

Post 16 Area Review Briefing

Purpose: To provide information regarding the Wiltshire, Swindon and Gloucestershire Post 16 Area Review, including reference to the roles of the local authority and the LEP and progress made towards the Wave 4 Review beginning mid-September 2016.

Summary

The review will cover Gloucestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire and the process forms part of national reforms to the post-16 education and training sector, focusing mainly on Further Education Colleges. Wiltshire College, New College and Swindon College are all in scope for the SWLEP area as well as three colleges in Gloucestershire.

The overarching aims of the review are to deliver:

- Institutions which are financially viable, sustainable, resilient and efficient, and deliver maximum value for public investment. The review will identify scope to make efficiencies in a range of ways.
- An offer that meets each area's educational and economic needs.
- Providers with strong reputations and greater specialisation. An important outcome of each review will be the establishment of clearly aligned progression routes, from schools through to specialised institutions including new Institutes of Technology, and National Colleges.
- Sufficient access to high quality and relevant education and training for all, including 16-19 year olds, adults and learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), both with and without high needs.

The review for our area will run from mid-September 2016 to February 2017. The LEP has commissioned support to develop a robust data analysis and skills plan for the area in preparation for the review. The Skills and Talent group of the LEP has been steering this work for Wiltshire and Swindon, and meetings have also been held with Gloucestershire LEP and County Council.

Papers published to launch the review state that:

"The engagement of the local authorities and LEPs is key to the success of the review as there is a need to ensure delivery of the wider economic objectives for the area, including a focus on higher level professional and technical skills. They will bring views on the economic needs of learners and employers in their area, current and future gaps in provision to be filled to meet the economic need, and will be able to feed in employer views. One of the expected outputs from this review will be local outcome agreements on skills."

1 Background

In a written ministerial statement on 20 July 2015, the Skills Minister, Nick Boles, announced plans for "a restructuring of the post-16 education and training sector, through a series of area based reviews of provision."

Taking place in five waves over an eighteen month period and due for completion by March 2017, the reviews, covering all further education and sixth form colleges, are currently underway with wave 3 of 5 nearing completion. Waves 1, 2 and 3 included colleges where there were serious financial and/or quality concerns with waves 4 and 5 to include those colleges less at risk. It is therefore expected that recommendations from Wave 4 reviews will be lighter touch than previous waves.

Few recommendations coming out of the reviews to date have yet been published.

The Government expects the area reviews to “enable a transition towards fewer, larger, more resilient and efficient providers, and more effective collaboration across institution types.” Each review will be led and overseen by a ‘local steering group’ consisting of college chairs of governors and principals, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), local authorities, FE and Sixth Form College Commissioners and Regional School Commissioners. They will start by assessing the educational and economic needs of the area before evaluating institutional options to meet that need. The options could include greater specialisation, rationalisation, mergers or closures of institutions.

Institutions will be responsible for deciding whether to accept any recommendations arising from a review. However, the Government has stated that it expects institutions to take action in light of the review’s findings.

There have been some concerns raised about the area review process. In particular, concerns have been raised about the scope of the reviews and that some post-16 institutions, including school sixth forms, 16-19 free schools and University Technical Colleges, will not be included. In response, the Government has stated that such institutions can opt-in to the reviews if they wish and that Regional Schools Commissioners will identify any issues with such provision as part of the review process.

Wave 4 Area Reviews are scheduled to commence in September 2016 and will include a review of our designated area which covers, Wiltshire, Swindon and Gloucestershire and will review Wiltshire College, Swindon College, New College Swindon, Cirencester College (if Cirencester becomes an academy it will not be included in the area review), Hartpury College and Gloucestershire College. Data for South Gloucestershire College will be included within this review, although they participated in wave 3 as part of the West of England review. The current FE commissioner will be starting off the wave 4 reviews and handing over to a new commissioner during the course of the review (name yet to be announced). I

2 What are the Reviews aiming to achieve?

- **Institutions which are financially viable, sustainable, resilient and efficient and deliver maximum value for public investment.** This may mean rationalised curriculum; multi campus colleges sharing back office functions.
- **Delivering an offer that meets each area’s economic and educational needs.** This means that the skills vision of the LEP has been clearly articulated, and that consideration is given about how existing structures can be adapted to deliver provision more effectively and efficiently.
- **Providers with strong reputations and greater specialisation.** An important outcome will be clear progression routes to higher level skills, with providers focussing on what they can deliver effectively to a high standard.
- **Sufficient access to high quality and relevant education and training for all.** The curriculum on offer is inclusive to enable participation by all those with SEND.
- **Colleges well equipped to respond to the reform and expansion of the apprenticeship programme. The government intends that apprenticeships are the biggest part of the vocational market.** Innovative preparation by colleges in responding to the new employer led environment must be considered in the review.

