



Department  
for Education

# **West Yorkshire Area Review**

**Final report**

**November 2016**

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## Background

In July 2015, the government announced a rolling programme of around 40 local area reviews, to be completed by March 2017, covering all general further education and sixth-form colleges in England.

The reviews are designed to ensure that colleges are financially stable into the longer-term, that they are run efficiently, and are well-positioned to meet the present and future needs of individual students and the demands of employers. Students in colleges have high expectations about standards of teaching and learning and the extent to which their learning prepares them to progress further, to higher education or directly into employment.

The local steering group was chaired by Cllr David Green, Leader of Bradford Council, for the first 4 meetings and then by Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe, who replaced Cllr Green as Leader of the Council, for the final meeting, supported by Sir David Collins, the Further Education (FE) Commissioner and by a representative nominated by the Sixth Form College Commissioner. The steering group met on 5 occasions between November 2015 and June 2016, and additional informal meetings also took place to consider and develop options in greater detail. Membership of the steering group comprised each college's chair of governors and principal, representatives from Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (Local Enterprise Partnership), the 5 local authorities Bradford Council, Calderdale Council, Kirklees Council, Leeds City Council and Wakefield Council, the Regional Schools Commissioner, and representatives from the former Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS), the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), the Education Funding Agency (EFA), and the Department for Education (DfE).

Visits to colleges and support throughout the process was provided by staff from the FE and Sixth Form College Commissioners' teams. The Joint Area Review Delivery Unit (JARDU) provided the project management, administrative support and developed supporting materials and papers used by the steering group. JARDU also led on consultations with local stakeholders.

# The needs of the West Yorkshire area

## Demographics and the economy

The West Yorkshire area review covers the 5 local authorities of Bradford Council, Calderdale Council, Kirklees Council, Leeds City Council and Wakefield Council, with a total population of about 2.28 million people<sup>1</sup>.

The area is illustrated on the map below<sup>2</sup>:



<sup>1</sup> ONS Local Authority Profiles – see data annex - Local socio-economic data. Please note that ONS update the data set on a regular basis and that the data included relates to the point at which the report was written.

<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia [West Yorkshire - Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Yorkshire)

The table below provides a snapshot of key demographic and economic data<sup>3</sup>, which has acted as a starting point for this review.

	<b>Bradford</b>	<b>Calderdale</b>	<b>Kirklees</b>	<b>Leeds</b>	<b>Wakefield</b>	<b>Great Britain</b>
Total population (2015)	531,120	208,400	434,300	774,100	333,800	63,258,400
Population aged 16 to 64	62.1%	62.6%	62.9%	65.8%	62.8%	63.3%
% with higher education qualifications <sup>4</sup>	26.8%	34.5%	32.6%	33.0%	23.3%	37.1%
Those formally qualified to level 2+	62.7%	72.3%	70.4%	71.7%	64.3%	73.6%
Gross weekly pay £ of residents	£451.60	£500.90	£484.20	£501.80	£460.30	£529.60
Gross weekly pay £ by workplace	£471.10	£485.90	£458.70	£519.50	£473.9	£529
Out-of-work benefit claimants	2.7%	2.0%	2.1%	2.3%	1.9%	1.9%
% of main benefit claimants	15.7%	13.1%	12.8%	12.6%	15.2%	12.0%

3 ONS Local Authority Profiles – see data annex

4 Percentages relate to those aged 16 to 64

	<b>Bradford</b>	<b>Calderdale</b>	<b>Kirklees</b>	<b>Leeds</b>	<b>Wakefield</b>	<b>Great Britain</b>
Jobs density <sup>5</sup>	0.67	0.84	0.65	0.91	0.75	0.82
<b>Total workplace units:</b>						<b>Average for Yorkshire and Humber</b>
Micro <sup>6</sup>	82.0%	82.7%	82.8%	80.9%	79.8%	81.7%
Small	14.1%	14.2%	13.8%	14.8%	15.5%	14.8%
Medium	3.4%	2.8%	3.1%	3.6%	4.0%	3.1%
Large	0.5%	0.3%	0.3%	0.6%	0.7%	0.5%

The key points to note are:

- according to the latest Index of Deprivation data<sup>7</sup>, Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield all contain pockets of severe deprivation. Bradford is the 11th most deprived local authority area in the country having 32.6% of Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOA) in the top 10% most deprived areas. Of the 39 LEP areas, the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is ranked 8/39<sup>8</sup> in relation to overall deprivation
- earnings of residents in Calderdale and Kirklees are higher than those of workplaces, suggesting that residents are commuting to better-paid jobs
- residents of Bradford and Wakefield are lower paid, and are less well qualified than their immediate neighbours. They also have higher levels of benefit claimants.

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<sup>5</sup> Job density relates to the level of jobs per resident aged 16-64. For example, a job density of 1.0 would mean that there is one job for every resident aged 16-64. The job density for Yorkshire and the Humber as a whole is 0.77, which is below the national average.

<sup>6</sup> Micro-businesses have a total of 1 to 9 workers; small businesses have 10 to 49 workers; medium have 50 to 249; large have 250+ (2015 data).

<sup>7</sup> DCLG Index of Multiple Deprivation – see data annex: Deprivation

<sup>8</sup> Where 1 = most deprived

## Patterns of employment and future growth

Commuting within the area is high with significant relationships between the 5 local authority areas. Leeds benefits from a 55,000 net gain of in-commuters<sup>9</sup>.

In its 2015 to 2016 Labour Market Analysis<sup>10</sup>, Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (LEP) indicates that the employment rate has increased since 2012 but has fallen behind the currently recorded national rate. The latest figure for the Leeds City Region is almost 70% employment compared to 73% in 2008. When measuring across LEP areas the Leeds City Region has one of the lowest employment rates, albeit higher than that of (for example) Greater Manchester and the Sheffield City Region.

The LEP report indicates that the most recent employment data confirms that the largest sectors outside the public sector in the Leeds City Region are retail and wholesale, manufacturing and business and professional services. Healthcare (part of public services) is the largest sector overall. Real estate, professional and business services and transport and logistics, have seen the largest growth since 2009 while there has been some contraction in employment in finance, ICT, retail and wholesale and manufacturing.

The following LEP table, from the 2015 to 2016 Labour Market Analysis shows how sectors are forecast to grow in the coming 15 years, in the Leeds City Region and nationally. Professional and business services, finance and insurance, construction, wholesale and retail and ICT are all projected to see increases in employment over this period in line with national trends. Conversely, manufacturing and primary industries are projected to see reductions in employment. However, replacement demand is high in manufacturing and engineering.

