



Department
for Education

Greater Lincolnshire Area Review

Final Report

August 2017

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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 jointly chaired by the leader of East Lindsey District Council, representing the Combined Authority of Greater Lincolnshire and the Sixth Form College Commissioner. The steering group met on 5 occasions between October 2016 and February 2017 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 Lincolnshire County Council, North Lincolnshire Council, North East Lincolnshire Council, the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership, the Humber Local Enterprise Partnership, the Regional Schools Commissioner, and representatives from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), the Education Funding Agency (EFA), and the Department for Education (DfE).

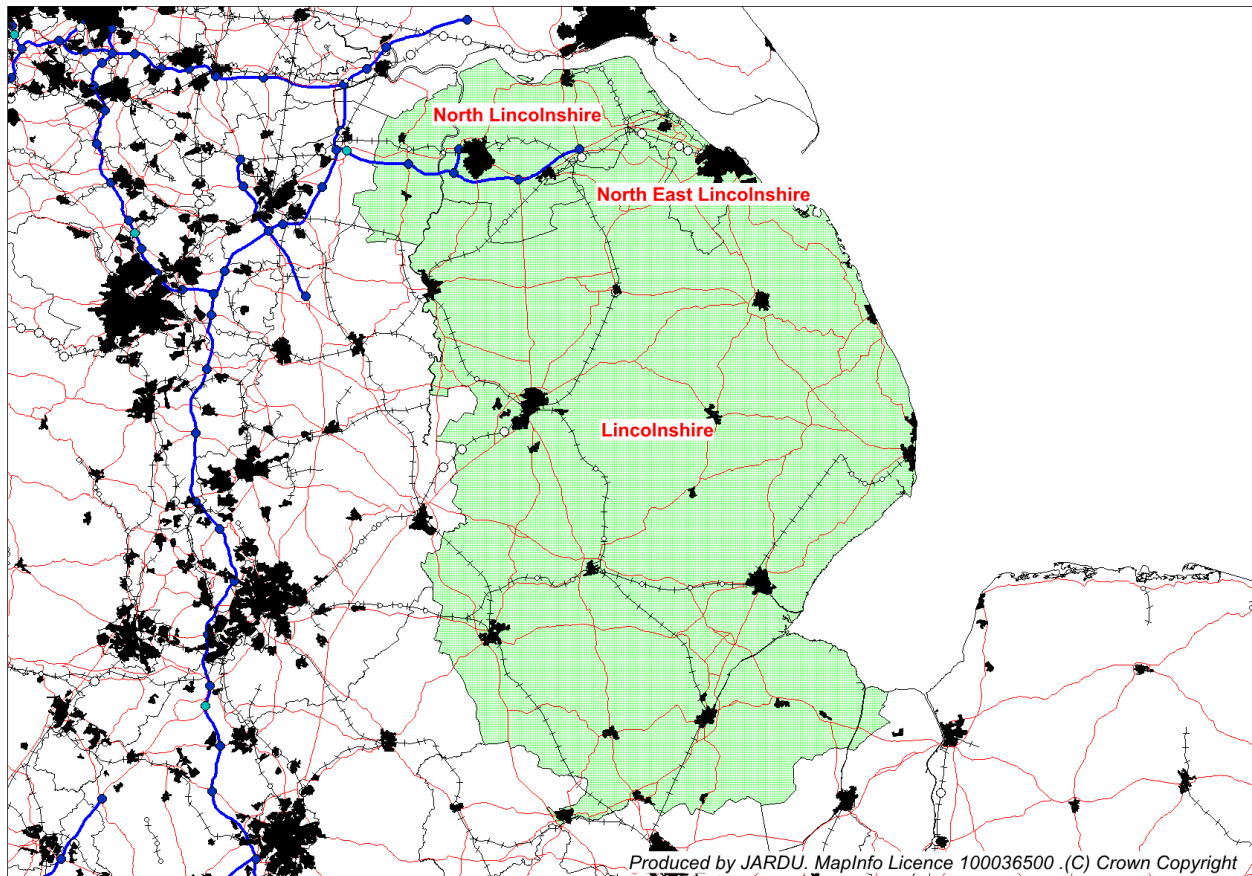
Visits to colleges and support throughout the process was provided by staff from the Further Education and Sixth Form College Commissioners' teams. The Joint Area Review Delivery Unit (JARDU) provided the project management, administrative support and developed supporting materials and papers used by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

The needs of the Greater Lincolnshire area

Demographics and the economy

The Greater Lincolnshire area review covers the 3 local authority areas of Lincolnshire County Council, North Lincolnshire Council and North East Lincolnshire Council. Lincolnshire County Council comprises the following 7 districts: City of Lincoln, North Kesteven, South Kesteven, South Holland, Boston, East Lindsey and West Lindsey. The Lincolnshire County Council area is served by the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), and in the 2 areas of North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire, by both the Greater Lincolnshire LEP and the Humber LEP.

The area is illustrated on the map below:



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

	Lincolnshire	North East Lincolnshire	North Lincolnshire	Boston	East Lindsey	Lincoln	North Kesteven	South Holland	South Kesteven	West Lindsey	Great Britain
Total population (2015)	736,700	159,600	169,800	66,900	137,900	97,100	111,900	91,200	138,900	92,800	63,258,400
Population aged 16 to 64	60.2%	61.4%	61.4%	60.8%	56.6%	68.4%	59.6%	59.1%	60.2%	59.6%	63.3%
Percentage with higher education qualifications ²	28.8%	23.6%	27.1%	24.3%	25.2%	25.4%	27.7%	24.7%	38.2%	32.2%	37.1%
Those formally qualified to level 2+	70.2%	66.6%	68.6%	61.5%	63.5%	66.9%	70.7%	71.3%	80.4%	72.4%	73.6%
Gross weekly pay £ of residents	465.9	470.1	527.3	415.0	459.1	437.2	502.0	464.1	468.3	496.0	541.0
Gross weekly pay £ by workplace	450.0	463.1	517.3	430.4	457.6	458.0	442.1	440.4	434.7	475.1	540.2

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.

