vocational programmes. Keswick in West Cumbria has seen the establishment of e2e to address the limited range of provision below Level 3 in the Derwent Valley. The Wirral held an e2e capacity event, which led to the securing of additional e2e providers. Interestingly the NEET percentage in the areas was reduced from 10.78 per cent in 2003 to 8.9 per cent in 2004. In Hartlepool, the outcomes of e2e were more disappointing: of 81 starters there were only 29 positive outcomes. Analysis of this indicated the need for a bridging pre-e2e course (as some other areas have developed). In Gateshead the focus for e2e has been on young offenders and care leavers. In 2004, e2e has been open to all learners entering the training sector with lower than Level 2 progression (27 per cent to July 2004 and 49 per cent to December 2004). Bradford reported that e2e has raised participation and improved the range of provision at entry and foundation level but, despite greater funding, it was still proving difficult to cope with the scale of demand.

The Education Maintenance Allowance

69. The universal extension of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) has undoubtedly contributed to raising participation and most probably to retention on course. The take up in Shropshire, already an area of high participation post-16, exceeded expectations and by December 2004 was 77.8 per cent, above the national percentage of 75 per cent. Redcar and Cleveland's numbers taking up EMA - 890 - exceeded the eligibility of borough residents, due presumably to inflows

from neighbouring boroughs. In Wolverhampton, 85 per cent are receiving the EMA allowance and the number of applications exceeded the DfES estimate.

70. In Middlesbrough, estimates of EMA applications of 1,030 have been greatly exceeded at 2,134, 1,669 of which had already been supported at the end of 2004. But this also mirrors the very high figures of participation in the North East generally and in Tees Valley in particular. Waltham Forest established a successful EMA partnership, which included an event to assist students with application forms, linked to the more general strategy of engaging young people in the borough. Hull reports that the introduction of EMA has a continuing positive impact upon retention at the three colleges of further education. In particular retention in learning of EMA students is significantly above that of non-EMA students.

Equality and diversity

71. Equality and diversity informs all the work in implementing action plans and examples of this will be found throughout the report. Some specific examples are given here. Many of these are concerned with learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and how their needs can best be met. Work has also focused on the needs of young people from black and minority ethnic groups (BME). In South Tyneside, partners have worked together on a study to identify learning and WBL opportunities for 14-19 year old young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In Sefton, the current learner support practice for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has been reviewed with particular emphasis upon ensuring that costed learning packages are available well in advance of a young person's point of transition. An initial audit of this notes some of the adverse implications of the funding system for coherent policy.

The funding systems across the sectors are differently administered with the complexities of prioritising need, for example the extremes of high cost of output of borough residential support needs, against, for example, high achieving young people, in mainstream education with undiagnosed dyslexia.

(Sefton)

72. This is supported by the development of mentoring systems for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities entering education and training post-16. Bristol has carried out a consultation and evaluation of existing provision for young people with special needs, has identified provision gaps and is now working with partners to fill these. In the Wirral additional funding has been secured to address the needs of younger people who are homeless, young people whose families are affected by long term unemployment, teenage parents, young people leaving care and black and minority ethnic young people.

73. In Redcar and Cleveland, a dyslexia awareness project was completed at the end of 2004, including initial training in the use of screening. This has provided training for 270 teachers in Tees Valley, 32 of whom are from Redcar and Cleveland. The same area has mounted workshops on equality and diversity and disability equality training. Leicester has also developed strategies to focus on learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and identified minority groups, which had additional support from Connexions. Similar training also took place in Middlesbrough. In Leeds, work is proceeding on the offer of support for 60 young people on supported employment courses, including 20 with mental health problems.
74. Waltham Forest commissioned research on factors influencing the transition of BME students at Key Stage 4. This indicated that the quality of advice and guidance at open days had a significant positive impact upon these students' choices to attend post-16 institutions. Croydon's 14-19 Partnership has commissioned research to collect participation, retention and achievement data by gender educational need and ethnicity. This is to test anecdotal evidence of a perceived ethnic profile of colleges, which might play a role in discouraging applications from some students. Walsall has engaged project workers to address WBL inequalities within the BME and Young Asian Women community. Their 14-19 Newsletter has been used to highlight the many success stories.
75. An interesting example in Redcar and Cleveland of the challenges to gender stereotyping of employment categories is provided by the well-established programme to encourage young people from three schools who have been involved in courses run by the Fire Service. These allowed girls to challenge traditional stereotypes and build up their confidence. In Brent, John Kelly Girls Technology College has a project to integrate young refugees into the UK school system. White Hart Lane School in Haringey received funding to provide targeted support to 30 late arriving students who have all been successfully integrated into school and are showing signs of progress particularly in the acquisition of English.
76. More generally there have been initiatives to promote awareness of cultural diversity. For example, in Newham a conference on cultural harmony concentrated on young people's experience in a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic environment. Students from three Newham schools visited two New York Schools to explore attitudes to the cultural harmony agenda.

