



HILLINGDON
LONDON

Education & Children's Services Policy Overview Committee 2010/11

14-19 Education and Training

Members of the Committee:

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Cllr Brian Crowe (Vice Chairman)
Cllr Judith Cooper
Cllr Peter Curling (Labour Lead)
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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Review of 14-19 Education and Training

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CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD



I am delighted to present this review on 14 – 19 Education & Training. The aim of the review was to look at the uptake and success of the Diploma which had been implemented in 2009.

The review also looked at other options that were available to students that sat alongside the diplomas.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank the external witnesses and officers for participating in the review. The Committee hopes that the recommendations can be supported by Cabinet to improve the service provided to students.

Cllr Catherine Dann

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Conclusions

The Committee reviewed the success of the diploma and the other options available that could be undertaken by students.

It was clear from the information provided by the witnesses that there had been a lot of work undertaken since the implementation of the 14 – 19 strategy in 2009. The Committee found that from the witness sessions they felt that there were some areas where some improvements could be made. These were in relation to the use of S106 monies, ensuring that schools and colleges provided impartial information on options. Also that the GCSE equivalent for Diplomas was not used as a tool for students making their career choices and to ensure that information was available to enable students to prepare adequately for progressing to the next stage of education/training after they have reached post compulsory school age.

Recommendations to Cabinet

- 1. That officers provide an update to Members on the National Review that is currently being undertaken on vocational education when the review has been completed.**
- 2. That the GCSE equivalent for diplomas is not used as the only tool for students in making their choices in the course of their compulsory Education and that all pathways were explained to them.**
- 3. That officers look at ways to ensure that impartial advice is provided to students to enable them to make an informed decision on their education path.**
- 4. To ensure that sufficient impartial information, advice and guidance is available to enable students to prepare adequately for progressing to the next stage of education/training after they have reached post compulsory school age.**

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

There has been an attempt by successive recent British Governments to promote and expand vocational education. In the 1970s, the Business and Technology Education Council was founded to confer higher education awards, many of which certified vocational learning, particularly for further education colleges. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Conservative Government promoted the Youth Training Scheme, National Vocational Qualifications and General National Vocational Qualifications. However, over time youth training became marginalised as the proportion of young people staying on in full-time education increased.

In 1994, publicly-funded Modern Apprenticeships were introduced to provide "quality training on a work-based (educational) route". Numbers of apprentices have grown in recent years and both the former and the current Governments consider apprenticeships as a "mainstream" part of England's education system.

Vocational qualifications are seen as technical and are therefore linked to trades and the perception by some is they are second in importance to academic qualifications. For that reason all students capable of doing academic qualifications were pushed down that academic route.

The former Government sought to provide a qualification that would marry the established divide between those that took academic education and those that took vocational education with the creation of the Diploma. This was to be a vocational learning that was applied, through input from an employer; a qualification that would be able to show that it had the rigours of academic education. At the same time, changes to 14-19 education in 2009 were to address criticism around the lack of rigour of existing qualifications felt to be inherent in GCSEs and A Levels, and the need for skills and training. The latter was in response to the Leitch Report¹ that stressed the need for skills and training in an increasingly competitive global environment. Therefore there have been not only changes in A Levels and GCSEs, but the introduction of new qualifications, the Diploma and Functional Skills².

What is a Diploma?

A Diploma is a qualification for 14 to 19 year-olds, designed to offer a more practical, hands-on way of gaining the essential skills employers and universities look for. It's aimed at increasing the choices available to young people and encouraging them to stay in education for longer.

¹ The Leitch Report was a Review commissioned in 2004 to examine the UK's optimal skills mix in order to maximise economic growth, productivity and social justice. In addition, the Review was asked by the Chancellor in Budget 2006 to consider how best to integrate employment and skills services.

² Functional skills are qualifications that have been developed to improve the country's literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

Such new programmes of learning have had variable success rates. However, it should be remembered that all programmes differ considerably in complexity and therefore the strategies for delivery have had to be different. Both Foundation Learning³ and the Diplomas have been run through a central network which has included the Local Authority, local providers, the Education Business Partnership, and Connexions⁴.

Clear plans and protocols have been drawn up for both these programmes of collaborative learning. The effect of this is that learning for these programmes can be varied and personalised to the requirements and interest of the learner. For this reason, impartial information, advice and guidance on careers, education and employment with which young people are provided and learner plans are an integral part of planning this strategy.

Effective collaborative and proactive partnerships are required for these programmes to be successful. Partnerships may be borough-wide e.g. Foundation Learning or localised e.g. some Diploma and Young Apprenticeship delivery. Partners are likely to be drawn from the higher education, work-based learning, business and voluntary sectors, as well as from the school and Further Education sectors.

