Background and introduction

1. The Government has set a PSA target for reducing the numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training; this target is currently owned by the Connexions Service, but the LSC clearly has an important role and contribution to make – along with local authorities – in ensuring that suitable provision is available, accessible, well understood by young people and is of high quality. The target requires that the percentage of young people who are not in education, employment or training is reduced to 8% by 2010.

2. The percentage of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training has remained stable, at between 8 per cent and 10 per cent, between 1993 and 2004. In 2005, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) estimated that this figure had increased to 11 per cent, which represents 220,000 young people. The DfES estimate of the percentage of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training is consistent with that of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

3. It is important to note that this percentage is a snapshot figure, and that there is a considerable amount of “churn”, with young people moving in and out of the education and training system and employment. In practice, only around one per cent of the cohort (20,000 young people) are not in education, employment or training throughout their three years aged 16 - 18.

4. The increase in the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training is in the context of an increase in overall participation in learning by 16-18 year olds, but a significant reduction in the proportion of 16-18 year olds in work.
Purpose
5 This paper provides an update on those 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training. It sets the scene for a presentation and discussion at the forthcoming Council meeting.

6 This paper reviews the current position regarding the participation of young people, identifies the actions that have already been taken to increase participation in learning, and identifies the measures which are being put in place to meet the continuing challenge of reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training.

Recommendation
7 The Council is asked to note this paper and to contribute to the discussion at the meeting in order to inform the development of the LSC’s action plan to improve participation, retention and attainment of young people in learning and employment.

Key points/issues

Participation
8 Participation in education and training has increased:
- 1% rise in 16-18 participation rate between 2004 and 2005, to 76.2%.
- 2.7% rise in 16 year olds in full time education to 76.5% (highest ever);
- 2.8% rise in 17 year olds in full time education to 62.9% (highest ever);
- 2% rise in 17 year olds in education or work-based learning (to 76%);

9 The other significant change in participation patterns is the proportion of young people in work without training – which has fallen by 2%. The change in the activity of 16-18 year olds over the past five years is shown in the table below.

Proportion of 16-18 year olds in education and training, employment and NEET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>NEET (%)</th>
<th>Employment (%)</th>
<th>Total education &amp; training (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>84.5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>87.3%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SFR 21/2006
The increase in young people who are not in education, employment or training is more apparent amongst 17 and 18 year olds – young people who are more likely to be active in the labour market than those who have just left school. Indeed, the numbers of 16 year olds not participating show a very slight decline in the last 3 years.

Information provided by Connexions Services identifies a fall in the number of employment vacancies notified to them. They also report that employers may prefer to recruit migrant workers who are perceived as having more developed interpersonal and technical skills. Population estimates indicate that significant numbers of young people are migrating into the country (26,000 18 year olds in 2005) which also increases competition for employment opportunities. There is also some evidence, from the Labour Force Survey, to indicate that recent migrants are more likely to be not in education, employment or training than those educated in England.

LSC activities and impact on participation

The following list summarises the interventions and programmes that the LSC has put in place which help to increase participation, retention and achievement amongst young people:

- Greater availability of provision at entry and level 1 and increased numbers of young people learning at these levels
- Improvement in success rates on level 1 programmes in FE
- Increased proportion of young people on apprenticeships following level 2 programmes
- Improvement in Apprenticeship success rates
- Through Education Maintenance Allowances, targeting support at those young people in greatest financial need and making an impact on learner participation
- Development and extension of ‘Care to Learn’ programme to assist young parents with the costs of childcare whilst they study
- Introduction of Entry to Employment (E2E) programme with improving progression rates to further learning and employment
- Improvements in delivery of learning and skills to young offenders which better equips them for the future
• Targeted use of 16-19 competitions for new provision to drive expansion and improvements in provision for young people who are currently not in education, employment or training

• Work initiated to ensure that in every area of the country there is a prospectus setting out what learning provision is available to 14-19 year olds, and helping them to navigate their options for the future. Some areas already have this in place and others are working towards national coverage by September 2007 – in advance of the introduction of the first new (specialised) Diplomas

• The offer of a ‘September Guarantee’ in half of the Local Authority areas in the country (with the intention that there will be full coverage by September 2007). The guarantee ensures that all young people who leave schools are supported by the Connexions Service to secure their effective transition to an offer of a suitable place in further learning, in the workplace as well as in school / college

• The identification and targeted support for ‘Level 2 hotspot areas’, where attainment of level 2 at 19 was lower than would be expected. This work provided a clear focus on participation and retention as well as on attainment

• Intervention to improve the quality of provision in specialist colleges for learners with learning difficulties and / or disabilities.