D Advice and Guidance for Young People

Policy and structure

77. The effective provision and delivery of information and guidance by schools, colleges and the Connexions partnerships is critical to enabling students to make successful transitions at 16 plus. The relationship between the Connexions service and information, advice

and guidance (IAG) in schools has been reviewed in many areas. The improvement of advice and guidance has been secured through partnership agreements with Connexions in Sheffield. A review of provision led to the appointment of a senior advisor. A total of 12 local schools now have the Sheffield kitemark for careers education and guidance (CEG) and a further seven are working towards it. In Sefton, a coordinated quality framework for staff engaged in IAG has been developed and more institutions have taken up the award. However the growth in demand is more than can be met by the current level of qualified assessors in the borough. IAG has also been supported by two major training events for Connexions and institutions staff involved in the information and advice role.

78. The restructuring of the Isle of Wight Connexions team has increased the number of personal advisors and has now created an education and community team with a small cross-functional centre team. The education team is introducing a one-to-one interview for all those in Year 11 and young people in the NEET group are now seen on a drop-in basis. In the Wirral, staff are working towards the Diploma in Careers Guidance. Nottingham's Connexions online has given a wide range of support to young people on personal and careers development and for example its vacancy service on the web averages 5,000 hits per month. In Middlesbrough, careers guidance for schools has been reviewed particularly to increase the awareness of work-based learning and increased involvement in vocational staffing in careers guidance.
79. Lincolnshire and Rutland has set a target to increase the proportion of schools achieving the East Midlands Quality Standard for Careers Education and quality standards for all Connexions access points have been introduced. In Knowsley, significant funding has been allocated to improve careers library resources. This includes a CD-Rom to update teachers and support staff on courses and progression opportunities for young people. A new careers education programme for Years 10 and 11 has been introduced. Careers coordinators have also been consulted on training needs. Islington has also concentrated on the need to improve careers advice and guidance in order to raise learners' aspirations and motivation. An additional higher education advisor has been appointed to improve careers advice and post-16 staff have received three days' training with a consultant. In Hackney, Connexions is working with partners to ensure at least five days of qualified careers advice, which will enable 240 additional students in Year 10 to have individual action plans. Camden has set up a practitioners' network for IAG involving the use of a quality checklist and an audit to improve the training of teachers who will deliver guidance.

Improving the quality of advice and guidance

80. One of the most significant features of the implementation of area inspection action plans from the earliest days has been the determined

and sustained effort to improve the quality of advice and guidance and access to it by young people, parents, carers and sponsors. This has taken many forms but particularly the development of improved prospectus information, whether paper-based or electronic, strengthened information advice and guidance procedures and a broad range of careers fairs, open days and taster sessions which offer young people the opportunity to receive and question the advice available. Care has also been taken to improve the match between guidance and individual young people's needs. The overall approach has embraced Connexions, schools, colleges and training providers as well as the local LSC and the local authorities. All see improved IAG as a means of better matching learners' aspirations with the provision available in a local area and of ensuring that young people do not enter courses unsuited to their aspirations and/or abilities.

81. In Enfield, the Guidance Charter ensures all young people have access to comprehensive and high quality advice and guidance. In West Cumbria, Connexions has carried out a comprehensive audit and evaluation of access to impartial information advice and guidance. The quality of advice and guidance is therefore also relevant to learners' retention and success. In view of proposed forthcoming changes to the structure of advice and guidance it is worth noting the growing strength of collaboration, which the reports indicate.

