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**Meeting:** Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Meeting  
**Date:** 29 June 2010  
**Subject:** 14-19 Commissioning  
**Report of:** Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services  
**Summary:** This report provides information on national changes to the commissioning of education and training provision for 16-19 year-olds.

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Contact Officer: Sylvia Gibson, Assistant Director, Learning & Strategic Commissioning  
Public/Exempt: Public  
Wards Affected: All  
Function of: Council

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Council Priorities:**

The transfer of Learning and Skills Council (LSC) responsibilities to the Local Authority will contribute to improvements in educational attainment and relates to the second of the Council's key priorities:

- Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people.

### **Financial:**

The Council is directly accountable for value for money for 16-19 education and training, with strengthened ability to hold providers accountable for the value for money provided. The resource level following the transfer of funding to the local authority from April 2010 is £24.2m for commissioning providers (including sixth forms) and an operational budget funded through the Special Purposes Grant of £193,000.

### **Legal:**

There are no legal implications.

### **Risk Management:**

There are no immediate strategic or service risks now that the transfer process has been completed and plans for managing the transition are being implemented.

**Staffing (including Trades Unions):**

TUPE arrangements apply to the transfer of LSC staff to the Local Authority. Arrangements are in place to develop Central Bedfordshire staff expertise and understanding of the relevant commissioning and financial accountabilities.

**Equalities/Human Rights:**

The new arrangements will strengthen the Council's ability to ensure that 16-19 education and training provides effective access for all groups of young people and all types of needs.

**Community Safety:**

None

**Sustainability:**

14-19 commissioning aims to ensure that people have the right skills for working life. Commissioning the right provision will increase:

- productivity and competitiveness;
- skills; and
- employee satisfaction and retention.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That the Committee comments on the arrangements for 14-19 commissioning.**

**Background**

1. In spring 2008, the Government published the White Paper, 'Raising Expectations: enabling the system to deliver' which proposed significant changes to arrangements for the education and training of 16-19 year-olds and skill development for adults.
2. Following the passing of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, the key changes in respect of young people are as follows:
  - Funding for post-16 education and training passed from the Learning and Skills Council to local authorities on 1 April 2010.
  - From April 2010 local authorities will commission and fund sixth form provision directly and will collaborate in formal sub-regional groupings to commission further education (FE) provision for the sub-region.
  - A new national Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) has been established to help the Local Authority to plan, allocate and fund a coherent offer to all young people, to ensure budgetary control and to provide nationally consistent funding and commissioning frameworks.

3. The Local Authority now has a key role as a strategic planner to:
  - meet the learning needs of all learners resident in the local authority area, including learners with specific needs;
  - meet collective learning needs across travel to learn areas;
  - support collaborative working through the Children's Trust and the 14-19 Partnership;
  - produce a 16-19 commissioning plan; and
  - develop the market and ensure provider quality.

### **The Sub Regional Group**

4. Sub Regional Groups (SRGs) have been established taking account of travel to learn patterns for Further Education provision. The proposed pattern for sub-regional groupings in the East of England is:
  - Central Bedfordshire, Bedford Borough, Hertfordshire, Luton;
  - Essex, Southend and Thurrock; and
  - Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
5. The aims of the SRG are:
  - to provide a greater range of choice for young people;
  - to give young people the knowledge and skills that employers, the economy and the region need to prosper in the 21st century; and
  - to provide all young people with personalised learning opportunities and an equal opportunity to succeed.
6. The SRG will jointly commission FE and apprenticeship provision. This commissioning is set in the context of planning other 16-19 and 14-19 provision such as those young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and pre-NEET interventions, school sixth form provision, apprenticeships and Foundation Learning/Progression Pathways provision.
7. The overall plan will be included in the Central Bedfordshire Children and Young People's Plan and will link to Children's Trust targets and to the adult skills and economic agendas.

## **14-19 Commissioning**

8. The Local Authority will have a direct commissioning relationship with:
  - Schools
  - 14-19 Consortia
  - NEET and pre-NEET/alternative provision
  - Sixth Form Colleges
  - FE Colleges (through sub-regional grouping arrangements)
  - The National Apprenticeship Service
  - Young People's Learning Agency.
  
9. On 1 April 2010 the Local Authority took on responsibility for elements of three separate commissioning cycles:
  - the final five months of the 2009/10 academic year commissioning cycle (April 2010 to August 2010) and for payments to colleges, schools, and other providers;
  - delivering the plans and allocations made by the former LSC up to 31 March 2010 for delivery in the academic year August 2010 to July 2011; and
  - responsibility for the whole process in the 2011/12 academic year, underpinned by the National Commissioning Framework.

## **Governance Arrangements**

10. Individual local authorities are financially accountable for the resources allocated to them. 16-19 funding decisions in Central Bedfordshire will be routed through the Children's Trust for approval and where appropriate to Schools Forum as agreed by the Executive at its meeting on 21 July 2010.
  
11. Reports on the activities of the SRG will go to the Economic Wellbeing sub-group of the Children's Trust and from there to the Children's Trust Board. These reports will set out the outcomes achieved in the previous year and the commissioning priorities and intentions for the following year. The timing of these reports will be aligned with the 16-19 business planning cycle and the annual review of the Children and Young People's Plan.

## **14-19 Strategic Partnership**

12. The 14-19 Strategic Partnership brings together stakeholders from education, training providers and other groups in order to plan and monitor the implementation of the 14 - 19 curriculum reforms. Its key purpose is to ensure that children and young people in Central Bedfordshire achieve economic well-being through the implementation of the 14 -19 reform agenda. This includes joint curriculum planning and delivery in order that all young people can access the full range of general and vocational options that meet their needs and aspirations.

- 13 The partnership promotes and supports collaboration across stakeholders, refreshes the 14-19 Plan annually and monitors performance. In doing this it ensures alignment with economic development plans and develops 14-19 learning in line with future employment and skills needs. The partnership is the key vehicle for ensuring that young people will meet the requirement, by 2013, to stay in some form of education or training until 17 and then 18. It is also a key driver in ensuring that our young people do not become NEET (Not in education, employment or training).

### **Conclusion and Next Steps**

14. In the autumn 2010, the Local Authority will start the process of planning and commissioning provision for the 2011/12 academic year.
15. 14-19 commissioning will need to make strategic links with the local economic development agenda and skills strategy to ensure that the right provision is in place for young people. Work is being done with Sustainable Communities to align the work of the Economic Wellbeing delivery group of the Children's Trust with the work to develop an Employment and Skills Board. This is an important development area.