² Percentages relate to those aged 16 to 64

	Lincolnshire	North East Lincolnshire	North Lincolnshire	Boston	East Lindsey	Lincoln	North Kesteven	South Holland	South Kesteven	West Lindsey	Great Britain
Out-of-work benefit claimants	1.7%	3.5%	2.3%	1.5%	2.4%	2.3%	1.0%	1.1%	1.3%	1.9%	1.8%
% of main benefit claimants ³	8.2%	12.0%	8.9%	8.0%	11.2%	10.5%	5.7%	6.7%	6.2%	8.8%	8.6%
Jobs density ⁴	0.75	0.78	0.75	0.79	0.72	0.967	0.71	0.78	0.73	0.55	0.83
Total workplace units:											Average for East Midlands
Micro ⁵	83.9%	79.9%	81.6%	80.6%	84.5%	75.1%	85.6%	85.9%	85.0%	86.6%	82.0%
Small	13.5%	16.1%	14.9%	15.7%	13.6%	19.6%	11.8%	11.8%	12.6%	11.5%	13.4%
Medium	2.4%	3.5%	3.0%	3.1%	1.9%	4.6%	2.3%	1.8%	2.1%	1.8%	2.8%
Large	0.3%	0.5%	0.5%	0.7%	0.1%	0.7%	0.2%	0.4%	0.3%	0.1%	0.4%

3 Main benefit claimants figures relate to those aged 16 to 64 and includes job seekers, those on incapacity benefits, lone parents, carers and those with disabilities.

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 Greater Lincolnshire as a whole is 0.76, which is slightly below the national average.

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).

The key points to note are:

- according to the latest Index of Deprivation data⁶, North East Lincolnshire, Lincoln and East Lindsey all contain pockets of severe deprivation. North East Lincolnshire is the 15th most deprived local authority area in the country. Of the 39 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) areas, Greater Lincolnshire LEP (GLLEP) is ranked 13 out of 39 in relation to overall deprivation⁷
- residents in Boston and Lincoln earn less than the average workplace pay for the review area and workplace pay in Boston is the lowest in the review area. This suggests that people who commute into the area take the better-paid jobs
- the largest variance between resident earnings and workplace pay is in North Kesteven, where resident earnings are on average 14% higher than pay in the workplace suggesting that residents travel to their workplace
- residents across Greater Lincolnshire tend to have lower levels of qualifications than is the case nationally, apart from South Kesteven which is the only area to show qualification levels above the national average. Residents of Boston are lower paid, and are less well qualified than their immediate neighbours.

Patterns of employment and future growth

Two local enterprise partnerships, the Greater Lincolnshire LEP (GLLEP) and the Humber LEP, were members of the steering group and at the start of the review set out their forecast for growth and priorities based on their refreshed Strategic Economic Plans (SEP)^{8 9}.

The GLLEP SEP highlighted that Greater Lincolnshire's economic output (gross value added - GVA) was over £18.3 billion in 2013, having grown by 7.3% since the onset of the recession in 2008. The GLLEP SEP identifies this as a positive sign of the area's economic resilience and emergence from recession. However, GVA growth continued to lag behind that of the East Midlands (11.1%) and England as a whole (11.4%) over the same period.

Workplace-based GVA per head in Greater Lincolnshire was identified as being 76% of the United Kingdom (UK) average in 2013, reflecting the particular mix of sectors and low economic participation rates in some parts of the Greater Lincolnshire area. This, along with levels of multiple deprivation, has resulted in Greater Lincolnshire's status as a 'Transition Region' for the purposes of the European Union Structural and Investment Funds programme for the period 2014 to 2020.

6 DCLG Index of Multiple Deprivation – see data annex: Deprivation

7 Where 1 = most deprived

8 [Greater Lincolnshire LEP Strategic Economic Plan](#)

9 [The Humber Strategic Plan](#)

The GLLEP SEP identifies that the employment rate for the area has been consistently higher than the national rate, particularly during the recession, and has only recently come into line with the national average. Youth unemployment (December 2015) accounted for 21% of all job seekers in Greater Lincolnshire, which is above the national average of 17%. Public sector employment fell by 13% between 2009 and 2014 as the Greater Lincolnshire economy rebalanced from the recession. Despite this, the number of people employed overall rose marginally during the same period. Employment in the agri-food and manufacturing sectors has remained stable over the period, whereas nationally the manufacturing sector saw a decrease in employment.

The Greater Lincolnshire LEP paper 'Greater Lincolnshire area review skills, data and analysis'¹⁰ summarises the current skills levels. This shows that, despite the proportion of school leavers obtaining a level 2 qualification being amongst the highest in England, Greater Lincolnshire has a higher than average proportion of adults with no qualifications for the area, with 27% of those over age 16 having no qualification compared to 23% nationally. The position is improved at level 2 where 58% of the working age population have a level 2 qualification as their highest qualification compared to 51% nationally. At level 4, however, only 20% of the population are qualified to level 4 and above compared to 27% nationally.

Greater Lincolnshire has a diverse base of almost 44,000 VAT/PAYE registered businesses across a range of sectors, and approximately 41,000 small and medium-sized businesses. The GLLEP SEP forecasting models predict that Greater Lincolnshire businesses will need to fill around 200,000 jobs (growth and replacement) by 2022, and that there will be greater demand for more highly skilled workers in sectors that have traditionally been seen as low skilled. GLLEP also predicts that there will be large numbers of future job vacancies that demand higher level, technical and managerial skills.

The Humber LEP SEP sets out that in 2014 the Humber economy generated £17.5 billion in GVA, an increase of 3.7% (or £630 million) over 2012. The SEP acknowledges that this rate of economic growth is considerably behind the regional and national increases of 6.3% and 9.0% respectively.

Whilst business start-up rates in the Humber region increased year-on-year from 2009 to 2013 to 13.8% they dropped marginally to 13.3% in 2014. This decline is attributed to decreases in both North Lincolnshire and Hull. This poses a challenge to the area as business survival rates have also decreased.

The Humber LEP SEP identifies that the employment rate across the Humber increased by 3.9% to 72.4% from June 2013 to March 2016. An additional 16,900 people were estimated to be in employment, though just 54.4% of this constituted full-time employment representing a small decrease in the full-time employment rate. The proportion of working

¹⁰ [Greater Lincolnshire LEP area review evidence base](#)

age people that are economically active increased slightly from 77.0% in June 2013 to 77.2% in March 2016. The unemployment rate however has fallen from 10.3% to 6.3% over the same period with significant decreases reported in Hull and North East Lincolnshire in particular.

The sectoral composition of the Humber's employment base in 2014 was very narrow with 50.3% of total employment concentrated across 4 sectors, namely manufacturing, health, retail, and education. This is considerably higher than the national average of 39.8%.