18 The following activities are being initiated or are under development and will provide the basis for the LSC’s action plan. The plan aims to improve participation, retention and attainment amongst young people, and to deliver the PSA targets for attainment of level 2 and level 3 at age 19, and for reducing young people who are not in education, employment or training:

• Use of the new LSC organisational structure and performance management process to reinforce priority of these targets

• Work to obtain better data locally and regionally – including data held by partner organisations – and pilot the use of the Unique Learner Number across 14-19 partnership areas to ascertain its value in tracking learners and sharing information across partners

• The articulation of a framework that clearly identifies roles and responsibilities in the system - drawing together all relevant strands of work by LSC and partners on Level 2, participation, retention and achievement, learner and learning support, support for learners with learning difficulties and / or disabilities, youth support, young offenders

• Development of the existing ‘Not in Education, Employment or Training’ / Level 2 toolkit for use by local 14-19 partnerships, and link to good practice guidance
• Creation of a guide that identifies and describes existing effective practice in developing and delivering high quality, accessible provision at and below Level 2

• The testing and trialling of the Foundation Learning Tier during 2006/07 and 2007/08, with the intention of introduction in September 2008. This will provide a single framework for provision below Level 2, and will enable tailored ‘progression pathways’ to be developed to meet learners’ needs

• Development of ways of capturing the ‘non-learner’ (or ex-learner) voice to inform planning, learning programmes and support. A pilot in Yorkshire and the Humber is exploring the notion of a strategic forum to advise on the development of regional priorities and commissioning plan

• Publication and implementation of the LSC’s strategy for learners with learning difficulties and / or disabilities (Learning for Living and Work), with clear investment priorities to transform access to relevant, high quality provision

• Work with QCA and DfES on the development, explanation and piloting of new (specialised) Diplomas offered in the context of an occupational sector (14 sectors) at levels 1,2 and 3

• Development of the Framework for Excellence as a tool to support provider self-assessment, and examine ways in which it may be used across consortia to assess the quality, value and responsiveness of 14 -19 provision. The Framework will also assist the LSC in decisions regarding investment and growth of new provision

• Formulation of our positive response to the Leaving Care green paper, working to support these young people who currently under-achieve

• Continuation of our work with DfES to increase the availability and volume of Apprenticeships as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review, and to develop and consult on funding approaches for (14 -16)16 - 19 learning that recognise the challenges and changes experienced by young people in this phase of their learning

• Continuation of our work with the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) to focus on the development of a quality framework for vocational provision, and support to improve learner progression.

Clearance

This paper has been cleared by Melanie Hunt, National Director of Learning

Communications
No external communications necessary at this point. The 14-19 Group reporting to the Learning and Performance Board will develop and submit the action plan for executive approval. This group comprises representatives from across the LSC and will support internal communications.

**Impact assessment**

No implications of this paper. The action plan will be subject to an equality impact assessment to ensure that the plan does not inadvertently disadvantage any group of young people.

**Resources**

Existing resources within regional and national teams will be utilised to develop the action plan. Delivery of the plan will be the collective responsibility of national, regional, area and partnership teams – with clear accountabilities identified. The existing 14-19 development budget will continue to be allocated to regions to support specific developments for 07/08.

**Paper creator**     Melanie Hunt  
**Date created**     23 August 2006  
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Annex: Summary of Advice from the Young People’s Learning Committee

The 14-19 Implementation Plan

- Communication is key but different messages are needed for specialist audiences (education and training sector) compared to non-specialist audiences (parents, employers, general public). The relationship of Specialised Diplomas to Apprenticeships should be clear so that employers can see and understand progression routes. It is important that they are not marketed as being only for the 40% who do not achieve 5 good GCSEs.

- Schools need to be encouraged to think through how they will deliver the entitlement and there is a need to engage with work based learning providers to secure their contribution to vocational learning and increasing the capacity for placements for young people.

- Employers are being asked to provide a whole range of support for 14-19 reforms (work experience, work placements, apprenticeships, IAG, professional development, curriculum design, governance, designing simulated work environments) and there is currently no infrastructure to facilitate this. There are some good links being made between individual institutions and employers but this is not universal. A different approach is needed to make the most of the enormous amount of goodwill that exists.