3 Area Reviews –Approach

- The National Area Review Steering Group, reporting to the Minister for Skills, is responsible for the national approach to phasing and scoping reviews. They are also responsible for evaluating the impact of the review process. The work of the National Steering Group is informed by the Stakeholder Advisory Group.
- Reviews are conducted within a national framework with space for local flexibility, including looking at needs for national provision e.g. land based.
- The focus is on General FE and Sixth Form Colleges.
- An outcome is to create a network of prestigious Institutes of Technology; detail is lacking but they will happen in the medium term (see section 6.2). BIS recently published a consultation on maintenance loans for level 4 and above students and only those studying at IoTs or National Colleges will be eligible.
- All involved are expected to embrace the following general principles; strategic and visionary, open-minded, seeking best value, embracing digital technology both for learning and management, commitment to collaboration, financial sustainability, 'once and for all' long-term vision, evidence based, focus on quality improvement, shared services, blended learning possibilities, delivers the skills vision.

4 Area Reviews - Process:

- Local steering group meetings commence (mid-September 2016 in our case)
- Analysis phase – looking at the local area's current and future skills and economic needs, current education and training provision, college estate, college and sixth form financial and performance data, thorough research into economic data, demographics, deprivation, attainment gaps, travel to learn analysis.
- Site visits to colleges after 1st steering group meeting.
- Development of structural options phase.
- Option analysis and evaluation phase.
- Recommendations are made and presented to the colleges' governing bodies.
- Area Review summary of analysis recommendations to be published on gov.uk.
- Implementation of the review recommendations.

5 Further detail on the roles of LEPs and Local Authorities before, during and after the review

Papers published to launch the review state that:

"The engagement of the local authorities and LEPs is key to the success of the review as there is a need to ensure delivery of the wider economic objectives for the area, including a focus on higher level professional and technical skills. They will bring views on the economic needs of learners and employers in their area, current and future gaps in provision to be filled to meet the economic need, and will be able to feed in employer views. One of the expected outputs from this review will be local outcome agreements on skills."

- **Support and challenge.** LEPs and local authorities (LAs) are essential partners in an Area Review process and have an important place at the Steering Group table; in both supporting and challenging and to ensure delivery of the right outcomes for learners and employers.
- **Informing decisions based on in depth understanding of employers.** With the impending introduction of the apprenticeship levy, employers from both the private and public sector will have an increasingly prominent role in directly investing in skills. LEPs have an in depth understanding of the views of the employers, local skills shortages and workforce development needs which is essential to inform decisions

about the curriculum and building the business case for investment of specialist training facilities.

