

## **Background and response to the Peer Review**

The Children's, Schools and Families Directorate underwent a Peer Review of its preparations for the Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) on the 25th and 26th of April 2013. This review was commissioned on the basis that

The review is part of a wider programme of work that comes through the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) which aims to develop, commission and lead on the delivery of services to children, young people and their families, including education, health, youth, early years and social care services. Beyond discussions with SCC Officers and Members, the review team met with senior stakeholders at secondary and special schools, colleges, training providers, Skills Centre staff and young people.

While the review has focused on RPA as a whole, the Directorate Leadership Team asked for this review to have particular emphasis on young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) as 56% of our NEET young people have some form of SEND. The review team was headed up by Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director of Education, Learning and Skills at Kent and also comprised Hilary Omissi, Director for Raising Participation across Berkshire, Phillip Walker, County Manager Post 14 in Hampshire and Steve Lambert, Learning Development and Commissioning Manager 14+ for Bracknell Forest.

### **Our response to the findings**

The review team have provided a valuable summary which can be found overleaf. This outlined the directorate's key strengths and the areas which they felt need further development. The directorate has been looking into these areas more closely in order to focus provision with developments being taken forward through the 14-19 Partnership.

The 14 to 19 Partnership Board discussed the Peer Review at its last meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July 2013. The Board has scheduled a workshop for the 4<sup>th</sup> of October 2013 where it will develop a more detailed action plan based on the challenges identified in the review.

## **Surrey County Council**

**Peer Challenge 25, 26 April 2013**

### **Strategy for Skills and Employability and Raising the Participation Age**

#### **Feedback**

##### **Strengths:**

- There is a clear strategy with strong ambition and drive, which expresses clearly the priorities and actions to succeed in achieving 100% of young people in Surrey staying in education or employment with training until the age of 19
- The work is supported by strong political commitment and leadership for the agenda
- The county is supporting the work with significant additional investment
- There is positive feedback from young people about the support they receive and the range of strategies and services in place to help them succeed
- There is good universal provision, positive outcomes for most young people and good levels of participation which are above average
- Partnership working with schools, colleges and agencies is a strength and is based on well established relationships and ways of working
- There is a wide range of support activities and commissioned services for vulnerable young people and those who are NEET
- There has been good service design and integration, for example, with the youth support services
- There are innovative programmes in place and in development, based on clear and accurate needs assessment
- The good communication about the strategy has ensured strong buy-in and commitment from providers and partners
- There is clear impact in some areas of the work eg. on reducing youth offending, the number of young people with SEND in independent specialist placements and the NEET figures
- The local authority is making good use of data at strategic level to plan provision and target resources
- There is a lot of energy behind the strategy and a range of new programmes, which gives the work momentum
- The high profile and ambition given to the apprenticeship programme is reflected in better engagement by employers and a rapidly improving trend in the number of young people taking up apprenticeships
- There is a strong emphasis on support into employment with training for vulnerable learners, especially for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities, through the work of colleges and the skills centres
- There is a positive and more integrated approach to supporting LDA learners and their participation 14-19, with a commitment to develop this integrated approach further for 14-25 year olds

- The Year 11- Year12 Transition Project has a high rate of success – 85% - but could start sooner and finish later to ensure sustained impact on participation to age 18

## **Areas for Consideration**

1. The delivery of the strategy would benefit from more effective local co-ordination and ownership:
  - through streamlining the architecture of local forums and clusters that take responsibility for RPA
  - by having a more unified approach to the local co-ordination role
  - and by ensuring more consistent prioritisation of RPA in the full range of local activities that are designed to support vulnerable adolescents
2. Commissioning could be developed further as a process to drive improvement by more locality based commissioning which is more flexible and responsive to need. This may involve devolving more accountability for existing resources to local level.
3. There could be closer integration of the County's educational achievement and improvement activity with the range of activity outlined in this strategy to promote engagement and participation. This should be aimed at providing more challenge to the range and quality of provision and new pathways that are being developed to deliver the Employability Plan.
4. We believe there is scope for more consistent targeted support for young vulnerable people using case worker support. The case worker and case management approach appears to be too variable at present.
5. Provision for SEND/LDD learners aged 16-18 is growing, especially in FE colleges, but we believe this needs further development. The commitment from colleges is variable and progression pathways 19+ also need development.
6. The sustainability of the approach (which has high levels of investment) would benefit from more emphasis on evaluating which activities have highest impact – supported by better local network data to help assess the benefits and compare costs.

The team would like to thank the DCS Nick Wilson and his team for the good preparation and quality of paperwork and data provided to the peer challenge team, for the openness of staff and partners in all the discussions that took place, and for the helpful organisation of the visit.

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