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<sup>9</sup> ONS Commuting in the UK

<sup>10</sup> The State of the Leeds City Region Labour Market 2015/16 – Challenges and Potential



Size of Broad Sectors in the Leeds City Region (Employment) and change over time 2015/30<sup>11</sup>:

	Leeds City Region		UK
	Total change (000s)	% change	% change
Accommodation, Food & Recreation	17.5	20.5	23.8
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	-1.6	-19.3	-9.5
Construction	20.6	31.7	31.3
Extraction & Mining	-0.5	-27.8	-10.2
Finance & Insurance	10.5	18.7	16.3
Information & communication	5.5	13.5	13.3
Manufacturing	-21.8	-15.1	-12.8
Professional & Other Private Services	42.9	19.1	17.3
Public Services	25.3	8.1	7.9
Transport & storage	6.2	8.7	8.3
Utilities	-0.1	-0.7	2.0
Wholesale & Retail	23.2	12.9	12.1
Total	127.6	10.6	11.3

## LEP priorities

The Labour Market Analysis by Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership has identified financial and professional services, health and life sciences, innovative manufacturing, creative & digital, food & drink, and low carbon & environmental as its priority sectors.

The report also highlights major skills shortages in engineering and manufacturing, digital skills and construction. These are identified as areas that present a particular barrier to gross value added (GVA) growth. The report further recognises there are other shortage areas in the city region (or at local level) in other sectors including health and care that employ large numbers of people in the city region and offer many employment opportunities for people at all skill levels.

The Labour Market Analysis also explores and sets out in detail supply and demand across sectors and evidences over and under-supply. The following information provides a headline summary of 3 particularly significant skills shortages.

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<sup>11</sup> The State of the Leeds City Region Labour Market 2015/16 – Challenges and Potential

## Engineering

The manufacturing sector employs about 13% of the workforce in the Leeds City Region. By 2022, the majority of employment opportunities will be at level 4 and above. Although the total number of people employed in the manufacturing sector will continue to decrease, GVA will continue to grow and a significant volume of employment opportunities will continue to be generated due to replacement demand.

To meet this demand, there is a need to increase the take-up of learning opportunities related to manufacturing (in FE, apprenticeships and higher education) in particular at level 4 and above. There is a particular need to address a lack of diversity in the sector and to encourage women and people from minority ethnic groups to consider careers in engineering.

## Digital skills

The report includes growing evidence that businesses across all sectors are facing a digital skills shortage, particularly coding skills, programming and data analysis. Businesses considering locating in Leeds City Region cite access to people with these skills as one of the main factors that will influence their decision. A number of high-profile businesses have made public statements about the difficulty that they are experiencing recruiting sufficient “tech talent” with the skills that they need.

Leeds Data City has recently completed a detailed mapping of the city region’s businesses to identify and better understand the digital and technology capabilities and assets. The LEP presented a summary of this information to the steering group, which identified:

- approximately 8,500 self-identifying digital and technology businesses in the city region
- over 3,000 job listings for the organisations analysed
- an estimated 70,000 people in the city region employed in digital businesses (including IT and data, hardware, health and social care, wifi and connectivity, fintech, internet of things and gaming).

## Infrastructure

Leeds City Region Employment and Skills Plan<sup>12</sup> shows that major schemes currently in the planning system, project demand for 120,000 workers against the current construction workforce of 107,000 (plus replacement demand), which they estimate will generate

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<sup>12</sup> Leeds City Region Employment and Skills Plan – Skilled People, Better Jobs 2016-2020

significant demand for new workers. They identify civil engineers, labourers, plant operatives, logistics and non-construction occupations as their existing shortage occupations, and cite the short term nature of construction projects as a barrier to offering apprenticeships.

The largest proportion of the total employment opportunities between 2015 and 2019 will be created by new housing followed by private, commercial, public non-housing, and infrastructure.

Publicly funded schemes such as HS2 and the West Yorkshire Transport Fund will create significant numbers of local employment opportunities and offer an opportunity for people looking to re-train.

## **Feedback from LEP, employers and local authorities, and students**

Feedback from LEP representatives, local authority representatives and employers consulted during the area review process drew attention to:

- skilled people, and better jobs. The Leeds City Region Strategic Economic Plan<sup>13</sup> identifies 4 priorities. The second of which is, Skilled People, Better Jobs. In order to attain good growth the plan outlines how the city region should deliver:
  - more and better apprenticeships
  - raising the bar on high level skills
  - great education, connected to business
  - employability, access to jobs and realising potential
  - building workforce skills and attracting talent
  - addressing skills gaps and shortages
- working collaboratively to address the challenges that the city region faces, ensuring the partnership of the LEP, local authorities and colleges, continues to work together as it has for many years
- using LEP Local Growth Skills Capital funding to improve the quality of the FE estate and to link facilities to the needs of employers in priority sectors, as identified in the Leeds City Region Employment and Skills Plan – Skilled People, Better Jobs – 2016 to 2020<sup>14</sup>
- technical and high level skills to be a particular area of focus, linked to further education and higher education assets. In view of the important role played by higher skills in raising productivity, the LEP will aim to first reverse the widening gap on

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<sup>13</sup> Leeds City Region Strategic Economic Plan - 2016-2036

<sup>14</sup> Leeds City Region Employment and Skills Plan – Skilled People, Better Jobs - 2016-2020

higher level skills (NVQ4+) and in the long term to close the gap to the national average

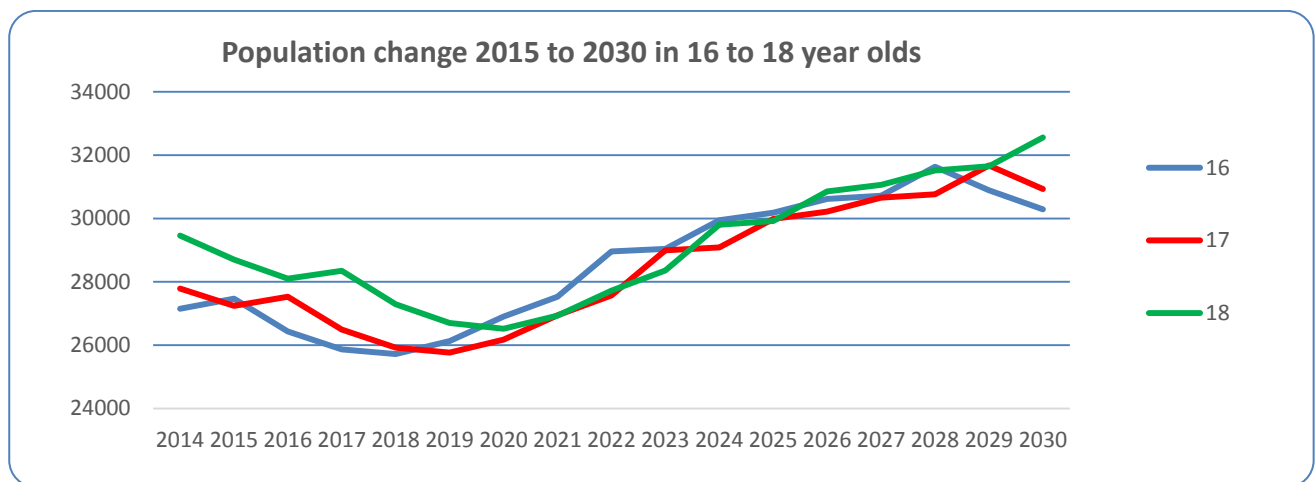
- local provision for young people studying at level 2 and 3, as they do not typically travel far to take up learning i.e. mostly within local authority districts. Local authorities value the importance of a coherent FE offer within their authorities, linked to local progression routes from schools, whilst recognising the importance of investing in specialist facilities for higher level courses where students may be more likely to travel
- upskilling the older workforce, and to stimulate demand from SMEs who face challenges navigating the skills system
- employer feedback was complimentary and supportive of the FE provision that they engaged with and valued provision delivered by the colleges in supporting their apprenticeship/training needs.