Prospectus and course directory development

82. All areas have concentrated on the improvement of both paper-based and electronic prospectus and course directory information, also valuable in strengthening the impartiality of advice. Not all of this is aimed at Year 11 but very often earlier in the learner's school career. So, for example Brent's 'Look Ahead' magazine is distributed to all Year 9 learners, which is when the crucial careers choices are taken for Key Stage 4. Sunderland has developed a CD-Rom for Year 9 options and aims to incorporate video clips for 2005. In Stockton on Tees both paper-based and an online alternative guide to learning has been produced. Development of an interactive active e-based prospectus is also under way.
83. Wolverhampton's Coursefinder is a web-based directory of courses. St Helens' post-16 booklet UP2U has been made available to all Year 11 learners. South Tyneside has similarly produced an online borough wide prospectus of post-16 opportunities for young people there and in Tyne and Wear more generally. The website also gives young people the opportunity to feed back their views about its effectiveness. Connexions and the LSC in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea produce a filofax detailing post-16 options.
84. Oxfordshire has developed a wide-ranging approach with improved guidance for a range of learners, including a searchable CD 'Choices at 17+' sent to all schools. Similar kinds of prospectuses have been produced by Liverpool, Lewisham, Gateshead, Enfield, Doncaster

(where the borough-wide prospectus is in its third year and the web-based prospectus in its second year) and in Bradford where the Your Choice pack has been developed and distributed (under the guidance of the Bradford Confederations manager). Croydon has produced a progression pathways publication identifying local work-based learning opportunities for students after KS4.

85. These are just a few examples of a common feature, which has improved the quality and range of information available and has also strengthened the impartiality of guidance. It is particularly worth noting that these areas already have in place comprehensive information on opportunities for young people of the kind that is proposed in the White Paper and in the more recent Green Paper Youth Matters.
86. A number of areas are also seeking to develop a more a coordinated applications system post-16 to minimise duplication and reduce confusion. In Stockport, all four colleges have launched the Stockport Enquiry Form in which learners can request information from any or all of the four colleges. Connexions acts as a clearing house for forwarding requests to colleges. The main aim is to improve understanding of the curriculum offer and to ensure that impartial advice and guidance is given. Sheffield has been piloting a common application form for work-based learning and has produced a directory of work-based learning provision.

Open days/taster events

87. The availability of course information is backed up by many opportunities for learners and their parents and carers to receive information either through careers events or taster/sample courses in colleges. A few examples of these include South Tyneside's tertiary evenings and open days in eight of its ten secondary schools, with two combining with a parents' evening, which over 1,500 young people attended. Over 650 attended a sixth form open evening, 800 a careers fair and strikingly 500 a work-based learning providers' event. The Red Hot Rotherham Skills Fair was attended by 1,700 learners from 13 secondary schools. Among vocational oriented developments here were Chemistry and Careers Events run with the University of Sheffield. This included reactive colour chemistry topics for Levels 2 and 3 in science. In Rochdale 2000 young learners attended the HE Fair to help progression post-16 and the feedback indicated that Aimhigher awareness among Year 9 pupils was increased.
88. In Wandsworth, a motivational event for students aged 13 - 19 was held and was attended by over 500 students with 50 parents, with 65 per cent female attendance and 50 per cent African-Caribbean students. A joint LSC/Connexions event '2 Heavy' was held in Haringey to promote the options and support open to young people. In West Cumbria, half-day vocational tasters were piloted with WBL and FE providers for Level 2 students on one-year sixth form courses in September 2004. In Camden the local LSC provided funding for many

small scale projects such as young peoples' taster sessions with employers at entry level for beauty and construction, health and social care, hospitality and other vocational areas. In Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham Business Link West London commissioned seven projects, which aimed to raise achievements through employer links with work-related learning and the vocational curriculum. This included alerting activities such as careers fairs and active support for learners across the whole ability range, including those with moderate and severe learning difficulties.

Aimhigher and access to higher education

89. If raising participation at 16 is an important theme, then so also is increasing progression to higher education. The progress of initiatives to increase access to higher education is frequently reported. Principal emphasis is upon the progress of the Aimhigher initiatives designed to encourage access to higher education by young people from families and communities where this has been uncommon. However other parallel initiatives are also noted, for example encouraging those who are on the work-based learning route to consider progression to higher education. In Middlesbrough, the Aimhigher roadshow was attended by 400. This was supported by aspiration visits to the University of Teesside. Those attending included 128 parents. The university has also made contact with 2,414 school pupils through visits: 1,388 post-16 college students have visited the university.
90. In South Tyneside the Education Business Partnership particularly targeted Year 10 learners from disadvantaged backgrounds with the capacity to progress to higher education. An evaluation of the Aimhigher programme in Westminster and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea commended the 'inclusive, appropriate and challenging' menu of activities offered. An Aimhigher 'Changing Attitudes' campaign was aimed particularly at parents: 115 attended, 28 visited the University of York and 12 the University of Northumbria. The very substantial Aimhigher project in Leeds involved 41 high schools, seven colleges of Further Education, the sixth form college, higher education, the city council and 80 businesses. Sunderland has produced posters for schools highlighting past students' success at HE. Enfield has established formal links through the Aimhigher Team with the Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture to improve access to and participation in higher education.
91. In Wandsworth, applications to the Higher Education Funding Council Summer School were oversubscribed. And in the same area a CD-ROM was developed which both developed skills in music technology and gave advice on different music courses at FE and HE level. In Bristol, a Level 3 tutor training course on Higher Education was run by staff for students' services at the University of the West of England. This aimed to improve the advice, guidance and support given to young people in Bristol applying to higher education. Barking and Dagenham has supported the funding of a Connexions secondee to

