

Implementation of 14–19 reforms: an evaluation of progress

This report evaluates the progress being made in implementing 14–19 reforms, based on visits to 16 local authority areas from April 2007 to March 2008. Partnerships were well established in almost all the areas visited and collaboration was effective in providing a broad range of courses, particularly in Key Stage 4. However, progression from 14 to 19 needs to be made clearer and more coherent, particularly for those on vocational programmes.

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Executive summary

This report on the progress being made in the implementation of 14–19 reforms is based on survey visits to 16 local authority areas between April 2007 and March 2008. In each area, inspectors met officers from the local authority, the Learning and Skills Council, the Connexions service and local employers, and visited schools, colleges and work-based learning organisations. Inspectors assessed the effectiveness of strategies in raising achievement, participation and retention in education and training; the range and accessibility of the curriculum; the quality of information, advice, guidance and support for young people; and the effectiveness of strategic leadership and management in taking forward the 14–19 agenda. Additional evidence was drawn from 15 joint area reviews of services for children and young people, the reports of which were published in the same period.

Almost all the areas visited had well-established 14–19 partnerships. All but one of the local authorities had made at least satisfactory progress in implementing 14–19 reforms; three quarters were making good progress overall. Local strategies were clearly effective in raising learners' achievement, participation and retention in 10 of the areas, although there were still substantial variations in achievement between schools and between groups of students. Importantly, improvements were often evident in the attainments of young people who might otherwise have been at risk of disengaging from education or training.

In three quarters of the local authority areas, collaboration was successful in providing a broad range of courses to meet young people's needs, particularly at Key Stage 4. Although 14–19 opportunities were increasing generally, some gaps in provision remained, including apprenticeships and level 1 courses post-16, and work-based learning opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Increasingly, 14–19 is treated as a single phase of education and training, but in practice for many young people, and particularly those on vocational programmes, there is still a discontinuity at age 16.

The overall quality of information, advice and guidance to young people was satisfactory or better in nearly all the local authority areas, and good in three quarters of them. However, evidence suggested that a small minority of young people, usually in 11–18 schools, had not received completely impartial advice about the full range of post-16 options. Just under three quarters of the areas had made good progress in introducing the new online 14–19 prospectuses.

The overall effectiveness of strategic leadership and management in taking forward the 14–19 agenda was satisfactory or better in all the local authority areas visited. Almost all the providers surveyed were represented at strategic and operational levels in the large majority of the areas, although the involvement of work-based learning providers was limited in some cases. The engagement of employers was good in just over half the partnerships. However, rigorous systems to assure the

quality of shared provision were underdeveloped in half the areas visited. In particular, more use needs to be made of performance data to inform planning.

Preparations for introducing the new Diplomas were mostly at an appropriate stage of development in local authority areas due to begin in September 2008 or in 2009. Visits were made well before Diploma courses started, and the full Diploma programme will not be fully in place until 2013. In assessing the progress being made, inspectors therefore considered what could reasonably be expected at this stage of reform. At the time of the visits, local consortia were aware of how much still needed to be done to ensure successful implementation. Examples of innovative, and potentially effective, approaches to providing the necessary wide range of Diploma options to all young people were being developed in several areas.

Key findings

- Overall progress in implementing the 14–19 reforms was satisfactory or better in 15 of the 16 local authority areas visited, and was good in 12 of them. Almost all local authorities visited had well-established 14–19 partnerships. Strategic direction was clear and a strong commitment to work together existed among most providers.
- Collaboration between schools and colleges was effective in most partnerships. This had led to the development of a broader range of courses and programmes to meet most young people's needs in three quarters of the local authorities visited. Collaboration was frequently weaker post-16 than at Key Stage 4.
- Local strategies had a positive impact in raising achievement, increasing participation and retaining learners in education and training. The best partnerships demonstrated substantial improvement in the attainment of targeted groups.
- A strong emphasis on educational and social inclusion was evident in the provision of an effective tailored curriculum for particular groups, including vulnerable young people and those at risk of disengaging from education or training. A sustained focus on those young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) had resulted in reductions in their numbers in the majority of local authorities visited.
- The quality of information, advice and guidance provided to most young people was good. They particularly valued the support they received from advisers in the Connexions service. Nearly three quarters of the local authorities visited had effective online 14–19 prospectuses, and their use was increasingly being incorporated into programmes of advice and guidance for young people.
- Although the intention has been to establish a coherent pattern of provision across the 14–19 age range, in practice there was still a discontinuity at age 16 for many young people. In particular, progression routes on vocational programmes from age 14 through to 19 were often insufficiently clear.