As part of each area review there was engagement with students coordinated by the National Union of Students Where the NUS submitted a report on the views of students these are available on NUS connect.

## The quantity and quality of current provision

The steering group considered information provided by each local authority about population projections, focusing on the changes in the number and needs of young people aged 16+.

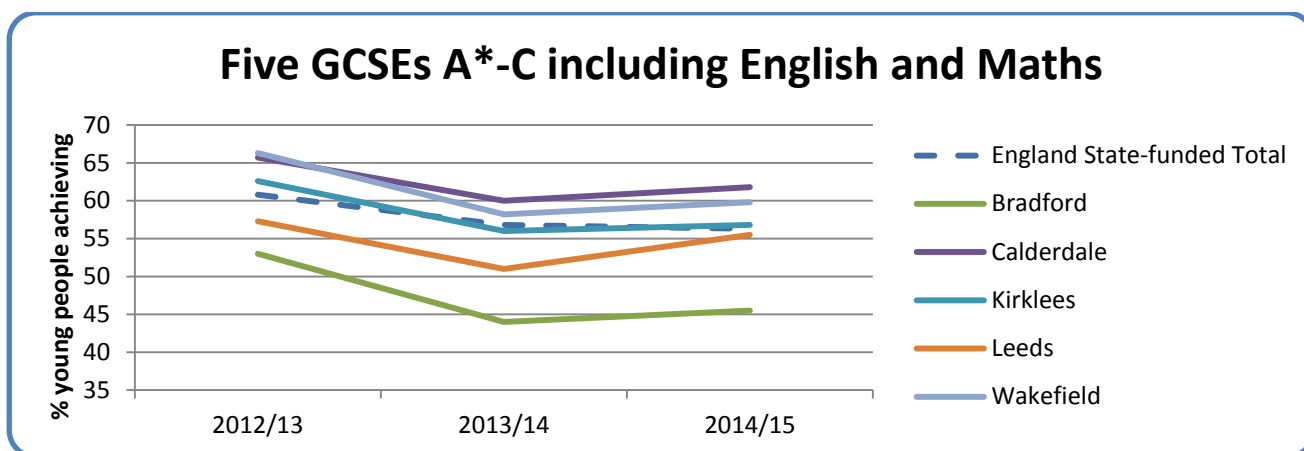
In West Yorkshire the numbers of young people aged 16 to 18 is declining, with the low point reached in 2019, after which numbers increase. The chart below indicates that the 16-18 population will reach 2014 levels by 2022, and are estimated to continue to rise to 94,200 by 2029<sup>15</sup>.



<sup>15</sup> ONS sub-national population projections – see data annex: Population projections

## Performance of schools at Key Stage 4

The recent trend in GCSE pass rates for 16 year old school pupils completing year 11 across the 5 local authorities is illustrated below<sup>16</sup>.



The overall performance of 5+ A\*-C grades including English and maths for schools at year 11 (key stage 4) within the review area is generally above the national average<sup>17</sup>, with the exception of Bradford and Leeds. Despite an overall drop in performance since 2012 to 2013, all 5 local authorities are now starting to show an improving picture.

Demographic projections for West Yorkshire suggest growth in the 15 to 19 year old population is unlikely until 2020. Colleges will need to consider carefully the implications of this in putting forward plans that depend on growth in numbers of 16 to 18 year old students before that point.

## Schools with sixth-forms

Area reviews of post-16 education and training institutions are predominantly focused on general further education and sixth-form colleges in order to ensure there is a high quality and financially resilient set of colleges in each area of England. Schools with sixth-forms have the opportunity to seek to opt in to a review if the local steering group agrees.

The underpinning analysis for the review included current post-16 provision in the area made by schools with sixth-forms. Regional Schools Commissioners and local authorities have had the opportunity to identify any issues with school sixth-form provision, and feed these into the review. We expect Regional Schools Commissioners to take account of the analysis from area reviews in any decisions they make about future provision.

<sup>16</sup> School Key Stage 4 results – see data annex. Local authority and total (state-funded sector) figures covering achievements in state-funded schools only

<sup>17</sup> In 2013/14 a change in how the GCSE performance of schools was defined led to a drop in the overall numbers of students achieving 5 GCSEs A\*-C, including maths and English

There are currently 90 funded schools with sixth-forms in the review area, including 33 local authority maintained and 57 academies. This includes 4 free schools and 1 studio school. Most school pupils in the age range 16 to 18 are enrolled on A level courses.

Overall funded student numbers in the mainstream school sixth-forms increased by less than 1% in the 3 years 2013 to 2014 to 2015 to 2016 with a total of 19,781 funded students taught in a mainstream sixth-form setting in 2015 to 2016. School sixth-forms in the area vary in size but using as a guide, for illustration purposes only, the application threshold of 200 for new school sixth-forms in academies, there are 39 school sixth-forms (including local authority maintained and academies but excluding special schools) that were funded below that level in 2015 to 2016. Two thirds of schools with sixth-forms have been graded by Ofsted as good or better<sup>18</sup>.

Schools responding to the review consultation mentioned the importance of accessibility and transport if young people are to have a choice of high quality academic and technical education options at age 16+. They commented on the range of productive relationships with colleges and the strength of many school/college partnerships which were in place. They also expressed some reservations over the future sustainability of some sixth-form provision.