support UCAS applications. In Leeds the numbers progressing to higher education have increased by 12.3 per cent in 2004 in comparison with a target of 4 per cent. A partnership with Oxford and Cambridge universities to provide support for potential applicants has brought the participation of 100 students.

92. Many areas use mentors to encourage learners' aspirations to enter higher education. In Middlesbrough the value of the Aimhigher mentors in encouraging applications for higher education was noted - with six mentors in colleges and 25 in secondary schools. In Lewisham, learners' mentoring was aimed particularly at encouraging black, Turkish and white working class underachievers to aspire to entry to higher education. In Wandsworth, an e-mentoring project matched 81 young people to mentors, provided for the training of a further 50 mentors and involved six schools. Mentors were also a feature of Halton's Aimhigher project. Mentors are now offered to all schools with sixth forms and one FE College. Graduate mentors attend all parents' evenings. Progression to higher education has increased by 3 per cent over a two-year period.

E Learners' Achievements

93. The impact of action plan implementations on learners' achievements is necessarily slower to produce evidence of improvement than the results of improved advice and guidance, which can be achieved more rapidly. This year's evidence, both specifically statistical and in terms of individual area initiatives, continues the broadly positive picture, which emerged in 2003. However the majority of areas remain below national averages – of course often the reason they were initially selected for inspection – though the gap between them and the average is narrowing.

GCSE achievements

94. The overall national percentage of students obtaining five passes at GCSE grades A*-C rose from 52.9 in 2003 to 53.7 in 2004. The percentage of students obtaining at least five passes A*-G remained unchanged at 88.8. The percentage obtaining no passes fell substantially from 5.2 to 4.2.
95. Against this background the areas did well. Forty of 57 areas improved the 5 A*-C pass rate between 2003 and 2004, in some cases significantly. For example Barking and Dagenham rose from 46.3 to 49.3 per cent, Brent from 50.7 to 54.5, Greenwich from 35.5 to 40.2, Hackney from 39.2 to 45.1, Knowsley from 33.5 to 38.1, Liverpool from 41.3 to 44.2, Rochdale from 41.3 to 46.3 and South Tyneside from 43.5 to 46.6 whilst between 2001 and 2004 Haringey have improved the GCSE A*-C pass rate from 39 to 43.1 per cent. Generally where there were falls they were small and only two, Manchester and Stockton-on-Tees, exceeded 1 per cent.

96. For passes A*-G the picture was slightly less positive. In 2004, 32 areas equalled or improved their 2003 performance. The percentage of learners achieving no passes remained the same or fell in 52 areas and in three others stayed the same. Some of the percentage falls were significant, Bristol from 11.3 to 9.0, Knowsley from 14.4 to 10.5, and Manchester from 11.2 to 8.0.
97. In relation to national averages, area achievements were again encouraging. In 2003, 14 areas equalled or exceeded the national average pass rate for five A*-C and in 2004, 12 areas also equalled or exceeded the national pass rate. For those achieving five A*-G passes in 2003, 28 equalled or exceeded the national average. In 2004, 24 achieved better than the national average for that year. For those achieving no passes the percentage figures were equal to, or lower than, the national average for 2003 in 27 areas and for 2004 in 24 areas. The national average improved between the two years from 5.25 achieving no passes in 2003 to 4.2 per cent in 2004. It is good to note that in 52 areas the percentage achieving no passes fell between 2003 and 2004.

A/AS/AVCE achievements

98. Nationally average points score per student improved from 258.9 in 2003 to 269.2 in 2004. Average points scores per entry improved from 77.4 to 78.7 in the same period. Areas did fairly well by this measure. In terms of average points score per student 45 areas improved. Of greater significance 24 of the 45 areas improved at a faster rate than the national trend. The position for average points score per entry was similar: 45 areas improved between the two years and, of the 41, 31 improved at a faster rate than the national average.