- **Providing detailed information.** During the initial Steering Group meeting, LEPs and LAs are jointly expected to provide detailed information about current skills needs and future priorities in an integrated picture which provides information beyond that which Steering Group members will have read from public documents. See Appendix 2 for a breakdown of the information required. In summary this will be:
 - Population characteristics (economic activity, unemployment, NEETs levels of HE, basic needs and students with SEND).
 - Key local employment sectors, and their direction of travel in terms of replacement demand, jobs growth and skill levels needed
 - Any acute skills shortages and skills gaps reported by employers which are relevant to the review
 - 'One- issue' forecasts which are relevant (for example major construction projects within the region which might impact on demand for skills; business relocations; closures and inward investment).
- **Commenting on provision.** Following the presentation of the overview of the colleges involved in the review by the Joint Area Review Delivery Unit (JARDU), LEPs and LAs will be invited to comment on the pattern of provision and gaps in provision and over-supply.
- **Judgements.** JARDU will propose scores for each area following the financial evaluation LEPs and LAs will be involved in judgements about how the changes made will benefit citizens and employers across the review area.
- **Consideration around Local Growth Fund.** LEPs and LAs will need to consider how Local Growth funds including capital funds and/or the future contracting of the adult education budget will affect proposals.
- **Investment.** There is an expectation that LEPs will make proportionate investments in skills capital projects, including the new investments that will come out of the area reviews.
- **Developing programme proposals.** LEPs will also be able to develop programme proposals that will allow them to more effectively respond to the area reviews.
- **Post review implementations.** Progress against recommendation will be monitored locally and nationally. LEPs and LAs retain their focus on driving improvements in education and skills and assessing how the implementation of recommendations is contributing to improvements in local economic performance.
- **Continued support for colleges beyond the conclusion of the review.** Ongoing support from the LEP and LAs will be required post review completion in respect of a number of important roles including supporting colleges with regular information on the changing economic and educational needs of the area, providing feedback to employers about what the review has achieved, strengthening the role played by senior business leaders in colleges by getting them actively involved as board members and practical help to colleges to speed up the development of new areas of work and/or the development of higher-level skills.
- **Provide feedback.** It is expected that combined authorities, LEPs and local authorities will be invited to feed back on college strategic plans and curriculum proposals in the course of their development.
- **Apprenticeship Training Agencies (ATAs).** LEPs and LAs will have a role in working closely with groups of colleges involved in establishing ATAs which have the potential to improve and increase the apprenticeship offer
- **Encouraging employer sponsorship.** An additional remit includes encouraging larger employers with skills shortages and gaps to sponsor a part of its specialist provision

There are no boundaries or limitations to what might be proposed as an outcome of the review, and options around collaboration and joint investment may have implications for decisions by LEPs about capital funding.

6 Further Government Guidance

6.1 Overview

In March 2016, further guidance was published which contains greater detail on a number of issues in relation to: Structural and Prospects Appraisals, the preparatory requirements of the review and experiences of the areas where the review process has been carried out.

These lessons include:

- The importance of early engagement between colleges on options to rationalise their curriculum and offer shared services
- The need for early communication between the colleges, LEP and LAs within an area
- The importance of a strong evidence based on accurate and timely data
- The importance of effective stakeholder engagement
- The role that the wider sector can play in supporting change
- The importance of having the right level of skills and resources in place to support the reviews in terms of knowledge and expertise across a range of review elements
- The importance of enabling the learner voice to input to the review boards
- The potential to consider innovative delivery models to effectively deliver apprenticeships

Updated guidance also contains more detail regarding the implementation of the outcomes of the review and information on the restructuring facility funding. Additional guidance is expected in the coming weeks.

The updated guidance highlights that, since the original guidance, there have been a number of developments critical to the future of further education. The first is the Spending Review. This protected FE. It also created a huge opportunity in substantially increased investment in apprenticeships through the employer levy. These are seen by BIS as strengthening the need for reform, rather than diminishing it.

As the Further Education Commissioner has identified, colleges that perform well on a range of quality and efficiency criteria – from class sizes to back office costs – can produce surpluses and reinvest in high quality delivery for their learners. However, well in advance of the Spending Review many colleges were treading a tight financial line, and in some cases requiring exceptional support. The area reviews are designed to enable all colleges to be secure for the long term. Critically this will mean adjusting to the potential to expand apprenticeships in an environment where employers have greater control – this is seen as a huge opportunity for colleges agile enough to take advantage.

6.2 Institutes of Technology

The original policy paper refers to Institutes of Technology (IoTs) as a means of achieving the objectives of the productivity paper and the delivery of high quality STEM provision at levels 3, 4 and 5. Updated guidance published in March provided further information on IoTs, stating that the emphasis is on quality and sustainability rather than quantity. The anticipation is that IoTs will require close collaboration between existing and new providers. There is likely to be more than one opportunity for areas to be considered for IoTs. Case studies are currently being set up which will test the viability of several different institutional governance models. The next steps will be announced in autumn 2016. Early indications suggest that 6-10 IoTs will be in place by the end of parliament, that they may or may not be

linked to devolution deals and that it is unrealistic to expect a need for an IoT to be identified as part of the Area Review process. Since the guidance publication there has been more of a shift towards IoTs as a means to bridge the level 4 rather than level 3 gap and to bridge FE to HE provision.