## **The further education and sixth-form colleges**

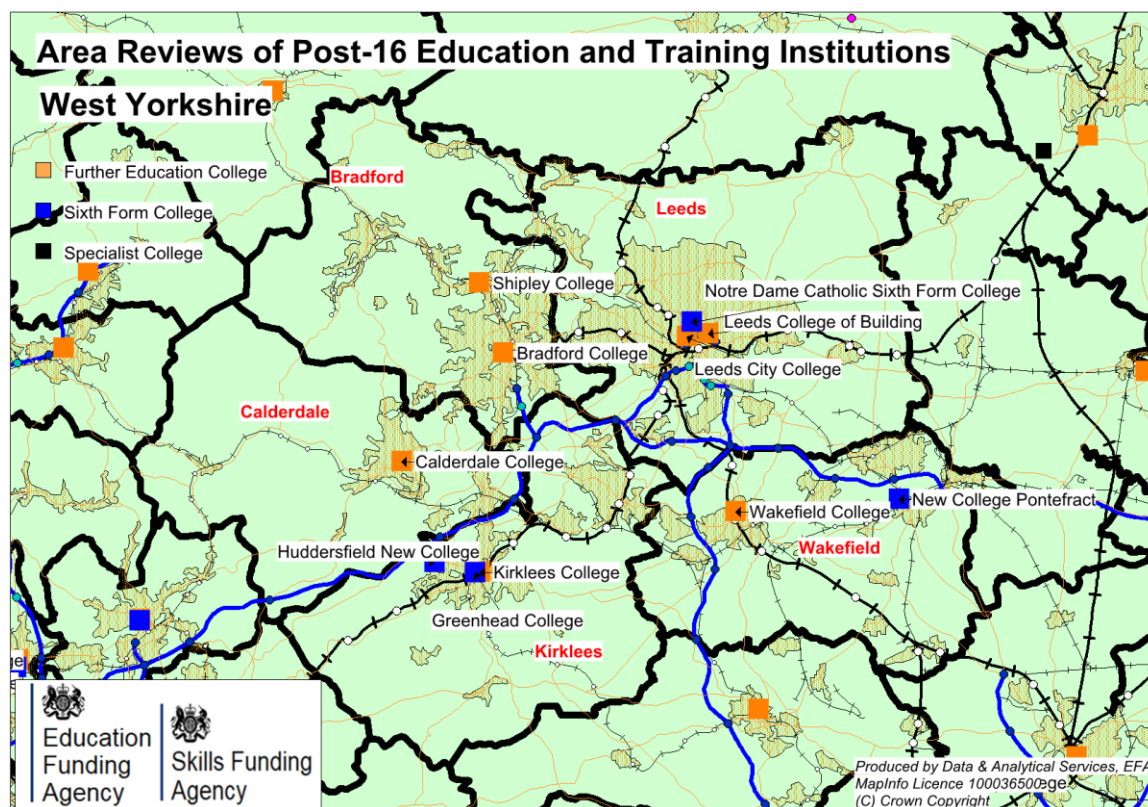
Eleven colleges (4 sixth-form colleges, 6 general further education colleges, and a specialist further education college) participated in this review.

- Bradford College
- Calderdale College
- Greenhead College (sixth-form college)
- Huddersfield New College (sixth-form college)
- Kirklees College
- Leeds City College
- Leeds College of Building
- NEW College Pontefract (sixth-form college)
- Notre Dame Sixth Form College
- Shipley College
- Wakefield College

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<sup>18</sup> Ofsted school inspections – see data annex: School inspections

The location of these colleges is shown below:



The colleges are spread throughout the area, based in the local authority areas as follows:

- Calderdale – a general further education college
- Kirklees – a general further education college and 2 sixth-form colleges
- Wakefield, Pontefract and Castleford – a general further education college and a sixth-form college
- Leeds – a general further education college, a sixth-form college and a specialist FE college
- Bradford Metropolitan- has 2 general further education colleges, and a site of Leeds City College in Keighley.

Part of the area review process involved a visit to each college by specialist further education and sixth-form college advisers who report to the respective commissioners. The advisers met with governors, senior managers and staff, and reviewed a wide range of documents and data relating to each college's current range and quality of provision, their track record in attracting students, and their overall financial health. Information from each of these visits was shared with colleges and has informed the evidence base to the steering group for this review.



## The current offer in the colleges

Greenhead College and Notre Dame Sixth Form College offer a curriculum largely based on A levels. Huddersfield New College currently provides both technical education and academic A level programmes where students are given the opportunity to study a mix of both A Level and BTEC qualifications, and NEW College Pontefract delivers AS and A level courses but has an increasing technical education provision.

A levels are also offered in 3 of the general further education colleges (Bradford, Leeds City, and Wakefield Colleges).

The general further education colleges offer a wide range of classroom-based technical education studies for post-16 students, with preparation for work, health and social care, engineering, construction, retail, ICT, languages, science and maths, arts and media, and business administration all attracting substantial numbers of students. Many of these colleges have strong links with local employers, which are active in supporting colleges with work placements, and in partnering on apprenticeship delivery. In some cases, colleges deliver commercial short courses to employers.

All the general further education colleges offer foundation courses in maths, English and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). These are aimed at individuals who are not yet at level 2 (GCSE equivalent).

Leeds College of Building specialises in the delivery of construction and building services engineering, to a local, regional and national customer base.

## Quality of provision and financial sustainability of colleges

The following table provides a summary of the size and quality in each of the colleges:

College	Most recent overall Ofsted grade <sup>19</sup>	EFA allocations (2015 to 16) <sup>20</sup>	SFA allocations (2015 to 16) <sup>21</sup>	Total college income <sup>22</sup>
Bradford College	Grade 2 – good (Sept 14)	£15.6m	£13.1m	£56.7m

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<sup>19</sup> Ofsted – see data annex: College inspection reports

<sup>20</sup> EFA allocations – see data annex: 16 to 19 funding

<sup>21</sup> SFA allocations – see data annex: Adult funding

<sup>22</sup> College accounts academic year 2014 to 2015 data – see data annex: College accounts

<b>College</b>	<b>Most recent overall Ofsted grade<sup>19</sup></b>	<b>EFA allocations (2015 to 16)<sup>20</sup></b>	<b>SFA allocations (2015 to 16)<sup>21</sup></b>	<b>Total college income<sup>22</sup></b>
Calderdale College	Grade 2 – good (Mar 14)	£8.1m	£4.8m	£21.7m
Greenhead College	Grade 1 – outstanding (Nov 07)	£10.1m	£0	£10.5m
Huddersfield New College	Grade 1 – outstanding (Apr 16)	£11.1m	£0	£11.2m
Kirklees College	Grade 2 – good (Nov 12)	£18.8m	£11.4m	£41.4m
Leeds City College	Grade 3 – requires improvement (Feb 16)	£27.9m	£22.5m	£79.5m
Leeds College of Building	Grade 2 – good (Jun 14)	£5.1m	£4.5m	£15.4m
NEW College Pontefract	Grade 1 – outstanding (Apr 14)	£9.0m	£0	£9.2m
Notre Dame Sixth Form College	Grade 1 – outstanding (Apr 08)	£8.4m	£0	£8.8m
Shipley College	Grade 2 – good (Feb 13)	£3.4m	£2.0m	£8.2m
Wakefield College	Grade 2 – good (Feb 14)	£16.7m	£3.7m	£28.1m

Where a college was subject to a financial notice of concern or a financial notice to improve, this factor was taken into account in the assessment of options for structural change in the

review. Leeds City College and Leeds College of Building are both subject to a financial notice of concern issued by the Skills Funding Agency.

Overall, the condition of college buildings is good. Some colleges have higher average space per student than others, but this does not necessarily indicate being over-spaced. Each college has unique circumstances and constraints regarding estates. The area review has highlighted some instances where rationalisation or further investment might be considered further during implementation.

## Higher education in further education<sup>23</sup>

Progression of young people to higher education (HE) across West Yorkshire is variable, and there are a number of 'cold spots' notably in Bradford South and East, Leeds West, East, and Central, and Hemsworth, Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford. Leeds Central has very low rates of participation in HE (15%), whereas in Leeds North West and Leeds North East, progression to HE is at 48 % and 49% respectively. HEFCE data indicates that Yorkshire and Humber students are highly mobile and on average travel 46 miles between home and institution<sup>24</sup>.

