



Department
for Education

Somerset, Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Area Review

Final Report

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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 the Sixth Form College Commissioner. The steering group met on 3 occasions between November 2016 and March 2017 and additional informal meetings took place to consider and develop options in detail. Membership of the steering group comprised each college's chair of governors and principal, representatives from Somerset County Council, Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council, Torbay Council, Cornwall County Council, the Council for the Isles of Scilly, Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (HotSW LEP), Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP, a representative for the Regional Schools Commissioner, and representatives from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), the Education Funding Agency (EFA), and the Department for Education (DfE).

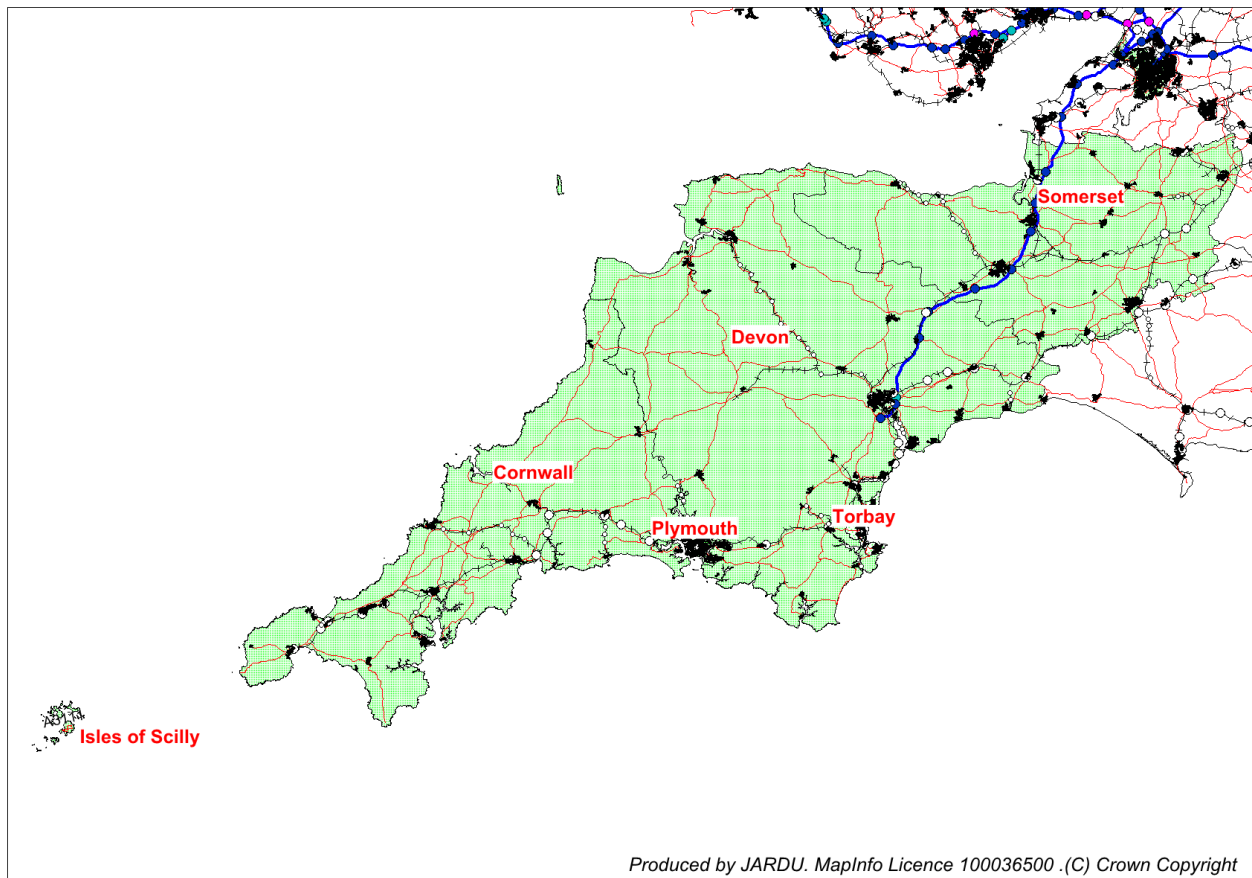
Visits to colleges and support throughout the process were provided by staff from the Further Education and Sixth Form College Commissioners' teams. The Joint Area Review Delivery Unit (JARDU) provided the project management, administrative support and developed supporting materials and papers used by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

The needs of the Somerset, Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly area

Demographics and the economy

The Somerset, Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly area review covers the local authority areas of Somerset, Devon, Cornwall, Plymouth, Torbay and the Isles of Scilly. The total population is around 2,266,300.

The area is illustrated on the map below:



The table overleaf provides a snapshot of key demographic and economic data¹, which has acted as a starting point for this review.

¹ 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.

	Somerset	Devon	Cornwall	Plymouth	Torbay	The Isles of Scilly	Great Britain
Total population (2015)	545,400	773,100	549,400	262,700	133,400	2,300	63,258,400
Population aged 16 to 64	59.0%	59.2%	59.1%	64.7%	57.6%	60.9%	63.3%
% with higher education qualifications ²	35.7%	40.4%	29.3%	29.9%	26.3%	N/A ³	37.1%
Those formally qualified to level 2+	79.1%	80.9%	74.8%	74.8%	72.3%	N/A	73.6%
Gross weekly pay £ of residents	482.4	484.5	469.5	481.5	443.3	N/A	541.0
Gross weekly pay £ by workplace	467.7	477.1	439.7	519.8	421.8	N/A	540.2
Out-of-work benefit claimants	1.5%	1.0%	1.6%	2.2%	2.2%	0.6%	1.9%
% of main benefit claimants	7.1%	6.7%	8.7%	11.0%	12.9%	1.4%	8.6%
Jobs density ⁴	0.84	0.90	0.81	0.79	0.74	2.01	0.83

² Percentages relate to those aged 16 to 64

³ The sample size is too small to allow data to be produced

⁴ 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 the South West as a whole is 0.86, which is slightly above the national average.

Total workplace units:	Somerset	Devon	Cornwall	Plymouth	Torbay	The Isles of Scilly	Average for the South West
Micro ⁵	84.9%	84.8%	84.1%	77.8%	82.1%	91.8%	84.0%
Small	12.6%	12.8%	13.7%	17.5%	15.0%	8.2%	13.2%
Medium	2.3%	2.1%	2.0%	3.9%	2.6%	0%	2.5%
Large	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	0.7%	0.2%	0%	0.3%

The key points to note are:

- Devon County Council has the highest percentage of working age residents (40.4%) qualified at level 4 or above and this is above the national average of 37.1%. The proportion of Somerset residents with higher level qualifications is just below the national average, but the other local authorities in the review area fall well below the national average, with Torbay the lowest with 26.3%. The Isles of Scilly (IoS) is not included here as the data is too small to be published
- Devon also has a higher proportion of its residents formally qualified to level 2+ (80.9%). Qualification levels for the rest of the local authorities in the area are closer to the national average of 73.6%
- the average weekly pay of residents right across the area is considerably lower than the national average of £541, with Torbay the lowest at nearly £100 less a week than the national average (IoS is again not included here as no data is available)
- the rate of benefit claimants is higher than the national average in Plymouth and Torbay and particularly so when it comes to the proportion of main benefit claimants
- Somerset, Devon and the Isles of Scilly have a job density rate above the national average, whereas Cornwall is in line with the national rate and job density in Plymouth and Torbay is significantly lower than the national rate, meaning that there are fewer jobs per head of population.

⁵ 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).