The Humber LEP SEP sets out the skills profile of the Humber working age population over the period 2012 to 2015. The proportion of working age residents qualified to level 4+ (degree level and above) remains 10% below national averages despite increases in the East Riding of Yorkshire, North Lincolnshire, and North East Lincolnshire. The proportion of working age Humber residents with no qualifications is 1% above the national average.

LEP priorities

At the start of the Greater Lincolnshire area review the Greater Lincolnshire LEP shared the 'Greater Lincolnshire area review skills, data and analysis'¹¹ paper with the steering group. The paper identified the area as the UK's largest arable and horticulture producer, producing 25% of the country's vegetables, processing, and manufacturing a large range of food products, including 70% of UK seafood.

The GLLEP report identifies other significant industries in the area:

- a manufacturing sector worth £1.9 billion
- a low carbon sector worth £1.2 billion
- Siemens' biggest plant in the UK
- more than 120 sites of special scientific interest, plus the 4th most popular tourist resort in the UK, which attracts over 31 million visitors per year
- an international airport serving the business community
- the largest UK port by tonnage
- 2 enterprise zones attracting significant investment in relation to the Humber Estuary and 3 food enterprise zones planned across the area.

Due to the large and diverse landscape of Greater Lincolnshire, the GLLEP identifies 6 priority industry sectors. GLLEP believes these offer competitive advantages and specific

¹¹ [Greater Lincolnshire LEP area review evidence base](#)

opportunities for the area and GLLEP intends to focus on these areas for economic growth. The sectors are:

- agri-food
- advanced manufacturing and engineering
- the low carbon economy with a particular focus on renewable energy
- the visitor economy
- the health and care sector
- ports and logistics.

The Humber LEP identifies 6 priority sectors:

- ports and logistics
- chemicals
- engineering and manufacturing
- creative and digital
- food
- the visitor economy.

The Humber LEP recognises the chemicals industry as a significant sector in the Humber region with 2 oil refineries providing 27% of the UK's refinery capacity.

The GLLEP 'Greater Lincolnshire area review skills, data and analysis' forecasts that growth will not just occur in the 6 priority sectors in future but in other sectors too, based on plans for almost 100,000 new houses being built over the next 15 years through urban expansions in Gainsborough, Grantham, Grimsby, Lincoln, Scunthorpe, Sleaford and Spalding.

Evidence presented in the GLLEP report acknowledges that even in sectors that are traditionally seen as low skilled, such as agri-food and health and care, there is a growing demand for skills levels that are higher than residents currently have. New industries, such as low carbon, will require new skills in higher-level advanced technologies and management. This is also reflected in the Humber LEP priority to ensure that businesses can access the skilled workforce they need to grow and that residents of the Humber are supported and able to access good quality employment opportunities.

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

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

- the breadth and diversity of the current post-16 offer that should be retained
- areas of good collaboration between providers and stakeholders and opportunities for further collaboration that could support the diverse needs of the area

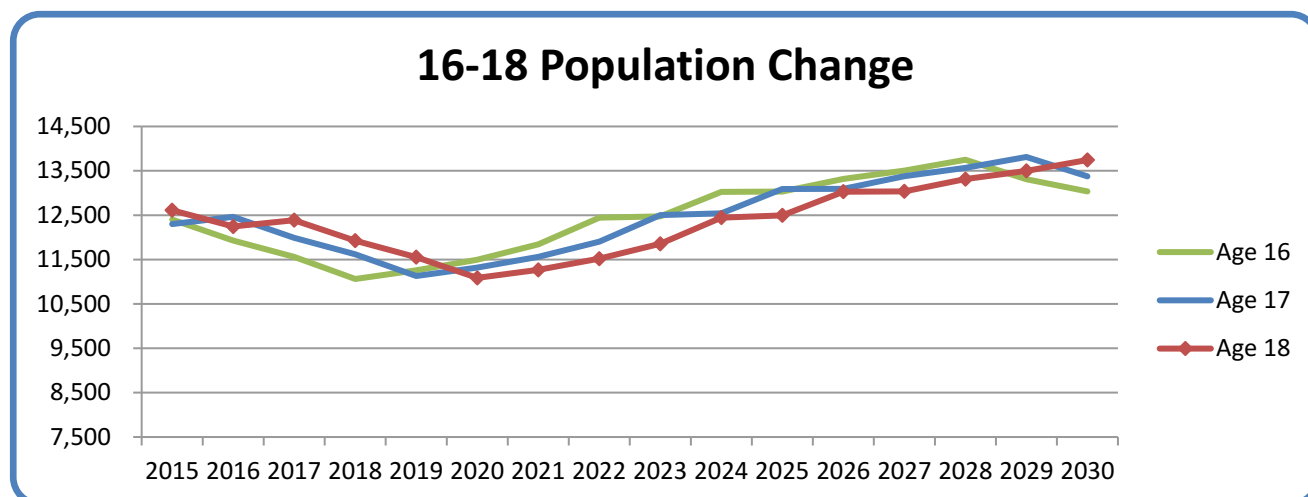
- transportation and the rurality agenda, which pose difficulties for both the delivery of provision and for employers' recruitment
- the need to further develop remote learning opportunities to address the geographical challenges of the area
- the need for progression routes/pathways to be available and clearly set out to young people at age 16
- the need to develop a greater range of opportunities above level 3
- GCSE maths and English achievement rates remaining a barrier to accessing apprenticeships.