The 5 universities of Bradford, Huddersfield, Leeds, Leeds Beckett and Leeds Trinity offer the majority of HE provision in the area. Except for Shipley College, the FE colleges all have a portfolio of higher education. Bradford College is one of the largest providers of higher education outside the university sector in England.<sup>25</sup> The main specialist areas for HE in FE are academic studies in education, initial teacher training/teacher training, and music related courses. There are opportunities for the development of HE in LEP priority sector areas.

## Provision for students with Special Educational (SEN) and high needs<sup>26</sup>

In 2015 to 2016, the EFA funded 1460 post-16 places across the 5 local authorities in maintained special schools, special academies, non-maintained special schools, general further education colleges, sixth-form colleges, school sixth-forms, academies and specialist post-16 institutions. Colleges delivered 639 funded places between them. The colleges delivering the highest numbers of funded places are Wakefield, Leeds City and Kirklees Colleges.

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<sup>23</sup> HEFCE – Higher education progression – see data annex

<sup>24</sup> [HEFCE – Student mobility](#)

<sup>25</sup> [Bradford College](#)

<sup>26</sup> EFA Allocations – see data annex: 16 to 19 funding

During the review, the local authorities confirmed that in general, high needs provision offered by colleges responded well to local needs and that there were no significant gaps in provision. Kirklees Council highlighted the need for clear routes into employment for people with the most significant barriers to learning and work, and ensuring that there is a range of provision for young people aged 19+ with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Kirklees Council also identified an expected short term increase in numbers of students with high needs. The steering group acknowledged that structural changes taking place as a result of the review should not disadvantage post-16 students with SEND or high needs, and determined that the provision for the most vulnerable groups not only needs to be safeguarded but should also be improved.

## **Apprenticeships and apprenticeship providers**

In 2014 to 2015 the general further education colleges delivered 11760 apprenticeship in West Yorkshire<sup>27</sup>. Leeds City College has the largest contract for apprenticeships with nearly 5000 in training. Kirklees and Bradford Colleges both deliver substantial numbers of apprenticeships. Private training providers, including large national companies, deliver apprenticeship across the area, with a total of over 9380 starts in 2014 to 2015.

Overall, the most popular frameworks<sup>28</sup> are business, administration and law, health, public services and care, retail and commercial enterprise, and engineering and manufacturing technologies. Recruitment in other sector areas is low by comparison. This pattern may change in 2017, with the introduction of the apprenticeship levy<sup>29</sup>.

## **Competition**

The further education and sixth-form colleges operate in distinct geographic catchments, and there is limited direct competition between them.

Growth in school sixth-forms has increased competition for young people across most of West Yorkshire, and may have, along with demographic changes, contributed in some instances to a decline in funded 16-18 student numbers at colleges. The sixth-form colleges have increased funded student numbers (and therefore their funding allocations) for 16 to 18 year olds over the period from 2013 to 2016.

Between 2013 to 2014 and 2015 to 2016 published allocations information shows that all of the general further education colleges, except Shipley College, have seen a decline in their funded 16 to 18 student numbers, with the steepest decline at Leeds City College. However,

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27 Numbers of apprenticeships by provider and LA – see data annex: Apprenticeships

28 Numbers of apprenticeships by Local Authority and subject sector – see data annex: Apprenticeships

29 'Apprenticeship levy and how it will work' on gov.uk

some colleges will have delivered growth in learner numbers in-year. The general further education colleges have all experienced declines in their Skills Funding Agency allocations.

Where colleges have experienced a reduction in demand, most have implemented savings to maintain financial health successfully.

## **Land based provision**

Landex, the sector organisation that represents a significant number of colleges which deliver land based provision, prepared a report on the mix and balance of land-based provision across the country, the key deliverers of this and the importance of that provision to the sector and the economic development of the country.

The strategic importance of the industry environmentally to food and water security in the future is set out. The land based and agri-tech industries have an ageing workforce and an increasing need for workers who can apply scientific and technological skills in a land based environment. And, while agriculture and land based engineering have relatively small provider bases compared to their significance to the industries they serve, there may be risk with loss of provision in either area.

Nationally, apprenticeships in the land based sector have been slow to grow and there is a low rate of progression to level 4 and above among students who go into employment in the sector after completing a level 2 or level 3 programme.

Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds City, Shipley and Wakefield Colleges offer significant classroom based technical education in land based activity. The largest areas of land based provision are animal care and veterinary science at Kirklees College, and horticulture and forestry at Shipley College, with significant numbers in both for classroom based technical courses. Leeds City College and Shipley College also offers apprenticeships, however the numbers here are relatively lower, following the national pattern.

## The need for change

Area reviews are intended to ensure that the further education sector has a strong and sustainable future – in terms of efficiency of operation, quality of provision, and the responsiveness of courses to the needs of individuals and employers.

At the start of the review the Combined Authority set out its priorities that provision in the area should:

- meet projected increasing demand for highly skilled labour in growth areas of engineering and manufacturing, digital skills and construction, including work to improve diversity of entry to those subjects
- meet projected increasing demand for workers at all skill levels in health and care
- improve engagement with SMEs as potential customers, particularly on apprenticeships.
- sustain access to the college delivered offer of entry to level 2 courses to learners of all ages
- meet the projected increase in demand for re-training from adults, given expected growth in the number of jobs and roles an individual will be expected to hold, over their working life.

## The key areas for change

Taking the preceding points into account, the key issues in relation to this review, and deliberated during steering group meetings, are:

- growing the college offer of higher level apprenticeships in priority sectors, in particular engineering and manufacturing, digital skills and construction
- consideration of opportunities for increased collaboration, to pool and build on individual colleges' expertise in higher level subjects
- addressing the higher levels of debt in some colleges, to provide greater flexibility and financial resilience
- ensuring all colleges are sufficiently robust to weather any future reductions in funding, and have the opportunity to consider through the review options for growth, including mergers
- exploring potential for efficiencies and savings through collaboration between colleges and other providers in the region.

## Initial options raised during visits to colleges

During their visits, advisers reported that all colleges had given considerable thought to potential strategic options in advance of the review. In some cases, this meant informal

discussions with neighbouring colleges and stakeholders to canvas views and to assess the potential level of support for change.

The types of options discussed were:

- formal structural change changes, including mergers, federations and joint venture companies. These options were presented as a means to reduce management and back-office costs, strengthen quality of provision and curriculum planning, and/or share the costs of investment in new areas of work, for example expanding apprenticeships, increasing commercial income or developing international markets
- sharing services. A platform for collaboration already exists for general further education colleges through the West Yorkshire Colleges Consortium (WYCC), which has been in place for a number of years. Toward the end of the area review, the colleges involved in WYCC set up a joint venture, a collectively owned company limited by guarantee. This joint venture seeks to offer further savings and improved efficiencies for WYCC by enabling:
  - a shared approach to tenders
  - the development of new income streams
  - stimulating other collaborative innovations (internally or externally)
- specialisation. The region already benefits from existing areas of expertise and the colleges were keen to build upon this by looking at ways to grow the offer through collaboration. The colleges also made clear the need to maintain a strong local offer at level 2 and below, as learners have not historically been willing to travel as far to access such provision
- remaining as a stand-alone college, where finances were sufficiently strong to withstand policy and funding changes, and where student numbers had increased despite growing competition
- conversion to an academy. This option is available primarily but not exclusively, to sixth-form colleges. By becoming an academy, a college is able to develop partnerships more easily with other schools in the area. In order to be approved, academisation proposals must be able to demonstrate how they will lead to strong links with schools, whether through joining or establishing a multi-academy trust (with other academies) or as a single academy trust collaborating with other schools in the area. Like other academies, sixth-form colleges which become academies would be eligible to receive reimbursement of their non-business VAT and would be classified as public bodies.