Patterns of employment and future growth

Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (CloS) LEP area⁶

The employment rate in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly has risen from 67.5% in 2012 (below the England average), to 74.5% in September 2014 (above the England average), indicating a significant improvement since the original LEP Strategy was developed. However, whilst the overall employment rate has improved, the CloS LEP area has the highest proportion of self-employed individuals of all LEP areas (15.9%, compared to 10.4% average) and the lowest proportion classified as 'employed' (57.5% compared to 62.8% average). The Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Employment and Skills Strategy highlights the importance of retail, health and social care, education, hospitality, construction, manufacturing and public administration to the area. These account for 76% of the workforce. Public sector employment accounts for 16.5% in Cornwall and 33% on the Isles of Scilly. As a comparison, the proportion of public sector employment for the south west of England is 18.6%.

The Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly strategy refers to:

- a projected decline in public sector employment, in Cornwall, in terms of overall employment growth
- significant employment growth in the health and social care sector, highlighting the impact of demographic changes and increasing demand for services of older people
- the fact that manufacturing employment is likely to fall, although gross value added (GVA) will grow relatively healthily, demonstrating the impact of productivity improvements in this sector
- the increasing contribution to employment growth from accommodation and food services.

The Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly strategy makes reference to the UK Working Futures model (2012), to offer insight into projected occupational changes to 2022 including:

- job growth will be concentrated in higher level roles, as well as lower level roles, reflecting an increasing polarisation effect, as seen nationwide
- 15,000 additional higher level jobs (for managers, professionals and associate professionals), with almost half of these in professional roles. Higher skilled jobs are expected to grow at a similar rate in the UK as a whole (16% in the LEP area compared to 17% in the UK over the course of the decade)

⁶ [Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP – Employment and Skills Strategy – Evidence Base – 2016](#)
[Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP – Employment and Skills Strategy – Evidence Base – Refreshed 2017- 2030](#)

- 6,000 fewer jobs in middle ranking administrative, secretarial and skilled trade occupations. Nevertheless, these areas of decline are expected to remain significant sources of employment by the end of the decade. For example, there are still expected to be around 22,000 administrative and secretarial jobs in 2022 in the LEP area, despite the loss of around 4,000 jobs in the previous decade and around 6,000 additional jobs in caring or leisure roles
- in terms of replacement demand (jobs created by people leaving the labour force temporarily or permanently), it is estimated that this will contribute around 8 times as many job openings as new job growth over the next decade: 96,000 replacement openings compared with 12,000 new jobs created. Replacement demand means that there will be a need to recruit suitable skilled people across all broad occupational groups, including those projected to decline
- for some occupation groups (mostly higher skilled ones), it is expected that there will be strong net growth in the number of jobs, supplemented by large replacement demands. For example, net growth of 7,000 jobs in professional roles is projected to be supplemented by 17,000 job openings arising from replacement demand; and,
- for those occupational areas in which it is expected to see a net decline in the number of jobs, replacement demand means that there will be a strong supply of job openings. For example in administrative roles, it is projected that a net loss of around 1,000 jobs will be more than offset by 8,000 job openings resulting from replacement demand
- The Isles of Scilly have a different pattern of sectoral employment with the largest sectors being administration and support services, and accommodation and food services. The other main sectors are wholesale and retail trades, and transport and storage.

Heart of the South West (HotSW) LEP

The HotSW LEP covers the local authority areas of Somerset, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay. The employment rate of 74.6%⁷ in 2012 was higher than the England average, however, this masks significant variation across the HotSW LEP area. The LEP area has the second highest levels of part-time employment in England, and higher than average levels of self-employment, particularly in rural districts.

In terms of increasing numbers of jobs, the following sectors are expected to grow fastest across the LEP area:

- professional services
- scientific and technical (undefined)
- information and communications

⁷ [Heartofswlep strategic-economic-plan](#)

- construction (which is currently already very significant in size).

The following sectors are expected to decline in overall size:

- mining and quarrying
- manufacturing
- public administration and defence; compulsory social security.

Sectors, which are expected to become significantly more efficient in terms of output per worker (percentage increase) across the LEP area as a whole, are:

- information and communications
- electricity and gas
- administrative and support service activities.

LEP priorities

CloS LEP⁸

Over the course of the period to 2022, it is estimated that an additional 3,300 jobs will be required to sustain the Smart Specialisation Sectors. This figure comprises growth of 1,100 jobs and just under 2,200 jobs of replacement demand. Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly LEP's Strategic Economic Plan⁹ sets out the following as priority sectors:

Aerospace and Space: The Aerohub Skills Action Plan (2013-2022) identified Cornwall as having a small but fast growing aerospace presence, which extends into the wider engineering and advanced manufacturing sectors in Cornwall. While Cornwall has less than 1% of the population, the county's aerospace industry constitutes almost 2% of the UK industry and the qualifications profile of the existing aerospace and advanced engineering sectors is almost comparable to that of the wider UK industry. Cornwall's advanced manufacturing sector includes marine, aerospace, advanced precision engineering and general engineering, each of which requires similar skillsets.

In the short to medium term the development of space capability will require the same skillset as that for aerospace and advanced manufacturing. Specifically, expanding the base of level 3-5 engineering, IT, manufacturing management skills and aviation/space operations.

⁸ [Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP – Employment and Skills Strategy – Evidence Base – 2016](#) and [Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP – Employment and Skills Strategy – Evidence Base – Refreshed 2017- 2030](#)

⁹ [Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Strategic Economic Plan](#)

Digital: A number of key issues for this sector have been highlighted which include:

- a preference for delivery of intensive training and online delivery
- only a third of all businesses were interested in accredited training
- this is an industry dominated by micro businesses and self-employment which act as a barrier to businesses acquiring a wide range of skills
- a need for employees who can combine high level creative skills with high level IT skills
- there are a high number of part-time worker in the sector which present challenges to up-skilling the workforce.

A number of specific recommendations were made to improve both the supply and demand for skills in the creative and digital sectors including:

- provision of an holistic approach to business support and skills – through a light touch business diagnostic service to help businesses identify the ‘real’ skills and training they require for sustainability and growth
- provision of support to help businesses understand the most effective way in which skills needs and gaps can be addressed
- recognition that skills training isn’t the only answer for micro-businesses
- provision of services which blend online learning with peer-to-peer learning and which provides opportunities to network and access to high-level experts
- the provision of marketing and sales skills, which businesses cite as key areas of weakness; and availability of bite-sized higher level training
- closer working between the employers and schools to improve the perception of IT jobs.

Marine Technology: For CloS the marine renewable energy (MRE) industry future opportunities focus on two aspects of the sector – offshore wave and floating offshore wind. The following qualifications and learning will support current and future skills and employment needs:

- new qualifications are required at an industry level in relation to level 3 MRE assembly technician
- MRE operations and maintenance/service technician
- supervisory control and data acquisition
- operation of jack-up barges (levels 2-4); handling of dredging equipment required for sub-sea cable installation; drilling courses; and decommissioning installations
- inclusivity of particular themes within existing training courses to make them more applicable to specific MRE job roles, e.g. mechatronics in all engineering design training provision; extension of existing provision for level 6/7 training in engineering (all types); local delivery of a range of short courses required by businesses in transference of core skills, for example, marine operations risk management; vocational education and training, pathways and industry experience; higher

technician-level and degree apprenticeships; development of core science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) skills for the MRE industry– to address the shortage of engineering skills at all levels.