Work-based learning achievements

99. All reports contain information upon learners' achievements in work-based learning. Historically this has been an area with poor achievements, by whichever category, foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA), advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA) who have completed the full framework or those who have achieved at least one NVQ (a partial award). The figures for 2004 are respectively 32 per cent, 30 per cent and 46 per cent. So in no categories do even half the learners succeed. The statistics contained in the reports vary from those for each area to those covering the whole LSC in which the area is situated. Considering this caveat, 19 areas equalled or exceed the national average for FMA, 26 for AMA and 19 for achieving at least one NVQ.

Improving retention and achievement

100. Approaches to improving learners' success have broadly taken three routes: improved tracking of learners and data, efforts to improve learners' retention and achievements across an area, often linked to targets and specific initiatives aimed at particular groups of students.

Examples of tracking include St Helens where the local authority and Connexions have agreed a protocol to track early leavers and in particular information has been gathered on school sixth forms, teenage mothers, young offenders and children in care. A retention task group has been established in the same area. Salford uses Progress File to record and review progress for over 2,000 learners in schools, the 3 colleges, special schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) in order to support progression at 16, 17 and 19 and is producing good practice guides to their use. Sandwell is piloting two Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) with the aim of rolling out to all 14 year olds from September.

101. In Shropshire, there is systematic monitoring of retention and achievements with half-termly reports linked to a red/amber intervention system. Best practice is identified and coded blue. Retention and achievement data in the county is closely monitored and a data group has been established to share, monitor and review performance indicators. In Hackney the Responsive College Unit has been commissioned to collate and analyse achievement data for 16-19 year olds across Hackney and is setting a baseline against which future improvement targets can be measured. Targeting, particularly for groups, which have traditionally performed poorly, is also in place. In Greenwich, a strong emphasis upon retention has increased retention on full time post-16 courses over the past three years and retention to year 13 as measured as a percentage of the Year 11 cohort two years earlier has risen from 28.6 to 34 per cent in 2003, exceeding a local target of 30 per cent. Participation initiatives which focus upon retention and achievement include the St Helens task group drawing upon good practice locally and nationally to develop a retention framework including baselines for school sixth forms.
102. There are many local initiatives targeted at particular groups of learners. In Wandsworth, 200 A2 and AS students attended a range of intensive subject specific enrichment classes and increased their average point score from 11.9 to 12.5. Wirral is developing a framework of good practice in retention for implementation across all providers on the Wirral. In Waltham Forest, a programme has been developed which aims to retain young people at the end of year 1 of a Level 3 course in both the borough's sixth form colleges. In the same area a project has been developed to keep young people in work-based learning. Sunderland targeted 35 young people on WBL schemes identified by schools and Connexions as requiring extra support. At the end of the project 28 were still in learning, two had progressed to an FMA and two to employment. Additionally providers commented on improved attendance, timekeeping and behaviour.
103. Redcar and Cleveland has had a major focus upon young people in pre- and post-16 education and training. In seeking to raise achievement, Oxfordshire has targeted asylum seekers, students moving between schools, young people in PRUs and care, travellers

and circus/fairground families. Brent schools have set targets for individual learners. Leeds has worked hard to ensure an increase in high quality work based learning and work related outcomes. This includes 340 Year 11 pupils obtaining basic skills qualifications.

104. Rochdale's learning achievement support workers help post-16 learners most at risk, including 94 with complex needs. North Tyneside's focus upon raising achievement for learners at Key Stage 4 has led to the area's best ever GCSE results. Lewisham's cross borough celebration of achievement in June 2004 was organised by learners. Retention workers were employed through Connexions to reduce the number of students dropping out. In Hull, the colleges and the school sixth forms have adopted retention boosting measures including early follow up of absence, improved identification of students at risk of dropping out, targeted use of learning mentors to support students at risk, the use of management information to track students at risk, the enhanced role of personal tutors and improved referral systems. Work-based learning providers have also identified those who may drop out early and measures have been taken to improve learners' awareness of the course they are undertaking.
105. Bradford is using retention and achievement coordinators who are working with WBL providers. This is already having a positive impact upon apprenticeship success rates, which have risen from 20 per cent to 24.2 per cent (FMA) and from 27 per cent to 35.6 per cent (AMA). Outcomes vary but Brent cites improvements in post-16 GCE A-level and AVCE results, lower completion rates for WBL but e2e progression slightly above the West London average. In some areas there has been a review of qualifications available to improve success. For example in Manchester the central district is considering more appropriate qualifications to develop literacy and numeracy skills and all six districts are reviewing the accreditation of vocational subjects.