# Criteria for evaluating options and use of sector benchmarks

## Assessment criteria

In each area review, 4 nationally-agreed criteria are used for the process of assessment. These are:

- meets the needs of current and future students and employers
- is feasible and generates financial sustainability
- raises quality and relevance of provision, including better outcomes
- achieves appropriate specialisation.

## FE sector benchmarks

To support rigorous assessment of proposals, particularly options leading to major structural change, DfE have developed a series of sector 'quality and financial indicators and related criteria'.

Financial benchmarks relate to delivering operating surpluses of 3% - 5%, ensuring borrowings stay below 40% of annual income (the maximum threshold set for affordability), staff costs of no more than 65% of total income (FE sector average) and a current ratio greater than one. Financial plans were assessed for each option, including colleges seeking to stand-alone, prior to consideration by the local steering group.

A number of other indicators are also taken into account by the steering group. These relate to the impact of proposed changes on quality of provision, on teaching efficiency, and how they actively support growth in apprenticeships and work at levels 4 and 5. Within proposals, overall levels of provision for high needs students should be maintained. New strategic plans need to be supported by LEPs and local authorities. Colleges may also need to review their senior staffing and their governance to ensure that they have the required skills, and the capacity to implement rapid change.

The assessment of options indicated that, based on the information available to the area review steering group, the colleges would move towards the benchmarks and indicators through successful implementation of options, and that the protected characteristics groups, including high needs students, would retain at least equal access to learning.



More detail about these benchmarks is contained in area review guidance Annex F<sup>30</sup> (revised March 2016).

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<sup>30</sup> Reviewing post-16 education and training institutions: updated guidance on area reviews Annex F, Pages 49-53

## Recommendations agreed by the steering group

Thirteen recommendations were agreed by the steering group at their meeting in June 2016. These were:

- Bradford College to remain as a stand-alone college focusing on the further and higher education needs of Bradford District. The college will develop a joint venture to work with Leeds College of Building (LCB) to deliver construction training to learners in the Bradford area, utilising the skills and expertise of both colleges
- Calderdale College to remain as a stand-alone institution focusing on the further education needs of the local community
- Kirklees College to remain as a stand-alone institution focusing on the education and skills needs of the communities it serves in Kirklees. To enable greater financial sustainability this is subject to re-financing of the high value, long term debt at Kirklees College
- Leeds City College to remain as a stand-alone institution focusing on the education and skills needs of Leeds. Leeds City College will also have a role to play in enabling action on the recommendation for Shipley College (below) as that recommendation requires Leeds City College to release its Keighley campus to Shipley College and Craven College, supporting their merger. The release of the Keighley campus will be subject to due diligence and financing. In addition, the steering group recommends that Leeds City College and Leeds College of Building explore potential for collaboration, which may lead to a federation in the future
- Leeds College of Building to remain as a stand-alone institution focusing on the specialist construction technical education needs of the communities and businesses it serves locally, regionally and nationally. While remaining as stand-alone institutions, LCB and Bradford College to develop a joint venture to deliver construction training to learners in the Bradford area utilising the skills and expertise of both colleges. In addition, the steering group recommends that Leeds City College and Leeds College of Building explore potential for collaboration, which may lead to a federation in the future
- Shipley College is to progress towards a three-way merger of Shipley College, the Keighley Campus of Leeds City College and Craven College (located in Skipton) to form a single Aire Valley College. This is subject to the extraction of the Keighley College campus from Leeds City College being agreed subject to due diligence and financing. The inclusion of Craven College is also subject to the outcomes of the York, North Yorkshire, East Riding and Hull Area Review and the other options explored by the Craven College board, during that area review in autumn 2016
- Wakefield College to remain stand-alone, focusing on the education and skills needs of the communities it serves in Wakefield
- Greenhead College to remain as a stand-alone sixth-form college. The college is exploring academisation and aims to have taken the decision by the end of December 2016

- Huddersfield New College to remain as a stand-alone sixth-form college, with a wide range of partnership arrangements with schools and other education providers in the area. The college is also actively exploring conversion to academy status and will make a final decision in November 2016
- NEW College Pontefract will explore conversion to academy status. The college will establish a multi-academy trust, 'New Collaborative Learning Trust', which will include NEW College Pontefract, New College Doncaster (opening 2017) and could include other partner schools and/or colleges joining the trust subsequently
- Notre Dame Sixth Form College to remain as a stand-alone sixth-form college. The college will explore conversion to academy status and hopes to make a decision by the end of 2016, once the implications for Catholic sixth-form colleges are clear
- All general further education colleges commit to create a joint venture, building on the existing West Yorkshire Colleges Consortium
- The West Yorkshire Combined Authority to convene an implementation group charged with overseeing and supporting delivery of the area review recommendations and any other locally determined skills issues.

Each of these recommendations is now outlined in more detail:

## **Bradford College**

To remain as a stand-alone college focusing on the further and higher education needs of Bradford District.

- the college offer to learners and employers attracts significant numbers of young people from Bradford. The current curriculum offers progression to higher level qualifications, including in the priority area of construction
- the college already has a strong and relevant curriculum offer to its learners and employers and an Ofsted rating of good. Links with HE are strong and progression towards higher level qualifications are available across all curriculum areas. Collaboration with Leeds College of Building (LCB) is expected to enable better progression routes into higher learning. The focus will be on marrying the nationally recognised specialism of LCB with Bradford College's expertise in engineering, computing and science to deliver a new curriculum which matches the high tech needs of the modern construction industry
- the college is moving towards meeting the benchmark for operating surplus over the planning period and is at or above other financial benchmarks. Working more closely with Leeds College of Building will enable the sharing of facilities across both colleges and reduce costs. Involvement in the WYCC joint venture offers potential to reduce both delivery and back-office costs.

## **Calderdale College**

To remain as a stand-alone institution focusing on the further education needs of the local community.

- the proposal to develop closer working with schools in Calderdale is intended to reduce duplication of curriculum, improve coherence, and ensure access and progression to academic and technical education qualifications, including apprenticeships
- the college's most recent Ofsted inspection resulted in an overall grade of good
- collaboration with Kirklees and Wakefield colleges will enable the development of specialist areas of curriculum including delivery of higher level apprenticeships and opportunities to enhance the progression of learners
- with regard to financial sustainability the college demonstrates a sound financial position and is forecasting a surplus that improves over the period to 2019 to 2020, to move towards the published benchmark. The college forecasts to achieve all other financial benchmarks. Involvement in the WYCC joint venture offers potential to achieve efficiencies in both delivery and back-office costs.