- Although 14–19 opportunities were increasing, a full range of programmes was not always available for all young people in an area. There were particular gaps in provision at entry level and level 1 and in work-based learning opportunities for young people post-16. Monitoring systems in partnerships were often not robust enough to ensure that all learners received their entitlement to education or training.
- There was evidence in just under half of the local authority areas visited that a minority of young people, usually in 11–18 schools, were not receiving completely impartial advice about post-16 options.
- Half the local authority areas visited did not have fully developed rigorous systems to assure the quality of shared provision. In particular, insufficient use was made of performance data to inform planning.

Recommendations

Partnerships should:

- clarify and promote the learning pathways available to all young people across the age range from 14 to 19 to ensure continuity and progression in their education and training
- fully map out the 14–19 curriculum available in the local authority area and ensure that any gaps in provision are filled
- exploit further collaborative opportunities to broaden post-16 provision
- implement robust processes to assure the quality of all provision in the area.

Providers should:

- ensure that all young people receive impartial advice about the full range of available 14–19 options in the area.

Introduction

1. Major reforms to education and training for 14–19-year-olds were first set out in *14–19 Education and Skills*, published in February 2005, which was followed by a 14–19 implementation plan in December of the same year.¹ Some modifications and developments to the initial proposals followed, culminating in a new consultation document in March 2008, *Promoting achievement, valuing success, a strategy for 14–19 qualifications*.²

¹ *14–19 Education and skills*, DCSF, 2005; www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/14-19educationandskills/

² *Promoting achievement, valuing success, a strategy for 14–19 qualifications*, DCSF, 2008; www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/14-19qualifications/

2. The government's intention with the 14–19 reforms is to give all young people the opportunity to choose a mix of learning which motivates, interests and challenges them, and which gives them the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to succeed in education, work and life. The 14–19 implementation plan focuses on raising current achievement and participation, as well as on longer term reforms of qualifications and the curriculum to provide new opportunities in the future.
3. The new qualifications and the curriculum are intended to make available a comprehensive and coherent set of learning routes with four key pathways:
 - the new Diplomas, to be introduced from September 2008
 - reformed and strengthened general qualifications (GCSE and A level)
 - apprenticeships
 - a new Foundation Learning Tier of lower level (entry level and level 1) qualifications.
4. The aim is a curriculum more tailored to individuals' talents and aspirations, allowing them greater flexibility about what, where and how they study. The intention is that it should also be more responsive to the needs of employers and higher education, thus better preparing young people for further study, skilled employment or both.
5. A major feature of the reforms has been the emphasis on providers working in partnership to ensure that the full 14–19 entitlement is available to all young people in an area. An expectation that providers, increasingly, should work in partnership to provide students with a wider range of 14–16 courses was set out initially in the White Paper *14–19 Opportunity and excellence*.³ At that stage, the then Department for Education and Skills supported a number of 'pathfinder' authorities to develop models of collaboration. However, it is only since 2005 that partnership has been widely accepted as the way forward for 14–19. The effectiveness of partnership working has been a major focus of the inspection and features strongly in this report.
6. The reforms are being introduced gradually. They build, in part, on previous or current initiatives, such as the Increased Flexibility Programme and Young Apprenticeships scheme. The most substantial new initiative, the Diplomas programme, will start to be implemented in schools and colleges from September 2008, and it will not be fully in place until 2013. The visits made by inspectors took place between six and 18 months before Diploma courses were due to begin, when preparations were still at a relatively early stage.

³ *Opportunity and excellence*, DfES, 2003.

7. Overall progress in implementing the 14–19 reforms, taking all aspects of performance, planning and preparation into account, was good in 12 of the 16 local authority areas visited, satisfactory in three and inadequate in one. This generally positive picture was reinforced by evidence drawn from the joint area reviews, where the impact and effectiveness of 14–19 strategies and provision were good in eight of 15 local authorities, adequate in six and inadequate in one.

The effectiveness of local strategies in raising achievement, participation and retention

8. Nationally, statistics for attainment, participation and retention in education and training show an improving trend, and this was reflected in the local authorities and in a large majority of the providers visited.⁴ In 11 of the 16 authorities in the survey, students' achievement was good, and it was no less than satisfactory in the remainder. However, there were often variations in the pattern of achievement and in the effectiveness of local improvement strategies within local authority areas.
9. Ten of the 16 local authorities visited showed clear evidence of the effectiveness of local 14–19 strategies in raising achievement, increasing participation and retaining learners in education and training. Most of the other authorities had put suitable measures in place, but their impact was not yet evident. About half of the joint area reviews showed similarly clear evidence of impact. Improvements were most often associated with good collaborative provision and a generally wider range of curriculum opportunities available to young people.
10. Improvements in achievement at Key Stage 4 were often due, at least in part, to the increased numbers of students following vocational courses or work-based learning and improved success rates on these programmes. Many of these programmes were available through good links between schools and further education colleges, which were often initiated through the Increased Flexibility Programme. The effectiveness of these programmes in re-engaging young people who are less motivated by, or less able to cope with, more academic provision confirms previous Ofsted findings on Key Stage 4 provision.⁵ The examples below illustrate some of the variety of this achievement.