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

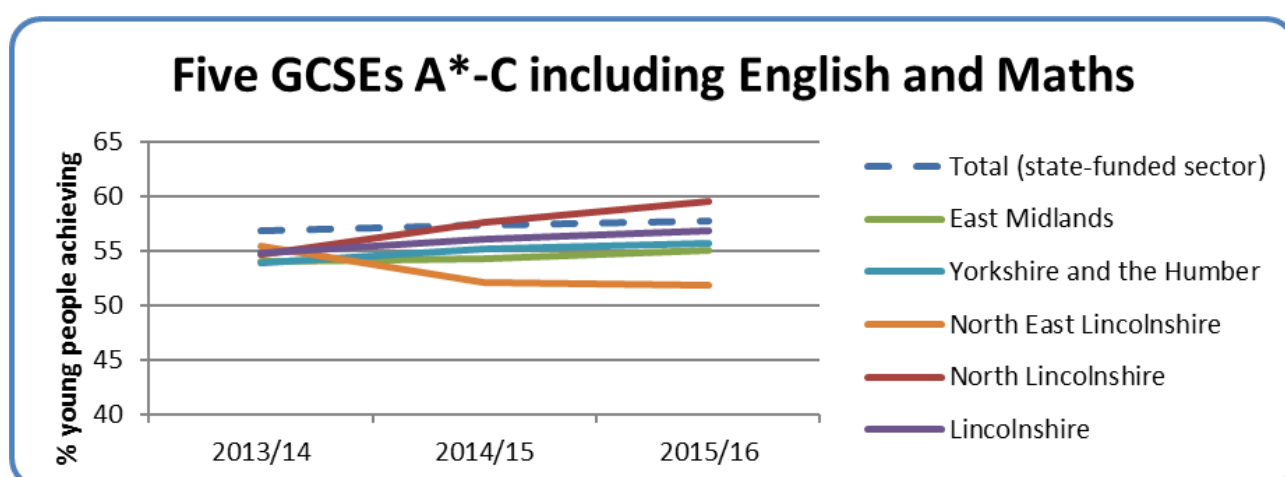
The steering group considered information provided by each local authority about population projections, focusing on the changes in the number and needs of young people aged over 16. The following chart shows the expected change in the number of 16-18 year olds in the review area.



In Greater Lincolnshire, the numbers of young people aged 16 to 18 is decreasing slightly. This is most prominent for Lincolnshire, although numbers are projected to start to increase from 2020¹².

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 3 local authorities is illustrated below¹³.



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

¹³ Local authority and total (state-funded sector) figures covering achievements in state-funded schools only.

The Yorkshire and Humber area is included as a neighbouring comparator and member of the Humber LEP. The overall performance of schools at year 11 (key stage 4) in North East Lincolnshire is below the national, East Midlands and Yorkshire and Humber averages and has continued to decline. Outcomes for Lincolnshire and North Lincolnshire students have both improved between 2013 to 2014 and 2015 to 2016 and both are above the averages for the East Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber, although Lincolnshire is slightly below the national average¹⁴.

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 delivered 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 47 funded schools with sixth-forms in the review area, including 5 local authority maintained, 40 academies and 2 university 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 1.9% in the 3 years from 2014 to 2015 to 2016 to 2017 with a total of 9,002 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 24 school sixth-forms (including local authority maintained schools 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 better.

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.

15 EFA Allocations – see data annex: 16 to 19 funding

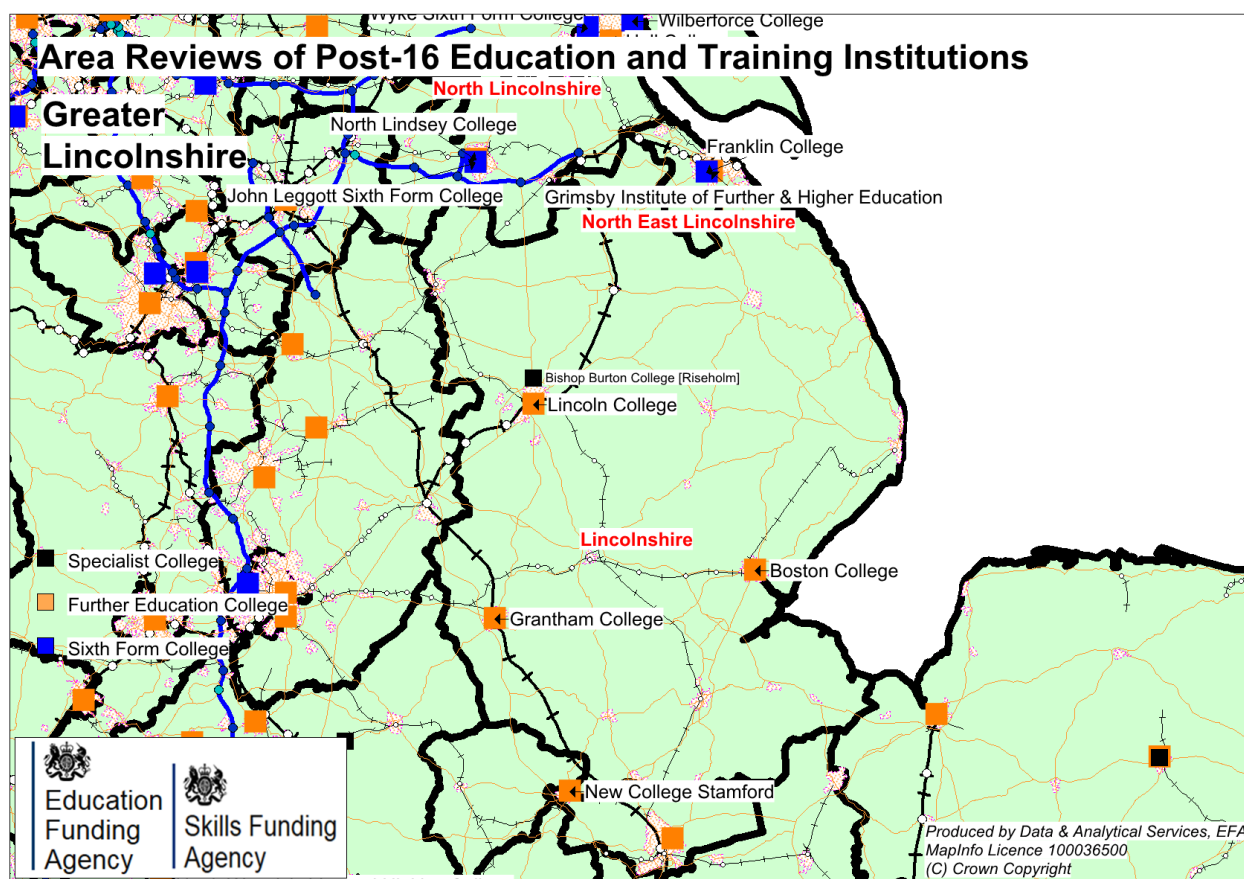
16 EFA allocations – see data annex: 16 to 19 funding. Where part of a local authority is in the review area, that local authority has been included in the school sixth-form data.

The further education and sixth-form colleges

Eight colleges (2 sixth-form colleges and 6 general further education colleges) participated in this review:

- Boston College
- Franklin Sixth Form College
- Grantham College
- Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education
- John Leggott Sixth Form College
- Lincoln College
- New College Stamford
- North Lindsey College.