7 Preparation for the Swindon/Wiltshire/Gloucestershire Review

- A shared data pack has been jointly commissioned by all the colleges in the area. Relevant data is being extracted and executive summaries are being prepared by all colleges in the review which will be made generally available to all interested parties.
- Three meetings with all chairs and principals of the colleges in the review have taken place (in February, April and June) to share views and to agree data sharing etc.
- The SWLEP Skills and Talent sub group had a briefing on the Area Review process from the FE Advisor involved in the West of England Wave 3 Review which outlined the role of the local authorities and LEPs and the Area Review process.
- SWLEP, Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council have commissioned Red Box Research to provide some additional capacity to ensure robust preparation for the review. This will include ensuring data analysis and a report outlining key findings and recommendations are in place providing the information that the guidance and the area review team have indicated is required from LEPs and LAs. As part of the commission, work to strengthen the LEP Skills Plan will take place.
- Amanda Burnside, Principal of Wiltshire College and Peter Nathan, Head of Education at Swindon Borough Council have briefed Wiltshire Association of Secondary School Heads (WASSH) and Swindon Association of Secondary School Heads (SASSH).
- Two meetings between Gloucestershire LEP and LA and Wiltshire and Swindon LEP and LAs took place on 23 May and 21 July to initiate preparation for the review. It covered a wide range of items including the profile and provision of the colleges in the area and the content and structure of the presentation required at the start of the review. On 21 July, the Joint Area Review Delivery Unit attended to provide an update.
- Individual meetings took place between the principal of each college, Head of Education and the Strategic Commissioner Routes to Employment to discuss the college data from the commissioned evidence base and the recommendations being put forward from the LEP/LA.
- The Post 16 Review Delivery Unit/Regional Schools Commissioner provided information for schools and invited their input.

8 Update on the review.

- Steering Group meetings have taken place in September, October and November 2016. The Head of Education has attended all meetings. The January 2017 meeting was cancelled due to further work on potential structural changes needing to take place. The final meeting is scheduled for 7th February 2017.

- At the first meeting in September, the LEPs and LAs presented information on how well the current post 16 offer is meeting educational and economic needs.
- At the November Steering Group, all parties were invited to put forward a summary of recommendations. SWLEP, Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council provided a summary of recommendations based on the paper provided for the first meeting.
- The Joint Area Review Delivery Unit (JARDU) co-ordinated input from local employers on how well the colleges are meeting employer needs. SBC officers worked with local employers to ensure questionnaires were completed. A summary report was provided by JARDU for the steering group.
- SBC has provided additional information and input to meetings between Swindon College and New College to discuss potential future arrangements.

Appendix 1: Area Reviews – Participants' and roles and responsibilities

- **LEPs.** Engaging in the review process by setting out their skills vision, with robust data on potential for economic development and job creation. Enabling change with their access to capital funding and ESF funding. Being the business voice to articulate how the system needs to change to better meet employer demand. LEPs will be on the Steering Group.
- **Local authorities.** If there is no devolution deal then the LA responsibility is to contribute through setting out their vision for the education and skills system, with robust data on participation, cohort demographic change and the needs of SEND learners coming through the system. Engaging with school sixth forms in maintained schools and taking account of the analysis produced by the review to inform their future deliberations about schools provision. LAs will be on the Steering Group.
- **Governing bodies.** Ensuring all the relevant options are considered for their institution. Chairs are members of the Steering Group supported by Principal or Chief Executive who will also attend throughout the process.
- **FE and Sixth Form College Commissioners.** Responsible for ensuring consistency, quality and neutrality across all area reviews. Ensuring that review recommendations are clear and deliverable.
- **Deputy FE Commissioners, FE Advisers, SFC Advisers and the Joint Area Review Delivery Unit.** Deputy FE Commissioners provide oversight and direction, supported by the team of FE and SFC Advisers and the Joint Area Review Delivery Unit (cross agency team).
- **Regional Schools Commissioner.** Engaging with post-16 academies, free schools and UTCs at the beginning and end of the process, feeding in local knowledge of issues or opportunities relating to provision. They will work closely with LAs. Member of Steering Group.
- **Education and Skills Funding Agencies.** Facilitating the review through data analysis and presentation, using funding levers to support the process and implementation of recommendations. The Transaction Unit will support restructuring and will be engaged towards the end of the process to ensure that all options are considered. Members of Steering Group.
- **BIS, DFE and wider government to include BIS Local.** Set the national context within which the review takes place. May be members of Steering Group or may be represented through the funding agencies.
- **Ofsted.** Will provide the steering group with summary and analysis of inspection findings for colleges and all other post-16 providers in the area covered by the review.
- **Others.** Support is available from a range of organisations to include the Education and Training Foundation, JISC, the AoC, NUS. HEIs can opt in and are advised to do so from the start of the process if they wish to be involved.