⁴ The most recent national data is available in DCSF statistical releases: SFR01/008 *GCSE and Equivalent Examination Results in England 2006/07* (Revised); SFR02/008 *GCE/VCE A/AS and Equivalent Examination Results in England 2006/07* (Revised); SFR 22/2007 *Participation in education, training and employment by 16–18-year-olds in England* – update released June 2008.

⁵ *The Key stage 4 curriculum: increased flexibility and work-related learning* (070113), Ofsted 2007.

The college expects high professional standards from Key Stage 4 students from local schools attending its vocational courses. The students really enjoy their college courses, they develop very good practical skills in vocationally relevant areas and demonstrate good levels of maturity. Retention levels are high, and success rates of 90% or above have been achieved on level 1 courses over the last three years. There has been excellent progression from Key Stage 4 to post -16, with 167 out of 178 students in the cohort remaining in education or training, most at the college in the same vocational area. The college reported examples of previous students moving successfully through from Increased Flexibility Programme courses to foundation degrees.

Students in this special school benefit from the specialist vocational provision, such as land-based and environmental courses at levels 1 and 2, available in their local 14–19 federation. Enterprise and other similar joint activities enable them to work with a wider range of 14–19 year-olds from mainstream schools in the federation. They also join college courses in areas such as motor vehicle maintenance, which are provided more widely across the local authority. These vocational courses are well supported by appropriate work placements, which the students enjoy and which help to develop their social, as well as occupational, skills. Programmes are carefully matched to needs, enabling students to maximise their accredited achievement.

11. The Young Apprenticeships programme emerged as a particular strength, with good or outstanding success rates noted in nearly half of the local authorities visited. Numbers involved are still relatively small, but the impact that the programmes can have on able students is illustrated by the example below.

The 12 students in each of Years 10 and 11 are highly motivated by, and committed to, the Young Apprenticeships scheme. They enjoy the work and feel that they can cope with it in addition to 10 to 12 GCSEs. The scheme involves a 'twilight' session at the college for two hours each week for theory lessons and 50 days' work experience in the school holidays. Students enjoyed the benefits of practical work using industry standard machinery and were often asked to demonstrate this to their classes in school, as well as to contribute to careers promotion events to dispel the myths of women in engineering. All understood the rigour of the course, that it could lead to A levels or apprenticeships, and that either of these routes could lead to degree courses in higher education. The scheme is a very positive way of motivating and challenging some of the most able students in the school.

12. However, within a generally improving situation at Key Stage 4, there were still areas of concern. The attainment gap between schools was an important issue

in more than a quarter of the local authorities. In over a third of the authorities visited, the proportion of 16-year-olds achieving five or more higher grade GCSEs, including English and mathematics, needed to improve substantially. In four of the local authorities, boys in particular were underachieving, although a marked improvement was noted in another local authority. The participation and achievement of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds presented a mixed picture, with clear improvements in four of the 16 authorities and continuing underachievement in another three.

13. More than half of the local authorities visited had good or increasing levels of participation and retention for post-16 students, and there were high or increasing levels of achievement in nearly three quarters of them. In a few areas, however, this generally positive picture masked underachievement in particular institutions.
14. An increasing proportion of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were successfully following post-16 courses in schools and colleges. However, in a few areas, progression into employment at age 19 or 20 was restricted by a lack of opportunities for them to participate in work-based learning post-16 and by limited opportunities in the local labour market. The following example illustrates how young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities can be successfully supported into employment.

The provider's programmes are well tailored to meet young people's individual needs. Coordination and work with an employer follow a workplace assessment to identify what aspects of the job the young person can do and where he or she might need very specific support. Together, the employer, the young person and the assessor work to find practical solutions to overcome obstacles. In a hospitality and catering course, a learner with reading and writing difficulties was supported in his work in a restaurant by using pictures of the meals on his order pad to help him take customers' orders. A learner with difficulties in understanding the concept of size, who worked in hotel housekeeping, used colour coding to select the correct size sheets she needed from the hotel store.

15. Improvements in provision for young people at risk of disengagement from education and training have contributed to reductions in the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training in three quarters of the local authorities visited. This positive picture is reinforced by evidence from the joint area reviews. Many of these young people in Key Stage 4 have responded well to more flexible provision which allows them to spend time in further education or employment. This broader experience in Key Stage 4 has often provided the incentive for the young people to progress to post-16 courses in the college or to move into employment with training. Multi-agency projects, targeted at particular geographical areas or particular vulnerable groups of

young people were also frequently making a difference to NEET numbers in both urban and rural authorities. However, NEET figures remained high in three of the local authorities and in some schools, even within areas where their numbers were reducing overall.