F Quality Improvement

Improving the quality of teaching and learning

106. A key element of the improvement agenda is the thrust to improve the quality of teaching and learning to enhance learners' satisfaction with their experience in education and training and to enable more to succeed. Initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning fall largely into two areas – the spreading of innovative good practice and continuing professional development (CPD). CPD initiatives included more structured schemes for the observation of teaching and learning with provision for feedback from the tutor observing and the teacher observed. Interestingly a Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) report produced for the Wirral led to the adoption of key priorities in improving the use of learner satisfaction surveys, developing common teaching and learning observation systems and producing a framework of good practice with a network of teachers to share the good practice.

107. Examples of good practice transfer in teaching and learning are commonly reported. In Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham independent learning was promoted through improved tutorial support and student review and this will be linked to a strategy for online individual learning plans. A pilot of 500 pupils completed online individual learning plans (ILPs) with tutor support. In Middlesbrough a conference on effective differentiation in teaching methods was attended by 35 college staff. Barking and Dagenham produced three videos to exemplify good practice; two were from schools, one from a training provider. A fourth video reflecting best practice in further education colleges is being produced. All institutions in the local partnership have received the videos with guidance on use in self-assessment. The Wirral has developed a common teaching and learning observation system and is developing a network of teachers of post-16 students to share good practice in teaching and learning.
108. Continuing professional development (CPD) is a significant feature in improving the quality of teaching and learning. In Sandwell stakeholders have come together to combine the CPD offer in the borough and are producing a directory of programmes open to staff from all organisations. St Helens has established a centre for professional development with a summer programme of development events, a WBL network and discussion of provider priorities in CPD. The programme has included mentoring, coaching, learning styles and the use of ICT. A key skills network has also been established to improve the quality of the teaching and assessment of key skills in work-based learning. Tees Valley's quality improvement project has included five training providers in Redcar and Cleveland. This has involved consultant visits to support improvement and the use of benchmarking data to measure progress.

Bath and North East Somerset used INSET to develop generic teaching skills integrated with subject work in classrooms to ensure appropriate advice to students on learning styles. The same area promoted a 'learning raid'; a best practice programme of visits to innovative provision and alternative approaches.

(Bath and NE Somerset)

109. In Middlesbrough, support for work-based training staff enabled 11 of 14 to achieve an NVQ Level 4 and 234 staff are undertaking Levels 3 and 4 (ENTO). Initiatives to improve teaching and learning through observation were reported by Stockport and Manchester where an observation project helped staff to undertake observation, identify staff development needs which arose from this and the development of new criteria for observation. This involved the training of staff in ten organisations. Seven providers developed new observation forms. Six

developed their policy and procedures and four were trained in effective observation skills.

In West Cumbria, there was support for teaching and learning through the e-learning strand of the 14-19 Pathfinder, which include the issue of a guide to web-based revision. Positive evaluation indicates that e-learning is supporting delivery and revision for a range of courses.

(West Cumbria)

Quality improvement strategies

110. All areas have developed quality strategies to secure improvement. In common with government policy there is an increased emphasis upon the use of self-evaluation/self-assessment to recognise providers' lead responsibility for improvement. Value-added and continuing professional development are also important elements. Shropshire's overarching strategy is linked to performance management and contract management and the area has no learners in provision with significant weaknesses. In Suffolk, draft protocols have been developed for post-16 providers causing concern, with intervention and support strategies in place. In St Helens an area-wide pilot of performance review, involving all 11 – 18 schools has supported quality improvement in school sixth forms using an LSC performance framework, which involves all 11 – 18 schools. The LSC and the local authority are working together to share outcomes and have set up a post-16 quality forum. St Helens is also working with Knowsley in piloting a quality monitoring framework.
111. In South Tyneside, providers have agreed a set of principles for a quality standard. Nottingham has developed a self-evaluation framework aiming at improving the quality assurance framework for alternative provision. Both City and County local authorities will trial and then make available the framework. In St Helens, a school sixth form review has used the LSC performance framework and a post-16 quality forum has been formed. Both St Helens and Knowsley are involved in piloting a quality monitoring framework to support the development of 14-16 collaborative provision. In North Tyneside the further development of a cross-sector quality assurance framework with benchmarking and quality assurance performance indicators aims to support the drive to raising standards. Leeds has endorsed a quality standard for 14-16 work based learning and is collating and analysing performance data at provider level. All Year 10/11 courses must now be accredited.
112. Another significant development linking both quality and curriculum is the development of the Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs). A few reports do make significant references to CoVE developments, notably Leeds, with its five CoVEs, Stockport with two new CoVEs, Rotherham, and reports from Central London LSC which has 15

CoVEs altogether. The additional investment in these centres is raising standards and opening up opportunities in a wide range of occupational areas.