The location of these colleges is shown on the map below:



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

The colleges in the Greater Lincolnshire review area offer a broad range of provision across the area.

All of the general further education colleges offer apprenticeships in all sectors, with some higher apprenticeships being offered in health, public services and care, business, administration and law, information and communication technology, and engineering and manufacturing.

Seven colleges deliver A levels across Greater Lincolnshire with the 2 sixth-form colleges, Franklin Sixth Form College and John Leggott Sixth Form College, delivering the largest number of A levels in the review area. Lincoln College is the largest deliverer of A levels among the GFE colleges.

All general further education colleges in the review have EFA funded learners aged 16-19 enrolled in the following subject areas:

- health, public services and care
- agriculture, horticulture and animal care
- engineering and manufacturing technologies
- construction, planning and the built environment
- information and communication technology
- retail and commercial enterprise
- leisure, travel and tourism
- arts, media and publishing
- business, administration and law.

Additionally, all colleges within the review area offer preparation for life and work.

All general further education colleges deliver some provision at level 4+, with John Leggott Sixth Form College delivering a small numbers of these courses.

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 (2014-15) (in 000s) ²⁰
Boston College	Good (June 2014)	£7,790,978	£4,471,924	£17,349
Franklin Sixth Form College	Requires improvement (October 2016)	£7,253,319	£486,133	£8,210
Grantham College	Requires Improvement (December 2015)	£4,547,204	£2,317,296	£12,687
Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education	Good (November 2013)	£16,167,405	£8,766,342	£49,374
John Leggott Sixth Form College	Good (March 2014)	£7,202,914	£134,900	£9,195
Lincoln College	Requires Improvement (May 2016)	£15,334,136	£9,230,564	£36,642
New College Stamford	Requires Improvement (March 2015) ²¹	£8,791,847	£1,932,503	£14,630
North Lindsey College	Good (May 2014)	£8,815,754	£3,134,716	£20,374

17 Ofsted – see data annex: College inspection reports

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

19 SFA allocations – see data annex: Adult funding

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

21 New College Stamford was re-inspected in February 2017, just after the area review had completed and was judged by Ofsted as good in all areas

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. No colleges in the review area were subject to a notice at the time of the review.

Overall, the condition of college buildings varies among colleges. Some colleges have higher running costs and 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 education²²

Progression of young people to higher education across Greater Lincolnshire has been variable. Data published by the Higher Education Funding Council for England for young people who reached 18 between 2005-2009 and participated in higher education showed that the progression rate for students accessing higher education across the Greater Lincolnshire area ranged from greater than 22.9% to 31.5% for each of the local authority areas compared to an average for England of 34.7%²³. North East Lincolnshire had the lowest progression rate in the review area and Lincolnshire had the highest.

The universities of Lincoln, Hull and Bishop Grosseteste offer the majority of higher education in the area. All 6 of the further education colleges offer higher education provision, with the largest number of students studying at Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education and North Lindsey College.

Provision for students with special educational needs and disability (SEND) and high needs²⁴

In 2016 to 2017, the EFA funded 712 post-16 places across the 3 local authorities in colleges, special schools and specialist post-16 institutions. Colleges delivered 392 funded places between them. The colleges delivering the highest numbers of funded places are Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education and Lincoln College.

During the review, local authorities expressed the view that the high needs provision offered by colleges was good. The local authorities and LEPs highlighted that those with special

²² HEFCE POLAR 3 – see data annex: Higher education progression

²³ Derived from HEFCE POLAR 3 – see data annex: Higher education progression

²⁴ EFA Allocations – see data annex: 16 to 19 funding: High needs

educational needs and disabilities (SEND) have lower levels of participation and are more likely to be young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).

The steering group acknowledged that any 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 2014 to 2015 the general further education colleges delivered apprenticeships to 8,320 participants in Greater Lincolnshire²⁵; some of which was delivered through subcontractors. Lincoln College had the largest contract for apprenticeships with over 4,300 in training. Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education, North Lindsey College and Boston College also delivered substantial numbers of apprenticeships. Independent training providers, including large national companies, provided apprenticeships across the area, to over 2,630 participants in 2014 to 2015. The 2 sixth-form colleges also delivered apprenticeships to a small number of participants (30) in 2014 to 2015.

Overall, the most popular frameworks²⁶ were business, administration and law, health, public services and care, retail and commercial enterprise, and engineering and manufacturing technologies. Recruitment in other sector areas was low by comparison. This pattern may change in 2017, with the introduction of the apprenticeship levy²⁷ and wider apprenticeship reforms, which presents an opportunity for the colleges to develop further and maintain even better relationships with employers.

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.

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

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

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

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.

All general further education colleges in the review area deliver small numbers of agriculture, horticulture and animal care course. However, Bishop Burton College (which was included in the York, North Yorkshire, East Riding and Hull area review) has a land based college campus at Riseholme near Lincoln delivering the majority of the land based provision in the review area. Their largest subject area is animal care and veterinary science. Additionally, Brooksby Melton College (which was included in the Leicester and Leicestershire area review) has a land based college campus at Brooksby which serves the south of the Greater Lincolnshire area.

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 3 local authorities (Lincolnshire County Council, North Lincolnshire Council and North East Lincolnshire Council) along with the 2 LEPs (Greater Lincolnshire LEP and Humber LEP) set out their priorities that provision in the area should:

- be accessible to all
- provide equal opportunities for the most vulnerable young people, including high needs learners and those with disabilities
- meet the needs of growth sectors identified by the LEPs
- meet the demands of the labour market and reflect a shrinking working age population and a 16-18 cohort that will not grow until 2020
- reflect the need to shift towards higher level skills (technical level 3 and level 4+)
- provide a different approach to employer engagement so that the curriculum offer at colleges better meets employer needs.

The key areas for change

At their meetings the steering group deliberated the following key issues in relation to this review:

- equality of access to provision and how remote learning and e-learning technologies could be used to help address this
- development of curriculum in the area to meet business needs and growth opportunities
- the need to respond to the area's changing need for skills and to develop provision that takes account of local variations and challenges
- the need to focus and develop skills and provision at technical level 3 and level 4 and above, to meet the shift to higher level skills within the labour market and provide the best opportunities for local people
- the need to grow apprenticeship provision to contribute to the government's target of 3 million by 2020
- the need to deliver at least good quality provision
- to seek to ensure all colleges in the area are financially strong and sustainable.