The diploma has been designed with a large input from employers. It is sector specific and contains a considerable amount of theoretic as well as vocational learning. It was hoped that it would bridge the divide between vocation and academic education. There are 14 Diplomas which are taught at levels 1, 2 and 3 relating to the following sectors: Engineering; Travel and Tourism; Public Services; Hospitality; Construction and the Built Environment; IT; Creative and Media; Retail; Sport and Active Leisure; Hair and Beauty; Business; Manufacturing; Society Health and Development; Environment and Land Based. There are also 3 'academic diplomas' in Humanities; Science; and Languages to be taught at level 3. Development of these last Diplomas due to be available from September 2011 have now been stopped by the Coalition Government after the elections in 2010, pending a review of this area.

14 – 19 Strategic Plan

In order to enhance the skills of the population to deal with the job market of the future, new legislation was introduced in 2009 entitled Raising Expectations. This raised the age of compulsory participation in education and training to 17 by 2010, and to 18 by 2015. The Coalition Government has recently confirmed its intention to continue with this policy and there still needs to be pathways to maximise progression for 14-19 year olds, and encourage their attainment and participation at all levels, particularly in a more challenging economic environment where employment for young people is more difficult to obtain.

³ Foundation Learning is the national suite of learning for 14-19 year old learners working predominantly at entry level 1.

⁴ Offers advice on education, careers, housing, money, health and relationships for 13-19 year olds in the UK.

The best way to do this is by making sure that all young people have access to learning programmes that are appropriate and personalised for them, whether this is via an academic or vocational pathway.

This objective underpins the Council's 14-19 Strategic Plan that aims to match learning to the borough's local employment needs and the wishes and requirements of young people. The 14-19 Strategic Group⁵ also plans to bring in curriculum changes and provide employer engagement for vocational pathways. This group works closely with the Youth Service and Connexions to ensure that information, advice and guidance is informed and embedded in learning programmes to achieve greater participation amongst young people. The 14-19 Strategic Group has selected the following five priorities to enable this:

- participation and engagement
- collaboration
- partnership
- attainment
- quality
- progression

It should be noted that many different qualifications can be taken together by young people. They are designed to fit into a young person's timetable, meaning that learning is personalised. For example a diploma student can take additional GCSEs (at level 2) or A Level (level 3) as part of their studies.

Reason for the Review

The reason for the review was to look at the success or otherwise of Diplomas for 14-19 year old and to look at other alternatives to Diplomas

The Committee wished to review the provision in Hillingdon Secondary schools; Uxbridge College and work based learning providers to ensure there are learning possibilities for young people that meet not only local needs and the requirements of young people, but for those young people from other boroughs that choose to travel to learn in Hillingdon. It should be noted that **Hillingdon is a net importer of students**, and as funding follows the learner this is beneficial for both our learning providers and our young people learning in Hillingdon.

⁵ The 14-19 Strategic Group is led by the Local Authority and membership consists of Uxbridge College, Headteacher representatives, Adult and Community Learning, Brunel and Buckingham New Universities, Training Providers, The Education Business Partnership, Job Centre Plus, HAVS, The Integrated Youth Service, Connexions and Economic Regeneration.

The objective of the group is to ensure the opportunities for all young people in terms of education and training in Hillingdon for both residents and those that travel into Hillingdon to learn.

In addition, the right mix of provision in the borough means that young people are more likely to remain participating in education or training and therefore less likely to become Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). Lastly, the committee wished to look at actions to enhance the skills of our own residents to provide the level 3 skills and knowledge that is required by local employers.

Finally, the Committee wished to look at the take up of diplomas, their progress and what lessons had been learnt.

Aim of the Review

To provide information to the Committee on other education and training choices that young people are making between the ages of 14 and 19 to include: Foundation Learning, Apprenticeships and GCSEs/A Levels

- review aspects of the 14-19 curriculum, in particular Diplomas, in terms of progress and lessons learnt.
- Consider how far Hillingdon has implemented these changes and consider current plans.
- Look at other routes into learning and training that young people are making.

METHODOLOGY

The Policy and Overview Committee received reports, presentations and heard from witnesses.

Documentation

- Information on the strategy for delivery of diplomas and other 14-19 education and training pathways.
- Evidence of national and local policy and practice.

Connections with Other Strategies

Other strategies and developments which impacted on this review included:

- Council Plan 2007 – 2010: *“A borough where children and young people are healthy, safe and supported where our young people are valued properly educated and given the opportunity to thrive”.*
- Inclusion strategy 2009 -11
- Outreach from special schools plan
- Building schools for 21st century –Strategy for Change part Inclusive secondary schools information gathering April 2009
- Inclusion Development plans
- Primary Schools Strategy
- Access Strategy (2008-11)
- Primary Capital Programme
- Inclusion review report
- Disabled Children’s Strategy (2009-11)

- Legislation and Guidance
- Hillingdon's Education and Children's Services Policy Overview Committee's review into "*Hillingdon Early Years Strategy 2006 – 2015*".