Self-assessment

113. The development of better understanding and use of self-evaluation/self-assessment systems has been universal. Brent has used self-assessment/self-evaluation to ensure that all providers are involved in strategy development and in particular the development of self-evaluation. All Brent schools complete an annual self-evaluation including post-16 provision. In Sefton, all institutions are now using self-assessment and quality frameworks, compatible with the Ofsted common assessment framework, are being established. In Rochdale, a borough-wide 14 – 19 self-assessment has been agreed and associated documents give advice on good practice. Nottingham has developed a self-evaluation framework with all key partners. Leicester has established a common process for self-assessment across both schools and further education and the zones are starting work on self-assessment. Similar developments are taking place in Hull, Gateshead and Camden where a conference of all providers brought about a broad consensus on the significant elements of self-assessment and self-evaluation. In Enfield all providers use a common summary reporting format.

Value-added

114. The adoption of common value-added systems across an area began to be implemented with the first 16-19 action plans and has now spread further. Examples reported this year include Sefton, where all institutions are now using ALPS and the Knowsley model has been adopted for measuring the value-added by vocational provision. Liverpool has also adopted the Knowsley model and is developing common value-added systems across the sector. In Hull value-added models for the WBL sector are under discussion. Halton is evaluating alternative value-added systems including ALPS, which the local authority is currently using and the Knowsley Collegiate system for value added.
115. Bromley's value-added project has ensured that all schools, colleges and the local authority are provided with both ALIS and ALPS for evaluation and for professional development. In Bath and North East Somerset, schools and colleges are taking a common approach to value-added, using ALIS and DfES methodology to assess the benefits and advantages of such approaches. In Bristol, a sub-group of the steering group is looking at piloting the wider measures of value-added and distance travelled. The growing use of and understanding of value-added systems provide a good foundation for the successful introduction of the new measures in value added and distance travelled.

Best practice

116. There are many examples of the spreading of best practice. In Sefton, the IF programme has begun to build up an exchange of good practice. In Redcar and Cleveland, a quality improvement project for 13 training providers' websites has developed a website to access best practice and also to use benchmarking data to measure the impact of the project. In Oxfordshire, best practice is being moved forward by schools sharing key stage 3, GCSE and GCE results analysis and this feeds into shared target data for the 14 – 19 strategy. Newham has promoted LSC-funded workshops for WBL and FE providers to improve the quality of provision and to learn from good practice models, such as improving employer engagement and three-year development plans.
117. In the Birmingham Collegiate system, Joseph Chamberlain Sixth Form College, a beacon college, will disseminate good practice to other colleges through its work with local ethnic minority groups and the provision of community languages. Bradford's education business partnership has hosted three conferences for the dissemination of good practice on work-related learning and work experience, enterprise education and the celebration of best practice and has used its website to communicate effectively with partners, to share and disseminate information and to trail three different pilot development programmes in identified priority areas.

Assessing the impact

118. As was noted in the introduction, assessing the specific impact of area inspections is difficult to distinguish from the wide range of programmes and initiatives they embrace. However carrying out a 14 – 19 area inspection in an area which had previously experienced a 16 – 19 inspection is a useful measure. Taking the 27 graded 14 – 19 area inspection reports which have been published the overall picture is as follows,

Outstanding	1
Good	9
Satisfactory	14
Unsatisfactory	2
Weak	1

119. Of the six areas where an area inspection had previously taken place the outcomes were:

Outstanding	1
Good	3
Satisfactory	2

None were unsatisfactory or weak.

120. Although exact comparisons are not possible, since 16-19 area inspections were not graded, analysis of their outcomes indicates that inspectors identified many weaknesses. And although there were some differences in the framework overall, 14 – 19 area inspections covered similar issues to those for 16-19, if with a wider age range. So in broad terms, the 14 – 19 area inspections carried out in the same areas as previous 16 – 19 inspections indicate that the implementation of the post 16 – 19 action plans has been effective.