Agri-tech: There is a need for the following to support agri-tech businesses within the CIoS area:

- skills for research – moving towards technology and higher level scientific and managerial skills to match advances in informatics, precision farming and engineering
- the sector also needs researchers with commercial understanding who are able to see the potential application of their work;
- the need for STEM graduates to join the industry
- there is also a risk of higher skills shortages in niche areas such as agronomy, plant pathology and agricultural engineering; and skills for the take-up of new technologies – and mechanisms to help businesses exchange knowledge, which will require continuing professional development for the current workforce and new recruits to meet demand.

E-Health: The skills needed to underpin E-health encompass the range of health, wellbeing and care disciplines, digital and IT expertise plus business and commercial skills. While consultations indicate the need for some specific skills development areas they also highlight the need for ‘translational skills’ - skills needed to work across different disciplines, with new technologies - which may be outside the usual professional skills training programmes.

HotSW LEP¹⁰

In its Strategic Economic Plan, the HotSW LEP identifies the growth sectors for the region, which include:

Marine – South West Marine Energy Park driving forward the growth of the marine sector (marine and offshore, manufacturing and services including ship building (defence related and leisure) and marine renewables. The main focus is Plymouth, with opportunities in North Devon, Torridge, South Hams and Teignbridge and including Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly LEP. The Plymouth and South West Peninsular City Deal is expected to create 10,000 jobs, with an emphasis on the marine sector.

Nuclear – construction and the legacy of Hinkley C will result in the UK’s first new nuclear power station in 25 years. The £16bn project will be Europe’s largest construction scheme,

¹⁰ Heart of the South West Strategic Economic Plan 2014 - 2030

and the UK's largest inward investment project, employing 5,600 individuals at peak and providing in the region of £100m per year additional GVA into the local economy during the construction process. This is focused in Somerset, but with opportunities across the area.

Aerospace and advanced engineering – securing growth from the aerospace and advanced engineering sector through support and strengthening access to cutting edge knowledge exchange, to include SMEs in the supply chain. This is across the LEP area, with a strong aerospace focus in Yeovil.

Agri-food/agri-tech – a priority in all aspects and right across the area.

Big data¹¹ and environmental futures – the establishment of a Global Environmental Futures campus with the securing of a supercomputer investment by the Met Office at Exeter Science Park, in partnership with Exeter University will drive demand for mathematics and other STEM subjects; focused in Exeter and parts of east Devon.

Feedback from LEPs, employers, local authorities, students and staff

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

For Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly:

- the proportion of young people not in education and training (NEET) is generally lower than the national average, but there are geographical variations across Cornwall. The needs of vulnerable groups, including those with mental health, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), children in care, and teenage parents remains a challenge
- more accessible provision is required to meet the needs of a geographically challenging area as transport links between main towns are variable across all institutions there is variability in Key Stage 5 performance
- a need to grow apprenticeships and higher education provision
- the need to develop employability in line with labour market needs, taking advantage of the growing demand for higher level skills
- in partnership with further education colleges the Cornwall County Council would like to strengthen preparation for adulthood provision as only 1% of adults with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) in Cornwall are in employment. The figure is 7% nationally. Priorities are: establishing clear pathways for high needs learners to

¹¹ Big data is a term that describes the large volume of data – both structured and unstructured – that inundates a business on a day-to-day basis

ensure choice at different points of transition; fully engaging in statutory processes to enable identification of progress and appropriate next steps; provision of supported internships and traineeships; increasing the proportion of post-16 placements in further education colleges rather than specialist post-16 institutions

- high quality career education information advice and guidance is still a major issue so there is a need to increase the quality and consistency of careers advice.

For Somerset, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay:

- there is an issue with distance travelled to learn/work in more rural areas
- the NEET levels are low across the area as a whole, but vary by locality
- there is an aspiration from a number of stakeholders including councillors to have a visible dedicated HEI in Somerset
- the Plymouth learning offer is strongly focused on school sixth-form provision
- colleges are generally felt to be performing well based on Ofsted outcomes
- there is a need to maintain access to breadth of land based provision the in rural areas
- The range of further education provision and accessibility was considered a challenge across east Devon
- HotSW LEP felt that SEND provision is good in their area but a further expansion of work focused opportunities and pathways is required
- high quality career education information advice and guidance is still a major issue so there is a need to increase the quality and consistency of careers advice.

A wide range of employers were contacted during the area review process and provided the following feedback:

- their main relationship with colleges was linked to apprenticeships and in the main this met employers needs
- some employers worked with colleges to encourage and lobby for improvements to the curriculum content where colleges were keen to involve them in new initiatives. Others suggested that employers need to be more involved in further education and would like a more strategic relationship with colleges
- half of the employers stated they were asked to provide advice, guidance, and/or expert industrial knowledge to the colleges within the review area, but this was not routine
- over half of the employers that responded were happy that the colleges in the review area provide the skills outcomes they need to deliver their business and maintain their competitive edge
- two thirds of employer respondents evaluated the level of service they get from the colleges as good. They cited colleges as helpful in understanding employers' requirements, identifying solutions, and willing to listen.

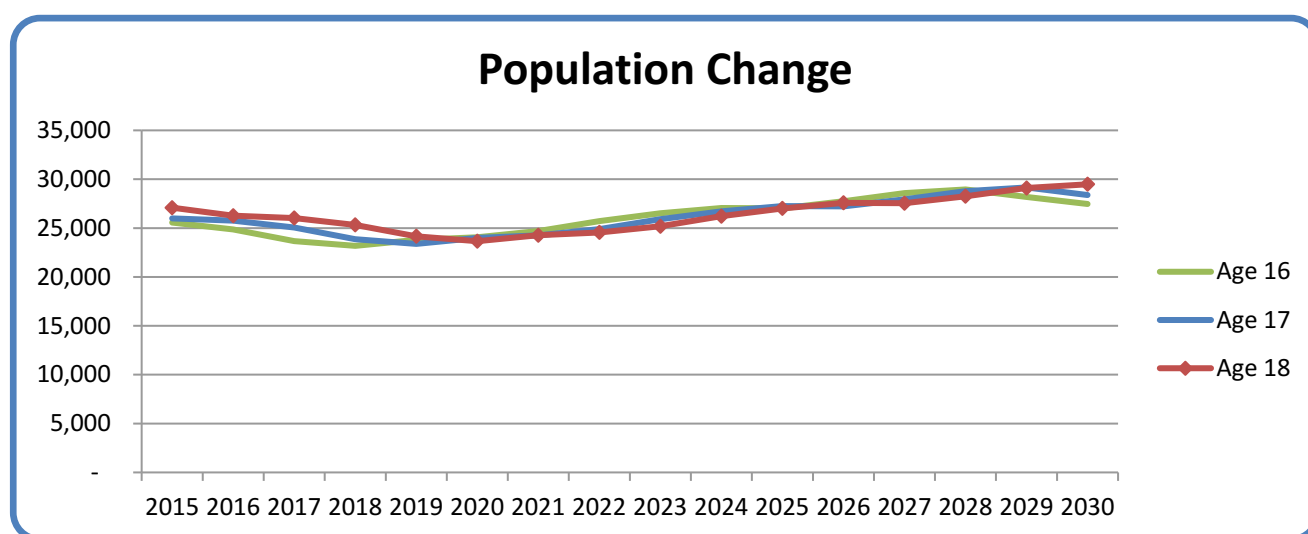
For each area review the National Union of Students submitted a report on the views of students which was considered by the steering group. Where the NUS submitted a report these are available on [NUS connect](#).

The colleges taking part in the review took primary responsibility for ensuring that their staff and union representatives had an opportunity to provide input throughout the review, which the steering group took into account. The Sixth Form College Commissioner held meetings with staff union representatives prior to some of the steering group meetings to enable them to feed their views into the review.