Appendix 2: Local Authority Engagement in Area Reviews

Local authorities will need to make an input at the first steering group meeting on the local area, its needs and the challenges that can be addressed through the review. This should include:

- **Demographics and deprivation:** Do you have information, data and intelligence that would be helpful in showing the local demographic picture for the age 16-19 cohort: declines, rises, and deprivation? For example:
 - What is the picture of decline and recovery?
 - Are there housing or transport developments that will impact?
 - Are there variations in the pattern across the area and when does the primary surge start to move through into post-16?
 - To what degree and what assumptions are there about forecasting?
- **Participation:** Data available for the area review is based on the Statistical First Release data. Do you have data which is more timely or which adds useful detail to the basic picture presented by the SFR.
 - Do you have further data and information that would update this profile, beyond that submitted? (and what assumptions are there about forecasting?)
 - Do you have any information, based on year 11 participation and basic need data, to indicate likely demand on post-16 institutions and are there housing or transport developments that will impact on these projections?
 - Are there specific aspects that you would like to see identified through the review?
- **Local learner outcomes:** Again data used by the area review will be based on published data.
 - Do you have any concerns that you wish to raise about local learner outcomes? This should include any specific concerns about outcomes for young people with characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010.
 - Where LAs have conducted their own recent analysis of learner outcomes, such as A level performance, sharing with area review will be a helpful contribution
- **High needs post-16 provision:** Local authorities have a statutory duty around ensuring that there is sufficient suitable provision for their residents aged 16-19 and a particular duty and commission role in relation to learners with additional needs. It is therefore important that LAs come to the meetings with a view on any gaps in provision for these learners and any issues regarding quality. The data available to the area review team comprises numbers of funded places only at the initial stage and does not reflect actual delivery or the totality of the SEND offer.
 - Are there any available forecasts of SEN levels/specialisms required locally for the future?
 - Are there current gaps in provision that colleges might be able to fill – e.g. by increasing capacity in order to reduce the number of young people attending residential provision?

- Are there any particular issues around either the supply of suitable provision for SEN learners or the outcomes that you wish to mention?
 - Is there further specific points about SEND and High Needs you would like to see articulated in the review?
- **Gaps in provision:** Are there any particular gaps in provision for young people in general or in specific geographical areas?
 - What are the gaps (sector or type of provision/geography/numbers)?
 - What action have you taken so far to fill those?
 - This should include any specific concerns about outcomes for young people with characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010.
- **Configuration of provision:** Does the LA have any views on the current configuration of post-16 provision and any recommendations to improve access to learners, specialist accommodation, building condition or travel arrangements?
- **Skills:** The LA in collaboration with the LEP will be invited to present their joint analysis and conclusions on current skills needs and future priorities at the first steering group. This should either be via a slide presentation or a position statement and should address the following questions:
 - What are areas of employment growth for the area and why?
 - Where are the gaps between the current skills available and what will be needed for the future?
 - What are the keys areas of development / change that need to be considered in the review?
 - What part do you expect the colleges to play in this?

Input at the meetings

Challenge role: local authorities have a role in providing challenge on emerging options to ensure that the needs of all learners and employers will be met by any potential changes.

Schools engagement in the area review process: While JARDU will supply the base post-16 schools data, LAs and RSCs will be able to provide input on issues around schools or applications in the pipeline for new post-16 provision. It will be important to agree early who writes to the schools/academies, whether there is potential/need to run any schools engagement sessions with representative leads and how the feedback is collected. A suggested standard letter template will be provided when a review starts and this can be sent from LAs with responses coming into the area reviews mailbox.

Facilitating employer/council engagement: LAs and LEPs will also be able to provide some input on the employer voice and may be able to facilitate engagement of employer groups, district councils etc. where this will be helpful to providing insight into local needs.