Conclusion

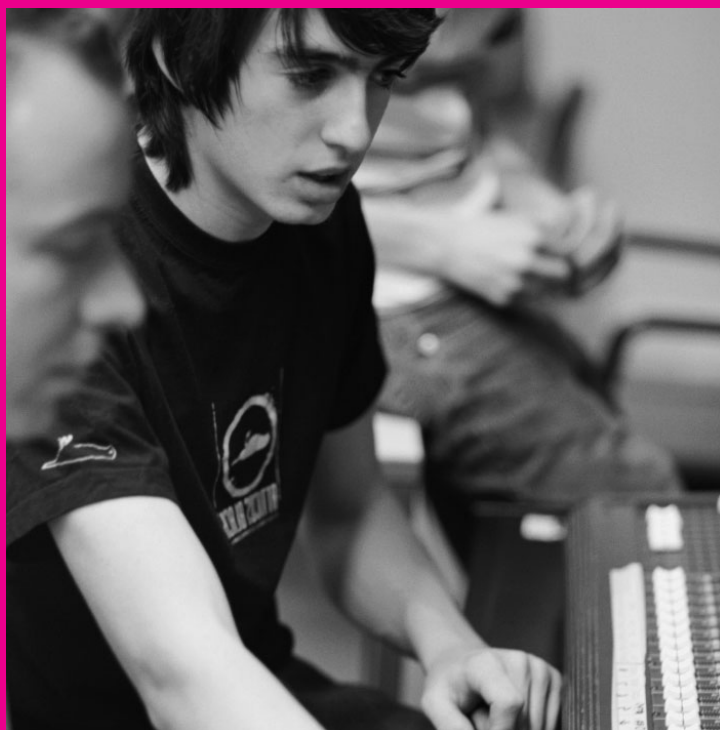
121. The most significant outcome of the implementation of action plans has been high level partnership between the local authorities, the local LSC and Connexions. This high level partnership has been underpinned by collaboration between local providers; for example the development of consortia between schools and colleges and less commonly training providers. Indeed the range and diversity of local collaboration is striking. Taken together these two levels of partnership and collaboration have built up 14-19 strategies and helped to create, develop and meet learners' entitlements. There has been significant development in curriculum audit and collaboration, including the stronger development of vocational curriculum. Much attention has also focused upon work-based learning in terms of raising awareness and esteem amongst learners.
122. Many activities to widen participation at both 16 and 17 have been initiated, notably the development of e2e and the focus on those who are not in education, employment or training and the impact of these is encouraging, particularly for participation at 17. Much energy has continued to be devoted to the continuing improvement of advice and guidance for learners and their parents and carers. All areas have emphasised the need to have a coherent approach to improving quality, in particular the development of self-assessment, the observation of teaching and learning and continuing professional development. In terms of outcomes, improvements in achievement at GCSE and A/AS/AVCE are encouraging.
123. An agenda for further improvement remains. Participation rates at 16 and 17 need to improve more and the same is true of learners' achievements. Those three areas found unsatisfactory in their 14-19 area inspections have a particular need to address the weaknesses in strategy and move forward. And even within areas judged satisfactory overall, some specific aspects were judged to be unsatisfactory, again most commonly in access and participation and achievement. However the creation of successful partnerships necessary to implement the action plans does create an effective forum in which improvement can be pursued.

Annex A

Areas covered by the report

Region	Local LSC	Area inspected
East Midlands	Leicestershire	Leicester
	Lincolnshire and Rutland	Lincolnshire and Rutland
	Nottinghamshire	Nottingham
East of England	Suffolk	Suffolk
London	London Central	Camden Islington Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Wandsworth Westminster
	London East	Barking and Dagenham Greenwich Hackney Lewisham Newham
	London North	Enfield Haringey Waltham Forest
	London South	Bromley Croydon
	London West	Brent Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham
North East	Tees Valley	Hartlepool Middlesbrough Redcar and Cleveland Stockton-on-Tees
	Tyne and Wear	Gateshead North Tyneside South Tyneside Sunderland
North West	Cumbria	West Cumbria
	Greater Manchester	Manchester Rochdale Salford Stockport
	Greater Merseyside	Halton Knowsley Liverpool St. Helens Sefton Wirral
South East	Hampshire and IOW	IOW
	MKOB	Oxfordshire
South West	West of England	Bath and North East Somerset Bristol

West Midlands	Birmingham and Solihull	Birmingham and Solihull
	Black Country	Sandwell Walsall Wolverhampton
	Shropshire	Shropshire
	Staffordshire	Stoke
Yorkshire and the Humber	Humberside	Hull
	South Yorkshire	Doncaster Rotherham Sheffield
	West Yorkshire	Leeds Bradford Wakefield



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