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 the Somerset, Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly review area the numbers of young people aged 16 to 18 is declining at present. The chart below shows the expected cohort change across the area by 2030. The age 16-18 cohort is expected to fall by 9% between 2015 and 2019, and then increase by 20% between 2019 and 2030¹². In number terms this is a total increase of 6,696 young people between 2015 and 2030. This could have an impact on the sustainability and space utilisation of some colleges with the review area.



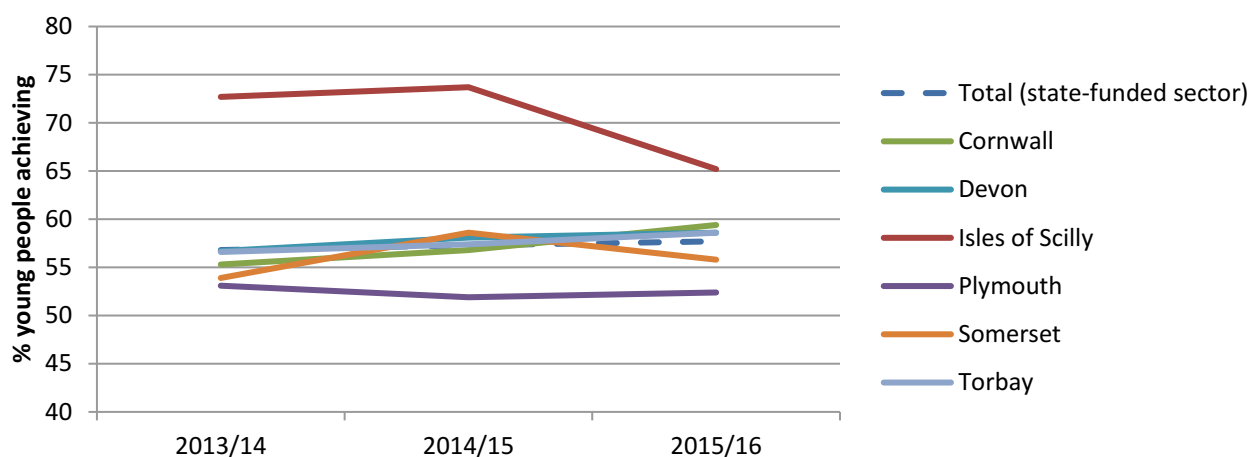
Performance of schools at Key Stage 4

The recent trend in GCSE pass rates for 16 year old school pupils completing year 11 across the 6 local authorities is illustrated overleaf¹³.

¹² ONS sub-national population projections – see data annex: Population projections

¹³ School Key Stage 4 results – see data annex. Local authority and total (state-funded sector) figures covering achievements in state-funded schools only.

Five GCSEs A*-C including English and Maths



GCSE results are above the national average in Cornwall, Devon, Isles of Scilly and Torbay with Cornwall, Devon and Torbay showing an improvement in results since 2013/14. Cornwall has increased its results by over 4 percentage points between 2013/14 and 2015/16. Both Plymouth and Somerset's results are below the national average for 2015 to 2016 (the latter having declined compared to 2014/15), with Plymouth 5.3 percentage points below. Results in Isles of Scilly have declined significantly (8.5 percentage points) between 2014 to 2015 and 2015 to 2016¹⁴.

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. Regional Schools Commissioners take account of the analysis from area reviews in any decisions they make about future provision.

There are currently 77 funded schools with sixth-forms in the review area, including 19 local authority maintained, 52 academies, 1 free school, 3 studio schools and 2 university

¹⁴ In 2013 to 2014, a change in how the GCSE performance of schools was defined led to a drop in the overall numbers of young people achieving 5 GCSEs A*-C including maths and English.

technical colleges¹⁵. Most school pupils in the age range 16 to 18 are enrolled on A level courses.

Overall funded student numbers in mainstream school sixth-forms decreased by 769 in the 3 years 2014 to 2015 to 2016 to 2017 with a total of 15,203 young people funded in a mainstream sixth-form setting in 2016 to 2017¹⁶. 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 41 school sixth-forms (including local authority maintained and academies but excluding special schools) that were funded below that figure in 2016 to 2017. The majority of schools with sixth-forms were graded by Ofsted as good or outstanding.

The further education and sixth-form colleges

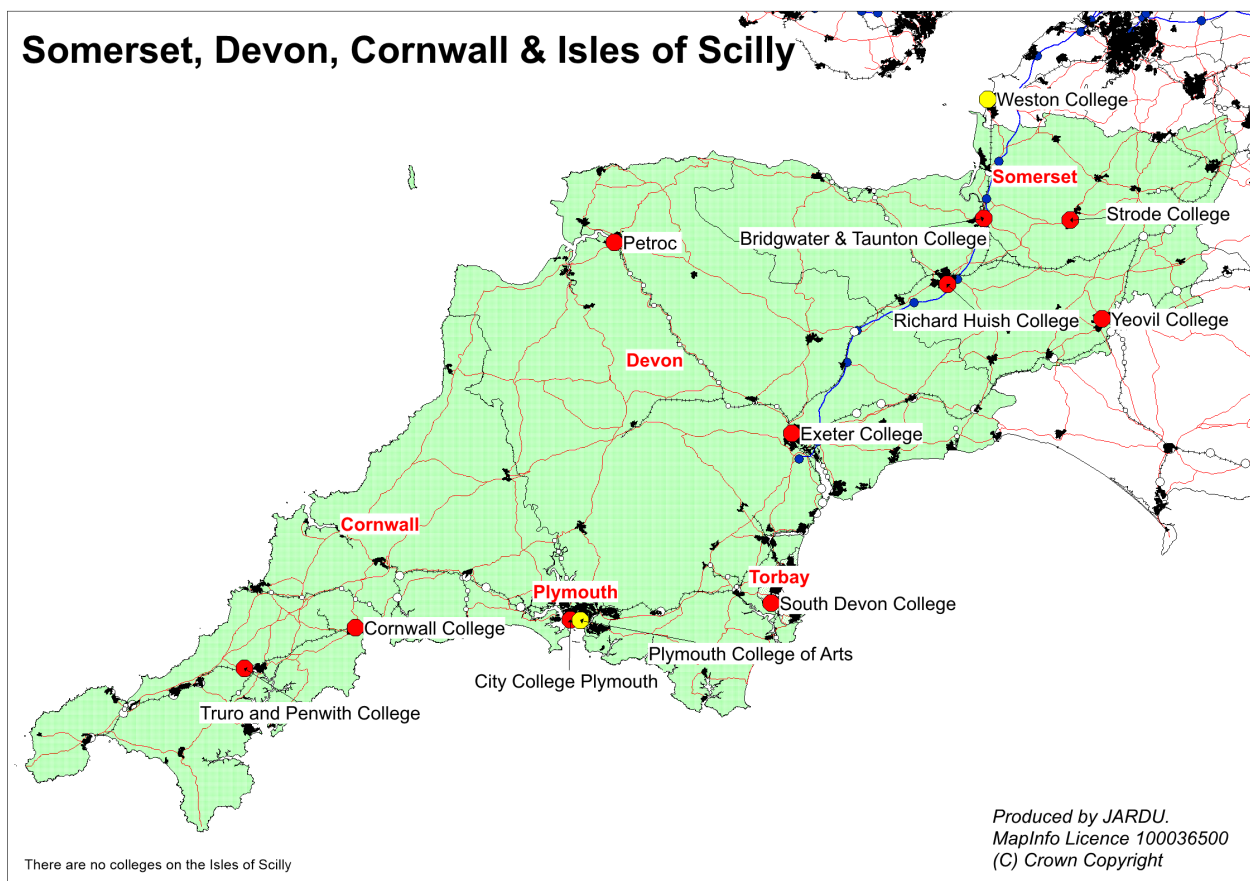
Ten colleges (1 sixth-form college, 3 general further education colleges and 6 tertiary colleges) participated in this review:

- Bridgwater and Taunton College
- Richard Huish College
- Strode College
- Yeovil College
- City College Plymouth
- Exeter College
- Petroc
- South Devon College
- Cornwall College
- Truro and Penwith College.