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) to improve financial viability, address quality issues, and retain a good choice of subjects. Options considered included a 4-way federation between the 2 sixth-form colleges in North Lincolnshire and 2 from the Humber area, and consideration of a potential merger between North Lindsey College and Doncaster College
- cross-college collaboration – Boston college, Grantham College and New College Stamford were already working on a number of projects in a 3-way collaboration including the establishment of a joint apprenticeship company which would have a focus on logistics. This was evaluated as part of the review. Grimsby Institute Group and Lincoln College Group put forward a 2-way collaboration to establish a joint apprenticeship company and set out 3 additional areas where they would look to collaborate
- the potential for collaboration to reduce costs and to share services – discussion took place on sharing of services as part of the development of the collaborative working agreed by the colleges
- the case for remaining stand-alone where a college could demonstrate long-term financial sustainability and a continued good or outstanding quality rating from Ofsted – from an early stage this was a consideration for 6 of the FE colleges (Lincoln College, Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education, North Lindsey College, Boston College, Grantham College and New College Stamford)
- conversion to an academy. This option is available 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 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. This was not an option favoured by either of the 2 sixth-form colleges.

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 F²⁸ (revised March 2016).

²⁸ [Reviewing post-16 education and training institutions: updated guidance on area reviews Annex F, Pages 49-53](#)

Recommendations agreed by the steering group

Nine recommendations were agreed by the steering group at their meeting in January 2017. These were:

- Franklin Sixth Form College and John Leggott Sixth Form College to establish a formal federated structure with Wyke Sixth Form College and Wilberforce Sixth Form College to drive up quality, sustain and improve the curriculum offer and introduce a range of shared services by July 2017. As independent institutions, the SFCs will continue to review, through the federation, further options for closer collaboration and structural change. Each institution to collaborate with the general further education colleges and schools in the Scunthorpe and Grimsby areas respectively to ensure that a wide and sustainable offer is available to students and employers locally.
- North Lindsey College to maintain its stand-alone position as a financially strong college serving Scunthorpe and its surrounding areas and to continue to explore options for merger with Doncaster College, subject to due process.
- Grimsby Institute to retain its position as the leading general further education college for Grimsby and the Scarborough area of North Yorkshire. The college will enter a federation with Lincoln College to improve the local education and skills offer. The federation will include a focus on apprenticeships, international education and training, higher education and skills, and higher level LEP priorities. The joint venture company, established as part of the federation, will work to expand apprenticeships particularly across Greater Lincolnshire, including rural and remote areas.
- Lincoln College to remain a stand-alone institution with a particular emphasis on improving quality. The college will enter a federation with Grimsby Institute to improve the local education and skills offer. The federation will include a focus on apprenticeships, international education and training, higher education and skills, and higher-level LEP priorities. The joint venture company, established as part of the federation, will work to expand apprenticeships particularly across Greater Lincolnshire, including rural and remote areas.
- New College Stamford to stand-alone, focusing on improving quality and continuing to work with local schools to create a coherent offer to young people in the Stamford and Peterborough area. The college to continue to work collaboratively with Boston College and Grantham College including on their joint venture for apprenticeship delivery to better meet skills needs for employers and students and to improve quality.
- Boston College to remain as a stand-alone institution acting as a key provider of general technical education serving the town of Boston and the surrounding rural areas. The college to continue to work collaboratively with New College Stamford and Grantham College including on their joint venture for apprenticeship delivery to better meet skills needs for employers and students and to improve quality.
- Grantham College to stand-alone in the short term, providing technical education in the Grantham area, and to continue to work collaboratively with Boston College and New College Stamford, including on their joint venture for apprenticeship delivery to

better meet skills needs for employers and students and to improve quality. Grantham College to consider options for structural change in the medium term to ensure longer-term financial sustainability. To this end, a structure and prospects appraisal to be undertaken, at a time to be determined by the governing body, in order that they can consider a range of options.

- Grimsby Institute Group (GIG) and Lincoln College Group (LCG) to integrate and embed the use of digital learning technologies to improve the delivery of post-16 education and skills across the Greater Lincolnshire area, through their federation agreement. GIG and LCG to share lessons learned with the other 6 colleges involved in the Greater Lincolnshire Area Review. Those other 6 colleges to consider how the use of digital technology could be used to improve the delivery of post 16 education and skills.
- it is recommended that the Federation of Greater Lincolnshire Colleges should invite formally colleagues from the SFA/EFA, LEPs and LAs to join the Federation's meeting, on a 6 monthly basis, to examine progress against implementation of the area review recommendations.

Each of these options is now outlined in more detail below:

Franklin Sixth Form College and John Leggott Sixth Form College

Franklin Sixth Form College and John Leggott Sixth Form College to establish a formal federated structure with Wyke Sixth Form College and Wilberforce Sixth Form College to drive up quality, sustain and improve the curriculum offer, and introduce a range of shared services by July 2017. As independent institutions, the sixth form colleges will continue to review, through the federation, further options for closer collaboration and structural change. Each institution to collaborate with the general further education colleges and schools in the Scunthorpe and Grimsby areas respectively to ensure that a wide and sustainable offer is available to students and employers locally.

- in terms of meeting current and future needs, the 2 colleges would maintain their current curriculum offer, with the federation providing an opportunity to improve quality and expertise. The colleges will continue to develop their curriculum to accommodate growth in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects and to provide greater work experience opportunities for young people
- with regard to financial sustainability, the federation will bring benefits to both colleges: helping to reduce costs through shared services and staff, including staff costs which are currently above benchmark at Franklin Sixth Form College, to better align with income. Initial modelling by the federation identifies significant savings over 4 years across the 4 colleges. Based on college forecasts, Franklin Sixth Form College will meet the 4 out of 5 of benchmarks, with staff costs moving towards the benchmark by 2019 to 2020 and John Leggott Sixth Form will meet all benchmarks by 2019 to 2020

- in respect of quality of provision, John Leggott Sixth Form College was assessed as good (March 2014) and Franklin Sixth Form College was assessed as requires improvement (October 2016) by Ofsted. The federation has established an Academic Board to review outcomes, self evaluation and progression across the 4 colleges. The board will drive quality improvement through use of support packages and peer review
- the colleges' specialisms include a wide range of A levels and broad vocational curriculum for 16 to 18 year-olds. Franklin Sixth Form College has expanded its Career Academy to encompass logistics and has expanded its curriculum to accommodate growth in STEM subjects to meet LEP priorities. John Leggott Sixth Form College has introduced a level 3 in engineering with a distinct focus on physics and maths to meet LEP priorities. Additionally the federation will look to develop Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) based on the Humber Gold Standard accreditation.