16. In three quarters of the local authorities visited, the personal development of 14–19-year-olds was good. This could be attributed in many cases to the wider experience and increased responsibility young people were given in programmes which took them into the workplace or involved some study in other institutions. Consequently, aspirations were raised, and social skills, confidence and independence developed. The survey found examples of outstanding attitudes to learning and a preparedness to travel and study out of school hours.

Twenty-two young people aged from 14 to 16 from local schools in and around a small town chose to attend the vocational college each week after school. They showed very positive attitudes and were determined to achieve an NVQ at level 1 in salon services.

Curriculum range, access and development

17. The overall quality and range of the curriculum for 14–19-year-olds and young people's access to it were good or better in 13 of the 16 local authority areas visited, and inadequate in only one. The most significant features of good provision were:
 - access for most young people to a broad choice of appropriate academic and vocational options
 - effective collaboration between schools, colleges and training providers
 - a flexible approach to meeting the needs of vulnerable young people.
18. However, there were also some weaknesses. Vocational qualifications, other than GCSEs, were frequently not offered to all young people. Students participating in collaborative vocational education at Key Stage 4 did not usually represent the full ability range, although students who were more able did take part in the Young Apprenticeship programmes. In some areas, too few employers took on apprentices or provided suitable work placements. The lack of sufficient entry level, level 1, pre-entry to employment, and workplace learning programmes, particularly post-16, inhibited progress in five of the areas.
19. Curriculum provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities varied between local authority areas. It was particularly good in six of the local authorities visited, with flexible and tailored programmes well matched to individual needs. However, it was limited in two other areas, particularly for those with more complex needs.

20. An effective, tailored curriculum for particular groups, including vulnerable young people and those at risk of disengaging, was a strength in almost half of the areas visited. Here, many of the young people involved had improving attitudes to learning, better motivation and improved attendance. Good collaborative work with the Connexions service to develop flexible courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those not in education, employment or training was having a positive effect on participation rates. Programmes to meet the needs of young people following an alternative curriculum at college were often well designed. In the most effective areas, particularly imaginative, innovative and engaging projects were devised to improve young people's chances of employment and foster positive attitudes to learning.

The school has recently leased workshop premises in the centre of the town. The premises are being restored and renovated by the school and its partners. The workshop houses facilities for courses in construction, beauty therapy, and travel and tourism. Imaginative budgeting and fund-raising enable the school to pay for the upkeep of the premises. Spare capacity on courses is offered to other schools in the area. The new facility is clearly motivating pupils very well in terms of their wanting to achieve and the school is well poised to support significantly the proposed Diploma in construction from September 2008. An added advantage is that the premises are perceived as neutral territory for pupils who need to be re-engaged in learning. The town centre location provides a good base for monitoring work experience placements, as it is close to many local employers working in beauty and tourism. Excellent links have already been forged with business neighbours such as a furniture restoration business in an adjacent unit. This has led to a business partnership and the acquisition of specialist tools. Further links are being negotiated with the proprietor of a nearby gym. The local authority is supporting the project with expertise, for example on health and safety matters, and has funded the project to around £10,000.

21. Six of the local authority areas visited had produced a clearly documented 'learner entitlement' that included all young people and was endorsed by all partners. In most other areas, an entitlement was being developed appropriately. The drive to implement a learner entitlement was resulting in a wider range of vocational and curriculum opportunities being offered more consistently across an area to meet young people's needs. In four of the local authority areas, where the learner entitlement was underdeveloped, it was unclear how the new opportunities being developed were made available to all young people. Not all young people were aware of their entitlement or of what the partnership's 14–19 plans meant for them. Systems to monitor whether each learner was receiving their entitlement were not always sufficiently robust.

22. Curriculum development initiatives, other than those associated with the new Diplomas, remained focused on the separate key stages of 14–16 and 16–19, rather than being planned across the 14–19 continuum. Half of the local authorities visited had not yet mapped the curriculum fully nor developed learning pathways through from 14 to 19 for all young people. The weaker areas visited had not fully or systematically identified any unnecessary duplication or gaps in provision. Particularly underdeveloped were progression routes which provided choice and enabled young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to enter employment or further education and achieve economic well-being.
23. Collaborative arrangements enhanced the range of the curriculum available to young people to at least some extent in all the local authorities visited. The joint area reviews also revealed an increasing level of collaboration to broaden the experience of young people in a wider range of local authorities. Some of the most successful links had been well established for many years. Those for 14–16-year-old pupils had often been set up through the Increased Flexibility Programme or as local arrangements to support disengaged young people. The extent of collaborative activity, particularly with local further education colleges or work-based learning organisations was often greatest in schools without sixth forms and least in areas with grammar schools, although there were some notable exceptions. Collaborative provision was more common in Key Stage 4 than post-16. Collaboration post-16 was usually limited to consortia of sixth forms increasing the choice of AS- and A-level subjects for their students. However, this picture was changing as providers started to plan for the introduction of the Diplomas.
24. Partnerships were drawing effectively on their earlier experiences to collaborate on planning to introduce Diplomas and, at the time of the visits, preparations were mostly at an appropriate stage for implementation in either September 2008 or 2009. Local consortia had a realistic view of what still needed to be done. Some providers remained concerned about issues such as developing suitable expertise in teachers. The Gateway process, through which local authorities and consortia submitted applications to operate the Diplomas from 2008, had sharpened thinking and planning for collaborative working.
25. Colleges, with their greater vocational expertise, frequently led and co-ordinated the planning for Diplomas, with Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) being used well to promote 14–19 developments. However, there were also examples of schools or work-based learning organisations taking an effective lead. In several of the areas visited, consortia used schools' specialist status very effectively in collaborative activities and planning for Diplomas, but other areas sometimes missed opportunities to make the best use of such specialisms.
26. Partnerships between providers varied in how successfully they had dealt with some of the practical difficulties associated with collaborative programmes for