The location of the main campus of each of the colleges is shown on the map overleaf:

¹⁵ EFA Allocations – see data annex: 16 to 19 funding. Where part of a local authority is in the review area, that local authority has been included in the school sixth-form data.

¹⁶ EFA allocations – see data annex: 16 to 19 funding.



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. Through a data sharing protocol between members of the steering group, the 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

Richard Huish College is a sixth-form college and offers a wide range of A levels. In the 2014 to 2015 academic year, 30% of all the EFA-funded A-Level enrolments were in the science subject area. The languages, literature and culture of the British Isles A-Level subject attracted 11% of all EFA-funded A-level enrolments. Richard Huish College also attracts relatively high volumes of enrolments in mathematics and statistics, sport, leisure and recreation, history, sociology and social policy, business management, and law and legal services. The college also delivers apprenticeships including health, public services, ICT and care, leisure, travel and tourism.

All of the general further education colleges offer A levels except for City College Plymouth.

All 9 general FE and tertiary colleges offer a broad range of technical provision for young people and adults including foundation learning, maths and English, apprenticeships for 16 to 18 year olds and adults and some higher education. The highest volumes of technical courses offered are in the following areas:

- arts, media and publishing - every institution included in this review has age 16-19 EFA-funded learners in this sector subject area. Truro and Penwith College has the greatest volume, followed by Exeter College, Bridgwater College and City College Plymouth. There are no higher level apprenticeships being delivered to learners living in the review area in this sector subject area
- health, public services and care - all 10 of the institutions included in the review area have apprenticeships in this sector subject area that live within the review area. Cornwall College has the largest volume of apprenticeship residents in the review area followed by Yeovil College and then South Devon College
- engineering and manufacturing technologies - all of the general further education and tertiary colleges in the review area deliver apprenticeships in this sector subject area to learners living in the review area. The majority of level 4+ learners are engaged in the engineering subject area. Bridgwater College and Exeter College are developing and delivering some programmes in nuclear engineering
- leisure, travel and tourism - all 10 institutions included in this review area have age 16-19 EFA-funded learners (non A-level core aims) in this sector subject area. Exeter College has the greatest number followed by both Truro and Penwith College and Bridgwater College. Across all 10 of the institutions there are a greater number of apprenticeships in the sport, leisure and recreation subject area compared to the travel and tourism subject area
- agriculture, horticulture and animal care - the apprenticeship market in this sector subject area is dominated by the two general further education colleges that also have specialist land-based campus sites. Cornwall College has Duchy College and Bicton College. Bridgwater College has the Cannington campus within its portfolio. Both the general further education colleges with specialist land-based facilities have adult learners at level 4+ mainly spread across the agriculture, horticulture and floristry and animal care and veterinary science subject areas.

There are very few apprenticeship learners living in the review area that are engaged in the science and mathematics sector subject area. Across the institutions included in the review the most prevalent level of learning for 16-19 EFA-funded learners (non A-Level core aims) in this subject area is at level 3 where there is over twice the volume of learners engaged at level 2.

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 ¹⁷	EFA allocations (2016 to 17) ¹⁸	SFA allocations (2016 to 17) ¹⁹	Total college income in 000s (2014 to 2015) ²⁰
Bridgwater and Taunton College	Outstanding ²¹ (March 2017)	£23,648,595	£11,672,071	£46,061 ²² £17,265 ²³
Richard Huish College	Outstanding (November 2007)	£7,724,834	£680,331	£10,039
Strode College	Outstanding September 2014	£6,451,472	£2,680,924	£11,699
Yeovil College	Good (November 2016)	£6,623,626	£3,879,691	£14,678
City College Plymouth	Good (April 2016)	£10,938,923	£7,283,612	£31,204
Exeter College	Outstanding (February 2014)	£24,474,908	£5,712,638	£38,447
Petroc	Good (December 2015)	£14,225,411	£6,471,651	£36,092
South Devon College	Outstanding (August 2009)	£13,767,002	£5,759,643	£29,166
Cornwall College	Good (January 2016)	£20,155,516	£13,194,928	£69,574

17 Ofsted – see data annex: College inspection reports

18 EFA allocations – see data annex: 16 to 19 funding

19 SFA allocations – see data annex: Adult funding

20 College accounts academic year 2014 to 2015 data – see data annex: College accounts

21 In 2015 to 2016 what is now Bridgwater and Taunton College was two separate colleges. The Ofsted grading is for Bridgwater College before merger which took place on 14 June 2016

22 In 2015 to 2016 what is now Bridgwater and Taunton College was two separate colleges. The total incomes is for Bridgwater College before merger which took place on 14 June 2016

23 In 2015 to 2016 what is now Bridgwater and Taunton College was two separate colleges. The total incomes is for Somerset College before merger which took place on 14 June 2016

College	Most recent overall Ofsted grade ¹⁷	EFA allocations (2016 to 17) ¹⁸	SFA allocations (2016 to 17) ¹⁹	Total college income in 000s (2014 to 2015) ²⁰
Truro and Penwith College	Outstanding (February 2016)	£24,913,177	£3,123,231	£42,512

Where a college was subject to a financial notice of concern or a financial notice to improve this was a factor which was taken into account in the assessment of options for structural change in the review. Cornwall College and Yeovil College are both subject to a financial notice of concern issued by the Skills Funding Agency.

Overall, the average condition of college buildings is comparatively 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

Progression of young people to higher education²⁴ across Somerset, Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly has been variable. In Somerset the progression rate for young people who reached age 18 between 2005-2009 and participated in higher education was 33.1%, which was just above the national progression rate of 32.6% for the United Kingdom for the same period. In Plymouth progression was 25.3%, in Torbay it was 26.1%, and in Cornwall it was 30.9%, all below the national average. However, in Devon it was 32.8% and in the Isles of Scilly progression to higher education was higher at 41.5%.

The majority of the higher education courses are delivered by the universities in the area. The most popular are subjects allied to medicine and business and administrative studies. The main offer at Plymouth College of Art is creative arts and design. The University of St Mark and St John offers over 9 subject areas with the most popular being education and biological sciences. All 3 are based in Plymouth, Devon.

The University of Exeter based in Exeter, Devon, offers over 16 subject areas with popular subjects in biological sciences, business and administrative studies, and languages.

²⁴ HEFCE POLAR 3– see data annex: Higher education progression

Falmouth University is based in Cornwall; its main offer is focused on creative arts and design.

The colleges in the review area all offer a range of higher education provision including some higher level apprenticeships, all have some direct funding from HEFCE and all also work in partnership with universities delivering franchised or non-franchised programmes.

In Somerset, Bridgwater and Taunton College works in partnership with the University of Plymouth, University of the West of England and Oxford Brookes University. Strode College works with the University of Plymouth. Yeovil College works in partnership with Bournemouth University, The University of the West of England, and The University of Gloucestershire. Richard Huish College works in partnership with the University of St Mark and St John.

In Devon, Petroc, South Devon College and City College Plymouth all work in partnership with The University of Plymouth. Exeter College works in partnership with the Universities of Plymouth, Exeter, St Mark and St John and Kingston.