As part of their review, the Policy Overview Committee at its meetings held in July, September, October and November 2010 received reports, presentations and heard from a range of witnesses:

Alison Moore	14 – 19 Manager, LBH
Jo Harper	Headteacher of Rosedale, lead school for the Hospitality and Engineering Diplomas
Laraine Smith	Principal of Uxbridge College
Peter Sale	Hillingdon Training Ltd
Tom Murphy	Head of Youth & Connexions, LBH
6 Young People	that had undertaken Diplomas

The findings from this review are presented in the following section of this report.

EVIDENCE & FINDINGS

The following evidence was gathered at the witness sessions, which took place at the Committee meetings in June, July, September and October 2010:

Uxbridge College

The review was informed that Uxbridge College offered an Engineering Diploma which was taught at Level 3. The first Cohort had finished and all 10 students had been successful. There were many different elements to the qualification and students had to pass all elements to gain the Diploma.

The retention rate on this qualification was 90%, but it was difficult to evaluate against national benchmarks as Diplomas were new qualifications. Support was expected from awarding bodies and some elements of the material for this qualification was not always of the highest standard.

A first Cohort of Students for the Business School had started last year. The College had attempted to recruit students for the Hair and Beauty Diploma but had been unsuccessful.

The development of Diplomas was the last Government's attempt to bridge the divide between vocation and academic education and which would, with time, replace other tried and tested qualifications. The development of further Diplomas had now been stopped by the new Coalition Government.

The review was informed that the present numbers taking Diplomas was sustainable but if the numbers dropped it would not be sustainable for the College. Diplomas were an alternative to GCSEs and were beneficial for those students who were more practical than academic.

The original intention for functional skills was for them to be compulsory for all students at Key Stage 4, and their purpose was to address concerns from employers that young people were not numerate, literate or proficient in IT, in spite of achieving GCSEs in English, Maths and IT. This had now been reversed leaving the Diploma as the only qualification which required the extra hurdle of all three functional skill qualifications to be passed in order to achieve a Diploma.

The principal of Uxbridge College informed the review that the scale of curriculum change for 16-19 year old had been the largest ever known and had led to a system that was too complicated. When asked about Diplomas the Principal felt that Diplomas would not be replaced but anticipated that they would be a niche market.

Apprenticeships

Reference was made to Apprenticeships which were becoming increasingly popular. Apprenticeships were work based qualifications and they were offered at two levels:

- Level 2 qualification, comprising National Vocational Qualification, technical certificate and key skills
- Advanced Apprenticeships were Level 3 qualifications.

Members were informed of the major Government drive to expand the Apprenticeship route, with employers encouraged to seek funding from the Government. Uxbridge College sometimes waived the employers' contribution to the Apprenticeships but it was possible that the new Coalition Government may possibly take Apprenticeships away if employers did not contribute funding.

Foundation Learning

Reference was made to Foundation Learning and Members were informed that this could be taught at both Key Stages 4 and 5 and provided a mix of qualifications for learners of lower abilities. Skills taught included social personal development and team working, which were pre-requisites to prepare students to progress towards Level 1 and subsequently Level 2.

In relation to elements of learning and teaching of Diplomas, the review was informed that courses on average consisted of 15/17 hours of teaching time. A large element of learning was for students to undertake independent learning with guided learning from teachers. E-Learning programmes were used by students.

Rosedale College

The review was informed that Rosedale College had started planning for Diplomas in 2006. Construction and Engineering Diplomas were the first undertaken and involved a number of schools. Diplomas had brought practitioners closer together to ensure consistency of approach.

On the Level 2 Engineering Diploma there was confidence that there would be 80% success rate, but it was frustrating that a student would fail if one element of the Diploma was not passed.

With regard to Functional Skills, Rosedale College was looking closely at making teaching at secondary schools more personalised.

The point was made that the early success of Diplomas needed to be built on. However, the qualification was too complicated and it appeared that the Coalition Government was not in favour of these qualifications.

Discussion took place around learning skills for Diplomas and how improvements could be made to the qualification. Members were informed that there was quality assurance in the College, with students regularly communicating with external moderators and assessors working with the College to ensure the right units for the qualification were being adequately delivered. The quality of the qualification was not the issue; it was about making the Diploma more attractive to students. Greater publicity was needed on courses that were successful and this would increase the number of students.

BTEC National Qualification

Reference was made to the BTEC National qualification and the review was informed that this was a good qualification which the staff of Rosedale College were used to teaching and was a good alternative to a Diploma. Another option could be a combination of a BTEC and a Diploma qualification.