## Kirklees College

To remain as a stand-alone institution focusing on the education and skills needs of the communities it serves in Kirklees.

- developing closer working with schools in Kirklees will reduce unhelpful duplication of the academic and technical education offer between the schools and the college
- collaboration with Calderdale and Wakefield colleges will enable the development of specialist areas of curriculum including specialist delivery of higher level apprenticeships and opportunities to enhance the progression of learners
- the college will also work with other Kirklees colleges (Greenhead College and Huddersfield New College) to establish a collaborative agreement to ensure post-16 provision in Kirklees is effectively planned in advance of demographic changes and consistently high quality provision, guidance and progression for students is available across Kirklees
- the college's most recent Ofsted inspection resulted in an overall grade of good
- the college financial plans show a move towards the published financial benchmarks over the planning period, although the report notes the risk that borrowings will continue to exceed the benchmark without the additional resilience that might have been offered by a structural solution. Involvement in the WYCC joint venture offers potential to reduce both delivery and 'back-office' costs.

## Leeds City College

To remain as a stand-alone institution focusing on the education and skills needs of Leeds.

- the college's most recent Ofsted inspection resulted in an overall grade of requires improvement
- The college is forecast to be at or around the financial benchmarks and this will be supported by the receipt of funds from the disposal of the Keighley campus. Involvement in the WYCC joint venture offers potential to reduce both delivery and back-office costs
- given their proximity, the college will also explore potential for collaboration with Leeds College of Building, which may lead to a federation in the future.

## Leeds College of Building

To remain as a stand-alone institution focusing on the specialist construction technical education needs of the communities and businesses it serves locally, regionally and nationally.

- the college predominantly delivers learning at level 2 and 3 but increasingly is delivering greater volumes of apprenticeships at level 3 and higher in response to

increasing demands from employers, locally, regionally and nationally for higher level skills. It has secured a number of national contracts with major employers looking to centralise the delivery of learning to meet their needs from a single institution rather than through a multitude of widely spread FE colleges. The proposed arrangement with Bradford College is expected to enable better progression routes into higher level and more technical qualifications and into HE for construction learners and provide a broader offer of both construction and engineering skills to major employers in the construction sector, including to address the LEP priorities in the review area

- the college's most recent Ofsted inspection resulted in an overall grade of good. the college's focus is on increasing volume and improving quality within its specialist construction subject areas. It will seek to take on a strategic role across the FE sector in England, as the only specialist construction college in the UK. It will assist in supporting construction education and training nationally
- its aspiration is to deliver increased volumes of higher level apprenticeships in response to increasing demand from the construction sector, including in the review area to contribute to priorities for higher level skills
- the college forecasts financial sustainability and has secured increasing employer demand from across the country. Broadening the employer offer within the construction sector will develop more of a whole employer offer including apprenticeships to major construction companies and projects
- the college meets, or is forecasting to meet the financial benchmarks over the planning period. Involvement in the WYCC joint venture offers potential to reduce both delivery and back-office costs
- given their proximity, the college will also explore potential for collaboration with Leeds City College, which may lead to a federation in the future.

## Shipley College

To progress towards a three-way merger of Shipley College, the Keighley Campus of Leeds City College and Craven College (located in Skipton) to form a single Aire Valley College.

- the development of an Aire Valley College has been an aspiration for the district for many years. The combination of Keighley campus with Shipley and Craven, who both have successful apprenticeship delivery (Craven's provision was graded outstanding by Ofsted in 2016) and excellent employer links has the potential to significantly enhance apprenticeship delivery and create better progression routes across the whole district
- work to identify synergies in curriculum and specialisations has yet to be completed, but combining the expertise of Shipley (Ofsted grade 2) and Craven (Ofsted grade 1 for apprenticeships) would be expected to support improvements in quality
- there is some overlap in the provision currently offered from the 3 campuses but not significant and not in LEP priority sectors. The merger would offer opportunities for

specialisation at level 3 and above, where learners will generally travel to learn, in agriculture, land based engineering, construction, environmental conservation and IT (applications & software)

- Shipley College and Craven College, as a merged institution, including the Keighley site, would be expected to become more financially resilient. The merger would be expected to provide efficiencies and savings in back office and management. It is however, likely that Shipley and Craven Colleges may require financing to secure the Keighley site, although the cost, and therefore the scale of financing support required, will need to be determined through post-area review due diligence
- the proposed merged colleges are forecasting a move to a surplus which will be in excess of the published benchmark by 2019 to 2020. The merged college would meet, or is forecasting to meet, the other financial benchmarks
- involvement in the WYCC joint venture offers potential to reduce both delivery and back-office costs.

## Wakefield College

To remain stand-alone, focusing on the education and skills needs of the communities it serves in Wakefield.

- the college attracts learners from across the Wakefield district but few from further afield. The college's most recent Ofsted inspection resulted in an overall grade of good
- collaboration with Calderdale College and Kirklees College will enable the development of specialist areas of curriculum including specialist delivery of higher level apprenticeships and opportunities to enhance the progression of learners. Wakefield College is also keen to develop a joint prospectus with other colleges for the HE offer to ensure synergy and learner progression, with a focus on the priority for growth in higher level skills
- the college shows some movements around the published financial benchmarks over the planning period. Involvement in the WYCC joint venture offers potential to reduce both delivery and back-office costs.

## Greenhead College

To remain as a stand-alone sixth-form college.

- the college offers a predominantly academic curriculum with approximately 90% progression into HE and has an Ofsted outstanding judgement. From 2016 the college will offer about 30 academic A level programmes
- the college is planning to work with both Huddersfield New College and Kirklees College to form a 16 to 19 collaborative trust for the provision of high quality and sustainable education for the young people of Kirklees. This should support better learner progression from school to post-16 learning against a falling demographic
- the college shows some movement around the financial benchmarks over the planning period
- the college will consider the academisation process and take a decision on whether or not that is in the best interests of the college by December 2016. This timescale will provide time for a full assessment of the academy option with the corporation and the new principal.

## Huddersfield New College

To remain as a stand-alone sixth-form college, with a wide range of partnership arrangements with schools and other education providers in the area.

- the college provides both technical education and academic A level programmes, with entry requirements below average. The college reports that over 80% of the 2,400 students are Kirklees residents, with most of the remainder coming from Calderdale
- the courses on offer are well suited to the local and regional needs. Their courses are offered at levels 1, 2 and 3. The college also offers a “fresh start at 17” programme for those young people who have been unsuccessful during their first year of post-16 learning
- the college offers progression to higher education, employment and training. It has just received an outstanding Ofsted inspection and as such will be involved in a variety of national projects to raise attainment
- proposals to work more collaboratively with Kirklees College and Greenhead College offer an opportunity for closer planning, a more coherent offer and improved information, advice and guidance across the borough. This should support better learner progression from school to post-16 learning against a falling demographic
- the college has had a historically strong financial position picture. It is currently forecasting small but decreasing surpluses, but meets all other financial benchmarks, except staff costs as a percentage of turnover. Proposals to work more closely with its neighbouring colleges in a collaborative trust may bring opportunities to generate financial savings



- the college will consider the academisation process and expect to take a decision on whether or not to academise, by November 2016.