In Cornwall, the higher education provision at both Cornwall College and Truro and Penwith College is run in partnership with the University of Plymouth.

Provision for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and high needs

In 2016 to 2017, the EFA²⁵ funded 2,266 post-16 places across the 6 local authorities in colleges, special schools and specialist post 16 institutions. Colleges delivered 1,687 funded places between them. The colleges delivering the highest numbers of funded places are Bridgwater and Taunton College, Truro and Penwith College, Cornwall College and South Devon College.

During the review, local authorities in the Heart of the South West LEP area expressed the view that SEND provision is good across the area but suggested that a greater focus was needed on expanding work focused opportunities and pathways.

Cornwall Council, working in partnership with the further education colleges, would like to see an increase in the number of placements for young people with high needs in local colleges rather than having to access appropriate provision outside the county area.

²⁵ EFA Allocations – see data annex: 16 to 19 funding: 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.

Apprenticeships and apprenticeship providers

In 2015 to 2016 29,170 apprenticeships²⁶ were delivered in the local authority areas within this review.

In 2014 to 2015, around 12,750 apprenticeships were delivered by the colleges in the review area. Of these starts, 60% were at level 2 and 43% were at level 3. In total, the colleges reported 280 higher level apprenticeship starts in the same period.

Overall, the most popular sector subject areas were business administration and law, health, public services and care, and retail and commercial services.

Twenty four private providers based in the review area were funded to deliver apprenticeships. These providers registered a total of 10,990 apprenticeships in 2014 to 2015.

Land based provision

Landex, the sector organisation that represents a significant number of colleges which deliver land based provision, has prepared a report for steering groups 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.

Cornwall College has land based college campuses in Cornwall at Duchy College, Bickton College in Devon. Bridgwater and Taunton College has land based provision at Cannington, Somerset. The largest areas of land based provision offered across the review area are

²⁶ Numbers of apprenticeships by provider and LA – see data annex: Apprenticeships

animal care and veterinary science, and agriculture, with significant numbers in both for classroom-based technical courses. Land based provision is a priority for the review area especially with both LEPs citing development in the area of agri-tech. While the colleges offers apprenticeships also, the numbers here are 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.

The key areas for change

The key issues in relation to this review, and deliberated during steering group meetings, were the need to:

- develop opportunities for students with high needs to increase choice locally and offer employment based education
- work in partnership across the review area to improve impartial and independent information, advice and guidance
- develop a strategic approach to the delivery of apprenticeships and increase supply throughout the review area, particularly higher level and degree apprenticeships, contributing to the government's 3 million target by 2020
- grow employer links and develop the learning offer to meet current and future workforce requirements to achieve economic growth ambitions
- develop a broader higher education offer that encourages progression beyond level 3, particularly in the Cornwall and Somerset areas
- ensure that the learning offer is accessible by students living in the more rural parts of the review area, where public transport can be limited
- expand work focused opportunities and pathways especially amongst those with mental health problems and SEND and increase the number of placements for young people with high needs, in local colleges where appropriate.

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 (mergers or federations) which, if well planned and carefully managed, were considered to have the potential to improve financial viability, address quality issues, and retain a good choice of subjects and options for students. Options raised at an early stage included a merger between Cornwall College and Truro and Penwith College

- the potential for collaboration to share services and reduce costs: Richard Huish College and Strode College explored options to collaborate on the recruitment and delivery of apprenticeships ranging from consideration of joint marketing, joint delivery of information, advice and guidance (IAG) and developing shared sales teams, through to creating a joint apprenticeship company operating at arm's length from the 2 colleges
- discussion between colleges about the case for specialisation and further collaboration. The colleges in Devon have come together to form the Devon Colleges' Group. The colleges in Cornwall are collaborating to deliver an offer across the county that meets the needs of students and employers without duplication
- the case for remaining stand-alone if the college could demonstrate long term financial sustainability. From an early stage this was the preferred option for all of the colleges
- 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 sector bodies. Richard Huish College did not wish to explore this further.

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% to 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 1. 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 F²⁷ (revised March 2016).

²⁷ [Reviewing post-16 education and training institutions: updated guidance on area reviews Annex F, Pages 49-53](#)

Recommendations agreed by the steering group

Fifteen recommendations were agreed by the steering group at their meeting in March 2017 these were:

- Bridgwater and Taunton College to continue as a stand-alone institution, collaborating with the other 3 colleges in Somerset to meet the priority skills and education needs of the county and the wider LEP area.
- Richard Huish College to continue as a stand-alone institution, collaborating with the other 3 colleges in Somerset to meet the priority skills and education needs of the county and the wider LEP area.
- Strode College to continue as a stand-alone institution, collaborating with the other three colleges in Somerset to meet the priority skills and education needs of the county and the wider LEP area.
- Richard Huish College and Strode College to establish a joint apprenticeship venture to increase the quantity and quality of apprenticeships to meet local skills needs
- Yeovil College to continue as a stand-alone institution, collaborating with the other 3 colleges in Somerset to meet the priority skills and education needs of the county and the wider LEP area.
- Bridgwater and Taunton College, Richard Huish College, Strode College, and Yeovil College to collaborate to meet priority education and skills needs and deliver the right mix and balance of provision for the county and wider LEP area and to support the financial sustainability of provision and institutions in Somerset review area.
- City College Plymouth to continue as a stand-alone institution, collaborating with the other 3 colleges in Devon to meet the priority skills and education needs of the county and the wider LEP area.
- Exeter College to continue as a stand-alone institution, collaborating with the other 3 colleges in Devon to meet the priority skills and education needs of the county and the wider LEP area.
- Petroc to continue as a stand-alone institution, collaborating with the other 3 colleges in Devon to meet the priority skills and education needs of the county and the wider LEP area.
- South Devon College to continue as a stand-alone institution, collaborating with the other 3 colleges in Devon to meet the priority skills and education needs of the county and the wider LEP area.
- City College Plymouth, Exeter College, Petroc, and South Devon College will continue to work through the Devon Colleges' Group (DCG) with the collective aim of ensuring that Devon has the right mix and balance of provision, including the staff expertise, curriculum and infrastructure capacity to deliver on local, regional and national agendas.
- Cornwall College to remain as a stand-alone institution with a 'fresh start' approach to deliver financial stability. The 'fresh start' approach will include securing the service of a Turnaround Director to support accelerated recovery. The revised

college business plan to include sustainable land-based provision at Bicton. The college will work with Truro and Penwith College to meet the priority skills and education needs of the county.

- Truro and Penwith College to continue as a stand-alone institution working with Cornwall College to meet the priority skills and education needs of the county.
- Cornwall College, and Truro and Penwith College to establish a joint project group with an independent chair to oversee the relationship between the colleges and facilitate closer collaboration including in the following areas:
 - the delivery of higher education, provision for students with high needs, and apprenticeships
 - future curriculum developments at Callywith
 - how governance can be strengthened by sharing expertise.
- The colleges in Somerset, Devon, Cornwall to explore proposals for Institutes of Technology (IoT), either as stand-alone organisations or through hub and spoke models, aligned to the requirements of emerging national IoT policy and the productivity challenges of the review area.

Each of these recommendations is now outlined in more detail:

Bridgwater and Taunton College

Bridgwater and Taunton College to continue as a stand-alone institution, collaborating with the other 3 colleges in Somerset to meet the priority skills and education needs of the county and the wider LEP area.