- Functional English and Maths need to be embedded in a vocational context and not just delivered in schools at 14-16. The relationship of functional skills to key skills and basic skills needs to be clarified. The assessment for functional skills should be about demonstrating competencies not sitting tests.

- There is a concern that in some areas Children’s Trusts will not have sufficient focus on 14-19 and that the Joint Area Review process will not identify issues and provoke action. The LSC needs to clearly exercise its key role in local partnerships to maintain the impetus for reform.

FE Reform White Paper

- The recommendations of the review of planning and funding of provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities led by Peter Little OBE, should be integrated into the White Paper.

- Although simplification of the landscape is important there are complexities inherent in trying to apply the same philosophies to all types of colleges and private training providers.

- A strong steer is required on local collaboration, partnerships and federations in order to deliver the 14-19 reforms. Schools and sixth form colleges that have not traditionally delivered vocational learning should be encouraged to be part of local partnerships to ensure that the entitlement to specialised diplomas is available to all young people at all levels.
**Funding and the comprehensive spending review**

- The key feature is the aspirational target for 90% participation at 17 in 2015. However, in addition to a funding trajectory created by the target (influenced by the changing cohort size) the key funding considerations are the need for investment funds prior to achieving an increase in participation, the fact that reaching non-participants and then funding their learning programme will be more expensive than the norm, and recognition that gaining a level of increased participation may mean that some young people will initially have ‘false starts’ and may drop out of learning, which has a cost.

- There must be a realistic understanding and assessment of the costs of 14-19 reform. Funding will be required for capital investment in facilities, revenue costs of practical learning programmes (diplomas) over and above theoretical learning, increased pastoral and IAG support, the costs of collaboration including transport as more students undertake learning in a number of different institutions. There are also hidden costs of strengthened child protection arrangements, supervision arrangements and professional development for teachers who may not have worked with pre-16 learners before.

- It would be helpful to have a holistic approach that brings together funding for provision in schools, colleges and work-based learning for young people rather than having separate funding streams with individual constraints.

**Strategic planning in partnership with local authorities**

- It will be essential that the changes to Connexions partnership structures are managed effectively to support strategic 14-19 structures, in order to ensure that delivery of information, advice and guidance does not ‘disappear’ into separate institutions. There will be a continuing need for a mechanism for maintaining a strategic overview of quality and effectiveness.

- The successful development of the 14-19 curriculum, including work experience and work placements requires resources for dedicated staff to liaise with colleges, schools, training providers and employers. There is an urgent need to develop an overarching regional infrastructure and strategic plan for employer engagement at 14-19 to ensure appropriate allocation of resources.

- It is important not to underestimate how complex the matrix will be to offer 14 specialised Diploma lines at 3 levels in accessible places at an affordable price; the LSC at a local level will need to have a total picture of provision, including schools, to develop a commissioning model to collaboratively identify and fill gaps in provision. There is a need to clarify the levers for engagement of key partners in developing such a holistic strategy.

- Many head teachers have not realised the implications of the 14-19 curriculum changes and are not starting to develop capacity in schools. 14-19 partnerships should be encouraged to begin curriculum planning and associated staff development as soon as possible.
Quality – Framework for Excellence and Pursuing Excellence

- The goal for the Quality Improvement Strategy (Pursuing Excellence) and the Framework for Excellence should be a single model that applies across the whole sector (school sixth forms, colleges and training providers) with the same set of criteria being used by all agencies.

- The whole sector approach is important, as it will enable better quality control of existing collaborative 14–16 provision - including the Increased Flexibility Programme, Young Apprenticeships and the School Engagement Programme, as well as vital work for the future in planning delivery of the new Diplomas.

- Where possible existing processes that are respected by the sector and the public should be used (e.g. OFSTED inspections).

- Measures should be developed that are not dependant on context or mission of the provider (e.g. employer responsiveness could be very different in a General FE College compared to a Sixth Form college if it only measures one dimension of employer engagement).

Young people not in education, employment or training

- Tracking of young people who are not in education, employment or training is vitally important, and as part of the transition of the Connexions service, local authorities should be required to ensure that they have appropriate systems in place that can track individuals across administrative boundaries.

- There is a need to ensure an adequate and sustainable budget so that imaginative and engaging provision can be offered to these young people.

- Robust local arrangements for assessment and support for young people on the ground need to be in place and should be culturally appropriate e.g. by training people from specific communities as mentors and advisors.