young people. Arrangements for common timetabling were good in a few areas and were actively being worked on in others. However, in other areas, some pupils accessing collaborative provision were unable to attend all lessons at their base school because of clashes in timetabling. This placed particular pressure on them to catch up on work they missed. Other problems included lengthy journeys for some young people, although three of the rural local authorities had developed effective transport policies to minimise the impact on learners.

27. Initiatives by several local authorities to develop vocational or skills centres were an effective way of making specialist expertise and facilities available to students from schools over a wide area. Other imaginative approaches to extending the range of vocational options, particularly in sparsely populated rural areas, included virtual learning environments, e-learning and peripatetic vocational teachers.

The virtual learning environment is now supporting curriculum access and range in a number of areas in this large rural local authority. It is used for video conferencing, as well as providing online materials, tutoring and self-assessment tests. The development of e-portfolios is under way. All the further education colleges are fully signed up, and some 15 or 16 secondary schools are almost as active. Some work-based learning providers are also involved. One school is using the virtual learning environment for its young apprentices in performing arts. One of the colleges offers a GCSE in food technology using a webcam in the kitchen; this is regarded as successful since it encourages more take-up at a later stage in the college, and because it meets a local employment need in this sector.

28. In just over half of the local authorities visited, the engagement of employers to enhance the curriculum was good, enabling young people to develop and apply generic work skills and to develop specific vocational skills. Collaboration was particularly strong with employers in the Young Apprenticeship scheme. Employers in most areas contributed to work-related learning by providing work experience placements and, in many, they also gave careers talks and provided mock interviews. In some areas, employers were actively consulted by partnerships preparing for their Diploma bids, but the extent to which they will be able to contribute to curriculum development locally and provide specialist work placements is not yet evident. Employers were not involved sufficiently in three of the local authorities visited.

The quality of information, advice, guidance and support for young people

29. The overall quality of information, advice, guidance and support for 14–19-year-olds was good or better in 12 of the 16 local authorities visited and

inadequate in one. In the best practice, schools, colleges and work-based learning providers liaised effectively with the local Connexions service and one another to provide a comprehensive programme of individual advice and mentoring, careers awareness events, discussions and taster days to help young people make well informed choices about their futures.

30. In the majority of the areas visited, Connexions advisers made a strong contribution through impartial advice and guidance, raising young people's awareness of the range of opportunities open to them. This played a key role in increasing participation in education, employment and training. A similarly positive picture of the work of the Connexions services was evident in the joint area reviews. The example below highlights the close links that enthusiastic, well prepared advisers make with young people.

In this geographically remote 11–16 school, students have a wide range of involvement with the Connexions advisers during Years 9–11. Presentations, careers awareness events, discussions and taster days with colleges are usefully helping to develop students' knowledge of options available to them and to guide their decision-making. The Connexions advisers are well known to the students, who trust them and readily refer themselves for extra guidance and advice. The 'Above and Beyond' programme, developed jointly with the Connexions personal advisers and teachers at the school, provides a regular opportunity for all Year 11 students to meet employees and hear from these speakers at first hand about their jobs and to ask questions. Students favour this approach because of the vast amount of information that can be conveyed in such a session compared to other methods. They say it is challenging them to think more carefully about the next steps, to pay closer attention to course content and to weigh up the advantages of the different routes into specific jobs.