- in terms of meeting current and future needs, the college has a strong reputation for technical and vocational education, which addresses a range of local and regional employer needs. The development of the National College for Nuclear is in direct response to LEP priorities and employer need at local, regional and national level. The Advanced Engineering Centre, currently under construction on the Bridgwater site, dovetails into the nuclear development and builds on strong existing employer relationships. The college supports more than 300 high needs students and will continue to support a wide spectrum of needs
- with regard to financial sustainability, following a merger with Somerset College of Arts and Technology in 2016/17, this very large tertiary college demonstrates a sound and strongly improving financial position, with forecasts achieving 4 key benchmarks by 2017/18 and moving steadily towards the operating surplus benchmark by 2019/20
- in respect of quality of provision, Ofsted rated Bridgwater College as outstanding in 2006. Somerset College was rated as good and the merged college recognises a need to address some areas of quality through its self-assessment. It is aiming to reach outstanding as a merged college by the end of 2017/18

- the college's specialisms include civil engineering, the National College for Nuclear and land based.

Richard Huish College

Richard Huish College to continue as a stand-alone institution, collaborating with the other 3 colleges in Somerset to meet the priority skills and education needs of the county and the wider LEP area.

- in terms of meeting current and future needs the college has a wide range of level 3 curriculum opportunities with a track record of progression to higher education, further training and employment. The college has grown apprenticeships in response to government policy and is committed to further development of provision. The college has a small cohort of high needs students and will continue to provide support
- with regard to financial sustainability, the college demonstrates a sound financial position, with improvement based on planned growth, currently meeting 3 key benchmarks and progressing towards the remaining benchmarks of operating surplus and staff costs by 2019/20. The apprenticeships collaboration with Strode College has the potential to exploit synergies and efficiencies which would further improve the forecast operating surplus and overall financial resilience
- in respect of quality of provision, Ofsted rated the college as outstanding and it is successful in ensuring that A level students achieve qualifications with significant value added
- the college's specialisms are focused on the delivery of a wide range of level 3 programmes.

Strode College

Strode College to continue as a stand-alone institution, collaborating with the other three colleges in Somerset to meet the priority skills and education needs of the county and the wider LEP area.

- in terms of meeting current and future needs the college will meet LEP sector priorities through classroom-based provision for 16-18 year olds, high needs students, adult learners and apprentices generally, and specifically in 4 LEP priority areas: engineering, health and social care, business services and digital technology
- with regard to financial sustainability, this small tertiary college forecasts to achieve all of the key benchmarks, with the exception of the benchmark for operating performance, by 2019/20. The forecast is for a steady improvement from the current vulnerable financial position. The apprenticeships collaboration with Richard Huish College has potential to exploit synergies and efficiencies to improve operating performances and to reduce staff costs

- in respect of quality of provision, Ofsted rated the college as outstanding in September 2014 with a strong track record of adding value. Their current self-assessment places the college as outstanding
- the college's specialisms are broad. They offer classroom based programmes, apprenticeship and traineeship courses for all ages with some higher education.

Yeovil College

Yeovil College to continue as a stand-alone institution, collaborating with the other 3 colleges in Somerset to meet the priority skills and education needs of the county and the wider LEP area.

- in terms of meeting current and future needs, this is a tertiary college with a number of specialist facilities on-site and a small centre in north Dorset in the neighbouring county. The college supports the LEP and employer priority areas in aero engineering and health and social care. It will continue to offer education and training across all the subject sector areas, with the exception of land based provision, for 16-18 year olds and adults, including those with high needs
- with regard to financial sustainability, this small tertiary college forecasts to achieve the key benchmarks, with the exception of the one for operating performance, by 2018/19. Operating performance improves towards the benchmark, which contributes towards the strengthening of the currently vulnerable financial position.
- in respect of quality of provision, Ofsted rated the college as good in October 2016. The focus is for the college is to work towards achieving outstanding at their next inspection
- the college's specialisms are health and social care in partnership with Yeovil hospital, and aero engineering, including composites with Leonardo Helicopters.

City College Plymouth

City College Plymouth to continue as a stand-alone institution, collaborating with the other three colleges in Devon to meet the priority skills and education needs of the county and the wider LEP area.

- in terms of meeting current and future needs, the college's curriculum aligns to Plymouth City's key sectors for employment and growth which include technology, marine and renewables and creative, cultural and digital industries. The college will continue to offer provision for students aged 16 to 18 and adults, including a wide range of educational programmes of study for high needs students and apprenticeships
- with regard to financial sustainability, the college is viable and resilient and this is demonstrated in financial forecasts that achieve the key benchmarks by 2018/19 with the exception of operating performance and solvency. Operating performance

steadily improves towards the benchmark which contributes to a strengthening solvency ratio by 2019/20. The proposed 4 college collaboration in Devon will enhance financial resilience

- in respect of quality of provision, the college was graded as good by Ofsted in March 2016
- the college's specialisms include science, technology, engineering and mathematics and the college has a new Regional Centre of Excellence opening in September 2017 to meet employers' needs.

Exeter College

Exeter College to continue as a stand-alone institution, collaborating with the other 3 colleges in Devon to meet the priority skills and education needs of the county and the wider LEP area.

- in terms of meeting current and future needs, the college currently supports the LEP priority of nuclear. It has advanced plans for a digital, data and IT centre on its Hele Road Site, to meet LEP priorities and to support the needs of the digital economy of Exeter. The college will continue to offer a broad range of academic and technical programmes for students aged 16 to 18, adults and high needs students along with apprenticeships
- with regard to financial sustainability, this large college demonstrates a sound financial position and strong financial resilience by currently meeting all the key benchmarks. The college forecasts to maintain the sound financial position to 2019/20 and the proposed 4 college collaboration in Devon will enhance financial resilience
- in respect of quality of provision, the college was rated as outstanding by Ofsted, both in a pilot in 2012, and in 2014 in a full inspection
- the college's specialisms are focused on developing higher level technical and professional education to serve the needs of the community. The three key areas (big data, health and social care and advanced aerospace and engineering) align with not only LEP priorities, but with the economy of Exeter. The college launched a new digital apprenticeship driven by industry demand, and is a partner in an European Structural and Investment Fund project to support the development of higher level skills around digital, data and information technology.

Petroc

Petroc to continue as a stand-alone institution, collaborating with the other 3 colleges in Devon to meet the priority skills and education needs of the county and the wider LEP area.

- in terms of meeting current and future needs, Petroc's work aligns closely to the HotSW LEP priorities of marine, digital, nuclear, STEM, advanced engineering and

manufacturing. The college has established a Health and Care Academy in partnership with North Devon Healthcare Trust to support skills needs and is a provider of supported internship opportunities for high needs students

- with regard to financial sustainability, this large college demonstrates a sound financial position and financial resilience. Its financial forecasts currently meet the key financial benchmarks with the exception of the operating performance benchmark. The college is forecast to maintain the sound financial position to 2019/20 and improve operating performance to meet the benchmark. The proposed 4 college collaboration in Devon will enhance financial resilience
- in respect of quality of provision, Ofsted rated the college as good in November 2015
- the college's specialisms include future technologies, construction and engineering. It has new specialist STEM facilities and offers a wide ranging curriculum from level 1 through to higher technical and professional programmes at level 7, including digital and IT pathways. In addition, capital funding has recently been secured to develop a nuclear skills hub for the area in response to the Hinkley C development.

South Devon College

South Devon College to continue as a stand-alone institution, collaborating with the other 3 colleges in Devon to meet the priority skills and education needs of the county and the wider LEP area.