## **NEW College Pontefract**

To explore conversion to academy status.

- the college offers academic A level programmes with a growing technical education provision. Over 80% of students are Wakefield residents. The vast majority of students progress into higher education
- the college's most recent Ofsted inspection resulted in an overall grade of outstanding. The college is a teaching school and offers management consultancy
- the college is opening a free school in Doncaster and propose to form a multi-academy trust at the earliest opportunity. This will enable the quality provision in Pontefract to be replicated elsewhere, driving up the quality of 16 to 18 provision in other areas. The New College Collaborative Learning Trust will be formed of NEW College Pontefract, New College Doncaster (a 16 to 19 free school opening in 2017) and New College Bradford (a 16 to 19 free school proposed to open in 2018). Other schools will work with the multi-academy trust including 4 Bradford schools: Immanuel College, Buttershaw Business and Enterprise College, Belle Vue Girls' School and Bradford Forster Academy
- the college is forecasting to achieve the financial benchmarks during the planning period. The college plans to increase their HE provision that will contribute to mitigate against other funding reductions
- the multi-academy trust is expected to deliver economies of scale through improved purchasing power. Many of the business support services will also be provided through the multi-academy trust (e.g. MIS, HR, finance, examinations).

## **Notre Dame Sixth Form College**

To remain as a stand-alone sixth-form college

- the college offers academic AS and A level courses with around 10% of students on technical education programmes. It offers students a wide choice of A levels, with a current curriculum covering 34 subjects and a small selection of BTEC courses. Entry requirements start at 4 GCSE at grade A\*-C preferably including English language and maths. The majority of students are from Catholic high schools and/or backgrounds
- the college will strengthen ties with other Catholic sixth-form colleges, and will also potentially participate in the Greater Manchester Catholic sixth-form college collegiate proposal. It will further develop its partnership with local Catholic and non-Catholic 11 to 16 schools. Greater collaboration with the group of Catholic sixth-form

colleges in Greater Manchester is expected to generate opportunities for further improvements in quality, as well as potentially, efficiencies and savings

- the college indicates that it will be at or around most of the financial benchmarks, with the exception of staff costs as a percentage of turnover
- the college is discussing with its diocese the option to apply to become an academy. Their decision is likely to be influenced by the outcome of national discussions.

## **Joint Venture, building on the existing West Yorkshire Colleges Consortium**

All general further education colleges commit to create a joint venture, building on the existing West Yorkshire Colleges Consortium. This will be a collectively owned company, limited by guarantee and with coverage across the Leeds City Region, that seeks to:

- offer savings and improved efficiencies through a shared approach to tenders
- develop new income streams
- stimulate other collaborative innovations.

## **Implementation group**

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority to convene an implementation group charged with overseeing and supporting delivery of the area review recommendations and any other locally determined skills issues. The membership of the group will be determined by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

## Conclusions from this review

The purpose of area reviews is to put colleges on a stronger financial footing whilst also enabling them to better meet the economic and educational needs of students and employers for the long term.

Throughout the review, colleges have worked closely with their LEP, local authorities and the review team, sharing detailed information about their performance and processes. Each local steering group member has been in a position to offer ideas for change, and make comments and assessments about others' proposals and plans for their area. The review team is grateful for the positive approach taken by all the local stakeholders involved in the review.

The issues arising from the area review summarised in 'The need for change' will be addressed through:

- collaboration between Bradford College and Leeds College of Building, which is expected to increase access and progression for Bradford and Leeds based learners to a wider range of construction and engineering courses, including progression to higher level learning which is a priority for the LEP, as well as delivering in priority sectors. Leeds College of Building will also seek to strengthen its position (and resilience) by raising its profile at a national level, and attracting more business from outside the region
- the memorandum of understanding between Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield Colleges. This is planned to increase the coherence and breadth of access to higher level apprenticeships, drawing from the colleges' existing specialist areas of delivery, which include health and care, creative and digital and construction and engineering and contribute to priority sectors in the Leeds City Region
- the proposed merger of Shipley College and Craven College, with the Keighley campus, will form an Aire Valley College. This is proposed to improve on the financial resilience of the current individual institutions, allowing investment and growth - for example in new apprenticeship programmes - whilst also enabling better coordination and coherence of the offer between the colleges, to improve access and progression for learners
- the proposed sale of its Keighley campus will generate disposal proceeds to Leeds City College, improving its financial position and providing opportunities for investment in facilities and provision
- the discussion between Leeds City College and Leeds College of Building may identify more opportunities for efficiencies and growth, benefiting both colleges, whether through sharing of services or structural change, such as a federation
- the agreement for Kirklees College to try to restructure the long term debt. If successful, this will increase the college's capacity to invest and flex its offer, to benefit learners

- the ongoing partnership work by Calderdale College, with its local schools, which is planned to improve the coherence and the quality of learning by focusing and strengthening the academic offer within schools, and similarly benefit, the technical education offer within the college. The partnership will provide for improved progression between these providers, ensuring that students can access the right courses at all ages
- the West Yorkshire College Consortium joint venture will offer savings and improved efficiencies through a collective approach to procurement and other shared services, and the identification of new income streams
- whether by means of collaborative working, proposed merger, memorandum of understanding, joint planning, or by focusing on the needs of their communities, each college will sustain access to entry to level 2 provision.

## Next steps

The agreed recommendations will now be taken forward through recognised structural change processes, including due diligence and consultation.

Proposals for merger, sixth-form college conversion to academies, or ministerial approval, for example of a change in name, will now need intensive work by all parties involved to realise the benefits identified. Colleges will want to give consideration to making timely applications for support from the [Restructuring Facility](#), where they can demonstrate that the changes cannot be funded through other sources. Colleges exploring academy conversion will be subject to the application process and agreement by the Sixth Form College Commissioner and the Regional Schools Commissioner.

Primary responsibility for implementation of recommendations relating to individual colleges rests with those institutions. However, it will be important to understand how progress is going in the round in each area and each set of area review recommendations will be formally monitored at both national and local levels. As the [guidance](#) produced for LEPs and local authorities sets out all those involved in the local steering group will be expected to play their full part in ensuring that changes happen within the timescale agreed. In this context, LEPs and local authorities are expected to retain their focus on driving changes, and assessing how implementation of recommendations is contributing to local economic performance. The EFA and SFA, with oversight from the FE Commissioner and Sixth Form College Commissioner, will also be monitoring progress across all areas.

A national evaluation of the area review process will be undertaken to assess the benefits brought about through implementation of options. It will include quantitative measures relating to the economy, to educational performance, to progression, to other measures of quality, and to financial sustainability. This analysis will also take account of the views of colleges, local authorities, LEPs, students and employers about how well colleges are responding to the challenges of helping address local skills gaps and shortages, and the education and training needs of individuals.



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