31. Well established partnerships between the Connexions service and work-based learning organisations contributed strongly to re-engaging young people in learning and employment. Some innovative projects in the most effective local authority areas visited were successfully reaching vulnerable young people and reducing the numbers of those not in education, employment or training. Additional support and guidance in these areas were well targeted to need, particularly for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and extensive efforts were made to ensure that vulnerable and disaffected young people received effective support.
32. The large majority of young people whom inspectors met during the survey appreciated the information, advice and guidance they had received at different stages in their time at school and college, and had found it valuable in helping them to make suitable choices about the next stage of education or training. However, there were weaknesses which affected a small minority of young people. In just under a half of the local authorities, there was some evidence,

although often not extensive, of a lack of impartial advice and guidance about post-16 provision. In a small proportion of the schools, careers staff's understanding of 14–19 vocational routes was limited. Some students who had been in 11–18 schools felt that they had not been made fully aware of the range of options available to them, and had been encouraged to stay on in the school, usually to follow AS- or A-level courses. After a year in the sixth form, a few students had then moved to other institutions to follow vocational courses which better met their needs and aspirations.

33. Despite generally good advice about vocational options, choices and recruitment tended to follow traditional gender lines. This was identified as a particular issue for improvement in three of the local authorities visited, reinforcing findings from earlier Ofsted surveys.⁶
34. Just under three quarters of the local authorities visited had made good progress in developing and introducing the new web-based 14–19 prospectuses, which DCSF had requested to be in place by autumn 2007. The best prospectuses were well established, with good online search facilities. Their information was often useful to young people because they extended over local authority borders to reflect 'travel to learn' areas. Teachers and Connexions advisers increasingly were incorporating the prospectuses effectively into their advice and guidance programmes, although, because the developments were so new, not all young people were fully aware of them. In just under a quarter of the local authorities, development of the prospectus had been slow, and its usefulness was uncertain. Prospectuses were not always sufficiently accessible for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Publicising the prospectus to pupils, parents and employers generally needed further development.
35. In nearly half the local authorities, Aimhigher, or local programmes with similar objectives, were raising the aspirations of young people and increasing the number of students from lower socio-economic groups applying for higher education.

One student, who was a refugee six years ago, came to the city with limited English. He was not successful at school, but took a level 2 course in science at college and then A levels. He has been employed by the college and worked as a mentor this year with A-level students to provide guidance and support on exam technique and revision methods and as a role model and inspiration for what can be achieved. He now has a place to study medicine at university. The Aimhigher programme gave him the confidence to raise his aspirations and helped him with interview

⁶ *The Key Stage 4 curriculum: increased flexibility and work-related learning* (070113), Ofsted, 2007 and *The Young Apprenticeships Programme 2004–07: an evaluation* (070032), Ofsted, 2007.

techniques. He has just been awarded 'Millennium Volunteer' of the year for the extra mile he has gone with his voluntary work in the local hospital.

36. Personal support for young people was good in almost all the areas visited. Highly productive work across schools, Connexions, social services and other agencies to identify young people's support needs, including excellent support for young people leaving care, was evident in the best areas. In one local authority, collaboration between support services, combined with good advice and guidance from her Connexions personal adviser, made an important difference to one young care leaver. She wrote about how these factors enabled her to take advantage of the opportunities to continue in training:

'With me being a full-time mum of two I didn't think I would ever be able to work or do training and every time I applied for a job in the local shops or even the job centre I got turned down with not enough experience. So I decided to do an apprenticeship through Connexions. The staff at Connexions have been very supportive in every way. My adviser found me this apprenticeship and put me forward for the interview and although I have two children she was always positive that I would be given a job opportunity whatever my circumstances. They've provided me with help towards the costs of getting to and starting work, with bus passes, clothing allowance and interview techniques. Thanks to them I am now out of the house doing something with my life. I am really happy with myself for getting offered this post in the borough and I hope to gain experience and a job I enjoy at the end of this apprenticeship. Although I still want to work in the field of law, I feel that training will open up many different doors of opportunity.'

The effectiveness of strategic leadership and management in taking forward the 14–19 agenda

37. The effectiveness of strategic direction, leadership and management in taking forward the 14–19 agenda was satisfactory or better in all the local authorities visited; it was good in 10 of the 16 and outstanding in one.
38. Strategic partnerships were well established in almost all of the local authority areas. Strategic direction was clear and a strong commitment to work together existed among most of the providers surveyed. Very effective leadership by, and partnerships between, the local authority and the LSC were noted in many areas and data-sharing between them and the Connexions service was firmly established.

The local authority, working with the LSC and the college, has shown good forward planning and strategic thinking. It has an overall plan for the city's secondary schools that includes college involvement in the development of strategically placed academies. The city's Diploma bids are

coordinated and the offer has been carefully planned to include clear progression routes from age 14 to 19 and beyond. Middle managers and lecturers are also planning ahead and thinking strategically. For example, staff from the CoVEs are developing units that can be included in the new Diplomas and which will make students more employable. These are to be offered to other providers across the city.