- in terms of meeting current and future needs, the college has a broad offer for 16-18 year olds and adults. The development of a hi-tech and digital centre supports the local electronics and photonics and digital media sectors, cited as significant transformational opportunities by the HotSW LEP. The college has specialist facilities to support high needs students across a range of areas including autism spectrum, mental health and behaviour needs, and physical needs
- with regard to financial sustainability, this large college demonstrates a sound financial position and financial resilience by already meeting the key benchmarks, with the exception of operating performance benchmark. The college forecasts to maintain the sound financial position to 2019/20 and improve operating performance towards the benchmark. The proposed 4 college collaboration in Devon has considerable potential to improve the coherence of the local offer and to exploit synergies and efficiencies leading to enhanced financial resilience and potential improvement against the operating surplus benchmark
- in respect of quality of provision, the college is rated as outstanding by Ofsted and supports an inclusive approach. It continues to work in collaboration with Torbay Council, Torbay Hospital and other local providers to support the local special school expansion as well as its own provision for high needs learners
- the college's specialisms include: health (including social care) working in collaboration with Torbay Hospital and the local care trust; hi-tech including

electronics, photonics and digital media sectors; the marine sector; the construction sector; education; and professional and business.

Cornwall College

Cornwall College to remain as a stand-alone institution with a 'fresh start' approach to deliver financial stability. The 'fresh start' approach will include securing the service of a Turnaround Director to support accelerated recovery. The revised college business plan to include sustaining the land based provision at Bicton. The college will work with Truro and Penwith College to meet the priority skills and education needs of the county.

- in terms of meeting current and future needs, the college has a broad offer for 16-18 year olds, adults and high needs students including an extensive land based curriculum reflecting the region's rural economy. The range of provision offered by the college focuses not only on the high employment sectors (tourism and hospitality, agriculture, food and drink, construction, health and care, hair and beauty) but also the high growth potential sectors identified under the LEP Smart Specialisation approach (marine, digital, agri-tech, space/aerospace, e-health, environmental futures)
- with regard to financial sustainability, this college is not currently viable or resilient, with weak solvency and forecast operating deficits for the duration of the financial plan to 2019/20. The 'fresh start' approach will provide the means to support accelerated recovery and to move gradually and securely towards the key benchmarks
- in respect of quality of provision, the college was graded as good in December 2015
- the college's specialisms include agri-tech, marine, digital, aerospace and space. Land based provision is a key specialism and the college has land based campuses in Cornwall and Devon.

Truro and Penwith College

To continue as a stand-alone institution working with Cornwall College to meet the priority skills and education needs of the county.

- in terms of meeting current and future needs, the college has a core offer of learning for 16-18 year olds with additional provision in higher education and apprenticeships. It offers a small amount of provision for adults. The college will continue to work with Cornwall County Council to provide programmes for students with high needs. This will reduce the number of out of area placements. The college is embarking on the ambitious development of a third campus in Bodmin through the establishment of Callywith College as a free school. The third campus will offer a wider curriculum choice to north and east Cornwall learners and respond to local economic need for 16 to 18 year olds around the Bodmin area

- with regard to financial sustainability, the college has a strong balance sheet and currently achieves the solvency, borrowing and financial health benchmarks demonstrating its resilience to financial shocks. The college would need to review staffing in order to move more quickly towards the staff costs benchmark which would also positively influence the currently break even operating performance.
- in respect of quality of provision, the college is graded outstanding by Ofsted and has been since 2001
- the college's specialisms include specialist provision for a wide range of high needs learners, which it has expanded in response to local needs. The college specialises in the areas of profound and multiple learning difficulties, autism, severe and moderate learning difficulties, sensory processing and working with disengaged learners.

Richard Huish College and Strode College Apprenticeship Collaboration

Richard Huish College and Strode College Richard Huish College and Strode College to establish a joint apprenticeship venture to increase the quantity and quality of apprenticeships to meet local skills needs.

- this will build on the current plans of each college to grow their apprenticeship provision
- the colleges provided a long list of options that they would like to consider before they agree priorities
- both colleges are rated as outstanding by Ofsted and have shared strengths. By working together with a shared approach, the risk is reduced.

Cornwall Colleges Collaboration

Cornwall College, and Truro and Penwith College to establish a joint project group with an independent chair to oversee the relationship between the colleges and facilitate closer collaboration including in the following areas:

- the delivery of higher education, provision for students with high needs, and apprenticeships
- future curriculum developments at Callywith
- how governance can be strengthened by sharing expertise
- to help support and drive developments to meet local and employer needs; identifying and addressing gaps in types or level of provision, particularly in relation to apprenticeships, high needs students, higher level education, and information, advice and guidance

By working together on areas of mutual interest the colleges will be able to reduce unhelpful competition. The development of an agreement in respect of new provision at Callywith will enable the 2 colleges to develop new activity while respecting current provision.

Somerset Colleges Collaboration

Bridgwater and Taunton College, Richard Huish College, Strode College, and Yeovil College to collaborate to meet priority education and skills needs and deliver the right mix and balance of provision for the county and wider LEP area and to support the financial sustainability of provision and institutions in Somerset review area.

- there is a benefit to the colleges in Somerset working together to identify and fill gaps in provision and will more effectively meet LEP priorities
- by working together the colleges have the opportunity to reduce unnecessary competition, which will enhance the potential for sustainability
- collaboration will help to support and drive developments to meet local and employer needs
- this will provide an effective route to identifying and addressing gaps in types or level of provision, particularly in relation to apprenticeships, high needs students, higher level education, and information, advice and guidance

Devon Colleges Collaboration

City College Plymouth, Exeter College, Petroc, and South Devon College will continue to work through the Devon Colleges' Group (DCG) with the collective aim of ensuring that Devon has the right mix and balance of provision, including the staff expertise, curriculum and infrastructure capacity to deliver on local, regional and national agendas.

- the 4 colleges will work together in a partnership that recognises the independence of each. but shares expertise
- the collective strength of the 4 colleges with the individual specialisms of each provides an opportunity to meet LEP priorities and address gaps in provision
- this will help to support and drive developments to meet local and employer needs; identifying and addressing gaps in types or level of provision, particularly in relation to apprenticeships, high needs students, higher level education, and information, advice and guidance.

Institutes of Technology (IoT)

The colleges across Somerset, Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly to explore proposals for Institutes of Technology either as stand-alone organisations or through hub and spoke models, aligned to the requirements of emerging national IoT policy and the productivity challenges of the review area.

- the 10 colleges will ensure that their aspirations to meet the requirements of the IoT agenda are maximised with a view to giving collective consideration to the model(s) that best meet the needs of the local area(s).

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:

- having financially resilient colleges that develop clear pathways leading to skilled employment or higher education, helping to raise aspirations and attainment of learners in the area
- increasing the quantity and quality of apprenticeships to meet local skills needs
- increasing the higher level skills opportunities to provide progression routes, particularly in areas of LEP priorities
- 3 new collaborative groups of colleges established for Cornwall, Devon and Somerset, which will provide a strategic forum to help support and drive developments to meet local and employer needs; identifying and addressing gaps in types or level of provision, particularly in relation to apprenticeships, high needs students, higher level education, and information, advice and guidance
- collaboration between colleges to ensure the right mix and balance of provision and ensure the needs of learners and employers are met
- the Cornwall Colleges working closely with Cornwall County Council to provide provision that meets the needs of SEND/high needs students in area, with fewer young people being placed out of area
- colleges working closely with local authorities in the HotSW LEP area to expand work focused opportunities and pathways for high needs students
- development of proposals for Institutes of Technology to boosting technical education and ensure the same opportunities given to university graduates are given to those people who pursue technical routes.

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 Further Education 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.



Department
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