North Lindsey College

North Lindsey College to maintain its stand-alone position as a financially strong college serving Scunthorpe and its surrounding areas and to continue to explore options for merger with Doncaster College, subject to due process.

- in terms of meeting current and future needs the college will continue with its focus on technical training and its substantial higher education provision. The college offers learning from entry level through to level 7 across all sector subject areas, the largest provision being in engineering, health and social care and construction, meeting the LEP priority areas. The merger will allow growth of apprenticeships across the east / west corridor to meet LEP priorities in 3 LEP regions: The Humber, Sheffield City Region and Greater Lincolnshire. The merger with Doncaster College would provide an opportunity for a combined apprenticeship offer and the potential for joint delivery of higher education including higher degree level apprenticeships
- with regard to financial sustainability, the college has a strong balance sheet, and meets all benchmarks with strong operating performances. A merger with Doncaster College would enhance financial resilience because of the increase in scale which would allow the college to further exploit efficiencies. Based on the assessed forecasts, the college continues to meet all benchmarks up to 2019 to 2020 whether as a stand-alone college or following merger with Doncaster College
- in respect of quality of provision, Ofsted assessed the college as good in May 2014, with leadership and management assessed as outstanding. The college has taken the decision to phase out its full time A level programmes to concentrate on professional, technical and STEM-related provision ensuring a clear focus to maintain high quality vocational provision. A merger with Doncaster College, also judged to be good, would allow for joint quality improvement services and sharing good practice

- the college's specialisms include vehicle technology, body and paint technology, heavy vehicle maintenance and repair, construction, and engineering and manufacturing. The college will retain its specialisms as part of a merger.

Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education

Grimsby Institute to retain its position as the leading general further education college for Grimsby and the Scarborough area of North Yorkshire. The college will enter a federation with Lincoln College to improve the local education and skills offer. The federation will include a focus on apprenticeships, international education and training, higher education and skills, and higher level LEP priorities. The joint venture company, established as part of the federation, will work to expand apprenticeships particularly across Greater Lincolnshire, including rural and remote areas.

- in terms of meeting current and future needs the federation will increase capacity and capability at both colleges with collaboration over 4 thematic areas: apprenticeships, international education and training, higher education and skills, and higher level LEP priorities. As a stand-alone institution within the federation, the college will continue to offer a broad curriculum to Grimsby, the surrounding areas and its broader campuses. The college will continue to deliver a significant proportion of level 4 training in Greater Lincolnshire
- with regard to financial sustainability, the college is currently financially strong with a robust balance sheet. The financial position would be further enhanced through federation with Lincoln College, with increased apprenticeship delivery driving ambitious growth. The federation has the potential to provide collaborative benefits and cost savings, including to staff costs. Based on the assessment of the college financial plans, it is forecast to meet all benchmarks by 2018 to 2019
- in respect of quality of provision, Ofsted judges the college as good (November 2013) and the federation provides opportunities to share best practice and expertise across the 4 thematic areas mentioned above. The collaboration should improve learner outcomes, through improvements in delivery, employer relationships, resources, sub-contractor management and sharing of best practice
- the college's specialisms includes Modal, a centre of excellence for logistics, port and energy sector and a priority area for both LEPs. Other subject specialisms include arts, digital and computing, health and care, engineering and construction. The development of the Joint Venture Company as part of the federation will enable the 2 colleges to further develop their apprenticeship offer in LEP priority sectors.

Lincoln College

Lincoln College to remain a stand-alone institution with a particular emphasis on improving quality. The college will enter a federation with Grimsby Institute to improve the local education and skills offer. The federation will include a focus on apprenticeships,

international education and training, higher education and skills, and higher-level LEP priorities. The joint venture company, established as part of the federation, will work to expand apprenticeships particularly across Greater Lincolnshire, including rural and remote areas.

- in terms of meeting current and future needs the federation will increase capacity and capability at both colleges with collaboration over 4 thematic areas; apprenticeships, international education and training, higher education and skills and higher level LEP priorities. As a stand-alone institution within the federation, the college will continue to provide a broad curriculum offer to Lincoln and surrounding areas, including rural and remote areas. The college will continue to develop Career Colleges
- with regard to financial sustainability, the college operates a group structure which includes overseas ventures. Whilst presenting some risk, the overseas ventures are forecast to bring in strong revenue streams. The college has a strong balance sheet which provides robust financial resilience to fluctuations. The federation with Grimsby Institute is based on ambitious growth in the delivery of apprenticeships and has the potential to provide collaborative benefits and cost savings which would enhance the financial position of the college, including to staff costs. Based on the forecast, the college should meet all benchmarks in 2016 to 2017 and sustain this performance in all years to 2019 to 2020
- in respect of quality of provision, the college was assessed as requires improvement (May 2016) by Ofsted. The college has a particular focus on improving quality through sharing of best practice within the federation. The collaboration aims to improve learner outcomes through improvements in delivery, employer relationships, resources and sub-contractor management. These improvements will be driven by income growth, the sharing of best practice, and the integration of other functions
- the college's specialisms include Career Colleges in construction and air and defence with a further Career College focused on health and care, a LEP priority, planned. The college maintains significant overseas interests. The development of the Joint Venture Company as part of the federation will enable the 2 colleges to further develop their apprenticeship offer in LEP priority areas.

New College Stamford

New College Stamford, to stand-alone, focusing on improving quality and continuing to work with local schools to create a coherent offer to young people in the Stamford and Peterborough area. The college to continue to work collaboratively with Boston College and Grantham College including on their joint venture for apprenticeship delivery to better meet skills needs for employers and students and to improve quality.