39. Planning was informed by national 14–19 priorities and was shaped according to local need. 14–19 plans linked appropriately to the local authorities' Children and Young People Plan. The best plans had synergy with wider plans within an authority, such as those for workforce development, or they contributed to authority-wide priorities for regeneration and economic development. In just under half the local authorities visited, there was clear evidence of responsiveness to local employment needs in planning 14–19 provision. These authorities made good use of intelligence about the local labour market to develop a range of vocational courses and, specifically, to prioritise the development of new Diplomas. It was also used to good effect to inform young people about local employment prospects.
40. Increasingly, 14–19 plans focused on local authority priorities to 'narrow the gap'. They shared a common focus on identifying and supporting vulnerable children and young people in specific groups deemed to be at risk, such as young carers, disaffected youth or young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
41. In the larger authorities visited, local consortia or sub-partnership groups had been set up based on particular geographical areas. Typically, they focused on operational planning and involved all or most of the 14–19 school and college providers serving a specific geographic area. Work-based learning providers took a particularly active part in a few area partnerships, but they had relatively little involvement in most. In some cases, local partnerships were appropriately organised around 'travel to learn' areas and involved providers from neighbouring local authority and LSC areas. During the early part of the survey, there were isolated examples of individual schools that had chosen not to participate or had had little involvement with the local partnership. Generally, this was the exception and it was rare to find this during visits later in the survey.
42. The local partnership groups varied in the level of their activity and in the impact that they were having on learners' experience. The most effective partnerships were often those which had been established for a number of years. Clear, specific action plans formed an agenda for their work. Their roles and responsibilities, relative to the local authority strategic partnership, were clearly defined. They included all providers and met regularly to establish how each could contribute to establish young people's entitlement to provision across the area. Such groups were developing and exchanging data between

partnership members and had an effective level of delegation to implement their plans locally. Collaborative planning was generally effective in those partnerships which had been successful in their bids to introduce the Diplomas in September 2008.

43. Approaches to quality assurance varied between, and sometimes within, areas. Although there were examples of systematic monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of collaborative provision, with clear action planning for improvement, these were usually in long-standing partnerships. Half the areas visited had not yet developed robust systems. In just under half of the local authorities, partnerships had established, or were beginning to implement, systems to gather and share performance and other data as a means of monitoring the implementation of their plans. One local authority, for example, had conducted a survey of all Year 8 pupils to identify likely demand and curriculum choices post-16. However, much remains to be done to ensure that data are systematically analysed and evaluated to inform planning.
44. Employers were generally well represented in strategic partnerships. Their engagement at a local level with operational arrangements was more varied, but there were examples of some very active involvement and, sometimes, leadership of Diploma and other work-based initiatives. This example is from a remote, sparsely populated part of a large rural authority.

There is an emerging view among employers that, increasingly, it is in their interest to commit themselves to developing local communities, in which 14–19 education and training is a key element. This is exemplified by a useful booklet produced by the Connexions service, the local education business partnership and AimHigher, where a cross-section of local employers describe their employment requirements, set out the skills they most value in employees, and describe the training opportunities which they offer to employees.

Constructive links with local universities in planning for Diplomas and in establishing progression routes from 14–19 into higher education were well established in four of the areas visited and were being developed in others.

45. The 14–19 strategy was usually underpinned by appropriate development plans for workforce development. The best of these, seen in about a third of the local authorities visited, were based on carefully identified needs and on systematic, collaborative staff development in schools and colleges. However, a few of the areas were concerned about the availability of long-term funding for staff development activities.
46. As part of their long-term 14–19 strategy, several local authorities had created, or were developing, local skill centres for vocational learning to increase access for students, reduce transport difficulties and make best use of students' time. Innovative programmes in rural areas visited included the provision of a county-

wide travel card scheme in one area and mopeds for older students in another. Transport arrangements, particularly to support the introduction of Diplomas, were still being developed in other areas, although most had workable interim arrangements in place.

47. Other authorities visited used opportunities available to co-locate school and further education facilities, thereby rationalising and extending provision for 14– 19-year-olds.

The secondary school now occupies a new building on the same campus as the further education college and special school. This is the physical reality of the town's Learning Zone. This major investment has become a key driver of collaboration across the borough and has extended the Zone as a concept to include all schools. The level of collaboration is impressive, and the range of 14–19 courses is expanding rapidly. The college and school have effectively combined their sixth form provision. Special school students are integrated well into life and provision around the campus.

Notes

The report is based on survey visits to 16 local authority areas between April 2007 and March 2008. The areas differed in size and in their geographical contexts.

In each area, Her Majesty's Inspectors and Additional Inspectors met officers from the local authority, the LSC, the Connexions service and local employers, and visited schools, colleges and work-based training organisations. Inspectors assessed the effectiveness of strategies in raising achievement, participation and retention in education and training; the range and accessibility of the curriculum; the quality of information, advice, guidance and support for young people; and the effectiveness of strategic leadership and management in taking forward the 14–19 agenda.

Inspectors met young people and staff in a total of 70 secondary and special schools, 33 further education and sixth form colleges and 21 work-based learning providers in order to evaluate the impact of reforms in providers.

Additional evidence was drawn from 15 joint area reviews of services for children and young people, the reports from which were published during the same period. These included 14–19 provision or some aspects of work in this age range, as additional investigations. Further evidence was also drawn from a small number of visits to schools other than those in the 16 local authority areas of the survey.

Further information

Publications by Ofsted

The Key Stage 4 curriculum: increased flexibility and work-related learning (070113), Ofsted, 2007; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070113.

The Young Apprenticeships Programme 2004-07: an evaluation (070032), Ofsted, 2007; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070032.

The contribution made by centres of vocational excellence to the development of vocational work in schools (070058), Ofsted, 2007; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070058.

Developing a coherent 14 to 19 phase of education and training (HMI 2442), Ofsted, 2005; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2442.

The Key Stage 4 curriculum: increased flexibility, work-related learning and Young Apprenticeship programmes (HMI 2478), Ofsted, 2005; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2478.

Relevant websites

Department for Children, Schools and Families
www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
www.qca.org.uk/14-19

Learning and Skills Council
www.lsc.gov.uk

Annex

Local authorities visited for the survey

Blackburn and Darwen
Bournemouth
Bromley
Cheshire
Coventry
Cumbria
Hartlepool
Lincolnshire
Manchester
Newham
Plymouth
Rotherham
Rutland
Somerset
West Sussex
Wiltshire

Schools visited for the survey

Abbeyfield School
Adelaide School
Angmering School
Avonbourne School
Barr's Hill School and Community College
Bishop Fox's Community School
Blakewater College
Boundstone Community College
Bournemouth School
Brymore School
Burnage Media Arts College
Caistor Yarborough School
Cator Park School
Congleton High School
Coombe Dean School
Coopers Technology College
Dallam School
Darwen Vale High School
Egguckland Community College
Ernesford Grange Community School: a Specialist Science College
Fiveways Special School

George Hastwell School
Glebe School
Glenmoor School
High Tunstall College of Science
Hilltop School
John Ruskin School
Kings High School
King's Manor Community College
Kingsbury School: a Specialist Science College
Langdon School
Langley Park School for Boys
Lipson Community College
Little Ilford School
Macclesfield High School
Manor College of Technology
Middlefield School of Technology
Newstead Wood School for Girls
North Manchester High School for Boys
Oakwood Technology College
Park Lane School
Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee School, Horsham
Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School
Queen's Park School, Lincoln
Rudheath Community High School
Salisbury High School
Sherbourne Fields School
Shipston High School
Sir William Stanier Community School
Springfields School
St Angela's Ursuline School
St Benedict's Catholic High School
St Bernard's Catholic High school
St Bonaventure's RC School
St Hild's Church of England Voluntary Aided School
St Peter's RC High School
Stoke Damerel Community College
Stratford upon Avon Grammar School for Girls
Stratford upon Avon High School
Tauheedul Islam Girls High School
The Castle School
The Clarendon College
The Verdin High School
The Woodlands School
Uppingham Community College
Vale of Catmose College
Walney School

Warminster Kingdown
Wath Comprehensive School
Wilmslow High School
Witton Park High School

Further education sector colleges visited for the survey

Blackburn College
Boston College
Bridgewater College, Cannington
Bromley College of Further and Higher Education
Brooksby Melton College
Central Sussex College
City College Coventry
City College Plymouth
Dearne Valley College
Hartlepool College of Further Education
Hartlepool Sixth Form College
Henley College Coventry
Kendal College
King Edward VI College, Nuneaton
Loreto College
Manchester College of Arts and Technology (MANCAT)
Mid Cheshire College of Further Education
Newham College of Further Education
Newham Sixth Form College
North Warwickshire and Hinckley College
Northbrook College, Sussex
Orpington College of Further Education
Plymouth College of Art and Design
Reaseheath College
Richard Huish College
Salisbury College
Somerset College of Arts and Technology
St Mary's College
Strode College
The Bournemouth and Poole College
Thomas Rotherham College
Tresham Institute
Wiltshire College

Work-based learning providers visited for the survey

Academy Training
Achievement Training
Appleby Heritage Centre
Avon Vale Training

Building Crafts College
Carter and Carter
CWT Coventry
First College
GenII Engineering and Technology
JHP Training Group Ltd
Landmark Training
Nuneaton Training Centre
Skegness College of Vocational Training
Springboard (Bromley)
Springboard (Hartlepool)
The Castle Project
The Music Factory
The Vale Royal Study Centre
Total People
Training 2000 Ltd
WBL (Morthyng Ltd) and employers

Local authorities whose joint area reviews contributed evidence for the report

Bolton
Bracknell Forest
Durham
East Sussex
Hammersmith and Fulham
Hampshire
Leeds
Liverpool
Luton
North Lincolnshire
Oxfordshire
Poole
Richmond upon Thames
Southampton
Warrington