- in terms of meeting current and future needs the college would continue to offer a broad curriculum to young people in the Stamford and Peterborough area, consolidating their A level offer. The college intends to expand adult loans-funded activity targeting LEP priorities. Through a joint venture company with Boston College

and Grantham College (Trio Training), the college intends to grow apprenticeship delivery, initially for the logistics industry

- with regard to financial sustainability, the college benefits from a strong balance sheet and can stand-alone. The inclusion of the joint venture company further improves performance against the key benchmarks based on growth in apprenticeship delivery. The South Lincolnshire Colleges' Collaboration should allow cost savings through joint procurement and rationalisation of support services. Based on current forecasts New College Stamford will meet 4 of the 5 benchmarks in 2016 to 2017 and moves strongly towards meeting the operating surplus benchmark by 2019 to 2020
- in respect of quality of provision, the college was assessed as requires improvement (March 2015) by Ofsted²⁹. The college has focused specifically on improving outcomes for students using a college-wide Improvement Plan and the South Lincolnshire Colleges' Collaboration group to improve teaching and learning, and to share good practice across the 3 colleges which will further strengthen quality improvement activities
- the college's specialisms include construction, automotive, creative arts and higher education. The college's work as part of the joint venture company will expand provision to include logistics which is a LEP priority.

Boston College

Boston College to remain as a stand-alone institution acting as a key provider of general vocational education serving the town of Boston and the surrounding rural areas. The college will continue to work collaboratively with New College Stamford and Grantham College including on their joint venture for apprenticeship delivery to better meet skills needs for employers and students and to improve quality.

- in terms of meeting current and future needs the college will continue to provide a broad offer at level 3 and below in order to meet local needs. It will continue to meet LEP priorities through its Care Academy and through its partnerships with the NHS. Through a joint venture company, Trio Training, the college intends to grow apprenticeship delivery, initially for the logistics industry
- with regard to financial sustainability, the college has a strong balance sheet which supports its stand-alone position. Financial planning includes growth in apprenticeships through the joint venture company. The South Lincolnshire Colleges' Collaboration should allow cost savings through joint procurement and rationalisation

²⁹ New College Stamford was re-inspected in February 2017, after the area review had completed and was judged by Ofsted as good in all areas

of support services. Based on the financial plan submitted to the review the college achieves all benchmarks by 2018 to 2019

- in respect of quality of provision, Boston College is judged as good by Ofsted and plans to further improve quality through the South Lincolnshire Colleges' Collaboration which has set up a group to improve teaching and learning and share good practice across the 3 colleges
- the college's specialisms include a Care Academy, which delivers provision from level 1 for unemployed learners up to level 5 for care home managers and meets a LEP priority. The college's work as part of the joint venture company will expand provision to include logistics which is a LEP priority.

Grantham College

Grantham College to stand-alone in the short term, providing vocational education in the Grantham area, and to continue to work collaboratively with Boston College and New College Stamford, including on their joint venture for apprenticeship delivery to better meet skills needs for employers and students, and to improve quality. Grantham College to consider options for structural change in the medium term to ensure longer-term financial sustainability. To this end, a structure and prospects appraisal to be undertaken, at a time to be determined by the governing body, in order that they can consider a range of options.

- in terms of meeting current and future needs, the college will continue to offer a broad curriculum, particularly at level 3 and below to meet local needs and to meet LEP priorities in health and social care, engineering, manufacturing and agri-food. Through a joint venture company, Trio Training, the college intends to grow apprenticeship delivery, initially for the logistics industry
- with regard to financial sustainability, the college meets 3 of the 5 benchmarks in 2016 to 2017 and moves towards meeting the staff costs benchmark by 2019 to 2020. However, the operating surplus benchmark is not met throughout the period to 2019 to 2020. The success of the joint venture company is dependent on the forecast of growth in apprenticeships. This should provide potential cost savings through joint procurement and rationalisation of support services and improve projected operating performances. To ensure its financial sustainability, the college will need to identify further savings in the longer term, including by consideration of structural change through a structure and prospects appraisal
- in respect of quality of provision, Grantham College was judged as requires improvement by Ofsted. The college has a post inspection action plan and has further work to undertake to ensure good quality provision is being delivered. The South Lincolnshire Colleges' Collaboration has set up a group to improve teaching and learning and share good practice across the 3 colleges
- the college's specialisms include engineering and manufacturing with engineering offered at higher level, a LEP priority sector. The college's work as part of the joint venture company will expand provision to include logistics which is a LEP priority.

Digital and Remote Learning

Grimsby Institute Group (GIG) and Lincoln College Group (LCG) to integrate and embed the use of digital learning technologies to improve the delivery of post-16 education and skills across the Greater Lincolnshire area through their federation agreement. GIG and LCG to share lessons learned with the other 6 colleges involved in the Greater Lincolnshire Area Review. Those other 6 colleges to consider how the use of digital technology could be used to improve the delivery of post 16 education and skills.

- recognising the importance of equality of access to provision and the challenges of rurality within Greater Lincolnshire, the steering group explored how remote learning and e-learning technologies could be used to help address this
- building on Grimsby Institute Group (GIG) expertise in digital learning technologies, GIG and Lincoln College Group (LCG), through their federation, will lead on developing and delivering on remote learning across the area.

Implementation

It is recommended that the Federation of Greater Lincolnshire Colleges should invite formally colleagues from the SFA/EFA, LEPs and LAs to join the Federation's meeting, on a 6 monthly basis, to examine progress against implementation of the area review recommendations.

- in terms of monitoring the implementation of the area review recommendations the steering group decided that the Federation of Greater Lincolnshire Colleges standing group would be the most appropriate group and that the chair of that group would invite the LEPs and the local authorities to join their meetings on a 6 monthly basis.
- the steering group member agreed that they wished to use existing groups where possible, to ensure that a strategic dialogue continued after the review had ended. It was agreed by the steering group that the LEPs' employment and skills boards were the most appropriate place for that strategic dialogue.

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(s), 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:

- improved accessibility, including in rural parts of the review area, through greater collaboration between colleges and the development of new digital and remote learning route-ways
- the current college geographical footprint being maintained, ensuring that provision for vulnerable young people continues to be accessible and their needs are met
- increased volume and breadth to the apprenticeship offer to meet local employer needs and the demands of the local labour market growth sectors, achieved through the development of apprenticeship companies and college collaboration
- an improved higher education offer at technical level 3 and level 4 and above, that better meets local employer need, delivered through college collaboration across the review area
- a commitment from the colleges to grow provision in LEP priority areas including in adult skills
- improvements to quality as a result of the sixth-form college federation sharing best practice to raise standards and quality, and through the general further education colleges sharing best practice as part of their collaborations
- improvements to financial stability through cost savings and rationalisation brought about as a result of federated structures and mergers.

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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