Reference was made to the Diploma Steering Group (DSG) on Diploma development and the reporting structure for Diplomas. The review was informed that the Coalition Government had changed the rules with regard to 14-19 partnerships. In future the LEA would have freedom to decide on the direction of travel. The 14-19 Strategic Group had decided to retain the DSG, but would change its structure.

Discussion took place about Engineering Diploma students who travelled to learn at Rosedale College and the implications this had on the support they required within their own school for Functional Skills. The review was informed that the College was working closely with the Diploma Steering Group and provided extra support for these students.

Hillingdon Training Ltd

Hillingdon Training Ltd was an organisation, which delivered high quality work-related training for the benefit of residents and employers in the Borough.

The organisation provided alternative curriculum training such as Apprenticeships and practically anything which involved 14-19 year olds. The committee was informed that 30 apprentices had benefited from the scheme so far.

Engagement Programme

The Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme was provided by Hillingdon Training and was a short course designed to provide a programme of education for young people who had been identified as being at risk of dropping out of education. This programme involved a vocational element, basic skills, personal social and development units as well as enhancement activities. There were 10 schools involved in this programme and funding was through the LEA and the individual schools.

For 2010 there were 125 students on this programme which included courses on Construction, Motor Vehicle, Children's Care, Sports and Retail and

Business. Last year 60% of students achieved at least one qualification, with some students achieving four qualifications.

Young Apprenticeship Programme

Hillingdon Training also provided the Young Apprenticeship programme which had 280 students on the programme. 80% of students achieved Young Apprenticeships and 90% achieved full qualification.

From September 2010, work based learning providers and FE Colleges had to deliver Foundation Learning programmes in place of the existing Level 1 and Entry Level provision. A number of schools would also need to introduce Foundation Learning in partnership with Hillingdon Training and Uxbridge College through the Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme.

The review was informed that there was a drive from Government on promoting Apprenticeships and Hillingdon Training was hoping to have 135 Apprenticeships. Government funding had been diverted from Train to Gain⁶ into Apprenticeships. Reference was made to around 15 Apprentices who were employed by the Council with 13 of them having been trained by Hillingdon Training.

The review acknowledged that the Council and its partners had a key role in promoting work based learning and Apprenticeships, and work experience.

Section 106 Agreements Money

Discussion took place on the initiative which the Council had introduced in relation to the use of Section 106 Agreements money. Some Planning permission given by the Council's Planning Committees contained conditions relating to developers making a commitment to training as part of the Section 106 Agreements. Reference was made to the training of construction workers through Hillingdon Training. At Abbotsfield School 100 16 year olds were undertaking construction training.

The review felt that further investigations should take place with regard to Section 106 monies and officers review the mechanism for seeking Section 106 monies to ensure that opportunities for Apprenticeships and other training are secured for young people.

Connexions

Connexions provided a strategic approach to information, advice, guidance and support to all 13-19 year olds. It also provided a One Stop Shop designed to offer young people in the borough a single point where they could access a wide range of services.

⁶ Train to Gain is meeting the demands of employers from all sectors to improve the skills of their employees as a route to improving their business performance.

To ensure quality information was provided there were two key areas, this was to provide careers advice and information and guidance. Careers education in schools gave young people the knowledge to understand what was available and provided support to help them make the choices most suitable for the career they wanted to follow.

Providers

In relation to information, advice and guidance, this was provided by a specialist provider CfBT Education Trust⁷, who provided a range of Education Services. CfBT Education Trust has 36 full time advisers that work with teenagers through schools to provide bespoke information. This service was delivered via a formula providing different levels of service to different schools.

Personal Advisers and Link Advisers worked with the young people and their parents to support the choices they make. The advisers were fully up to speed on the current trends and changes, providing up to date impartial information as to what was available.

When Diplomas were first introduced, Connexions worked with all its partners to develop how the information on Diplomas would be communicated to young people. The work provided by Connexions was to national standards, which were clear and measured. Benchmarking was also carried out to ensure that what was being provided was both accurate and impartial. This enabled young people to make informed choices and reduced the number of young people outside of education/training.

Not in Education/Employment or Training (NEETS)

The current number of NEETs was low in Hillingdon and it was hoped these levels would be sustained and reduced. If it was identified that young people had made the wrong choices they would be monitored and support provided to help them back onto the right track:

3 Monthly 16-18 NEET Adjustment Figures	NOV 10 - JAN 11 Average	NOV 09 - JAN 10 Average	NOV 08-JAN 09 Average
Brent	5.0%	4.6%	4.6%
Ealing	4.4%	4.9%	5.4%
Hammersmith & Fulham	5.2%	5.6%	6.0%
Harrow	2.7%	2.9%	3.2%
Hillingdon	4.6%	5.4%	5.3%
Hounslow	4.6%	4.7%	5.5%

The review was informed that it was the ambition of Connexions to make sure that all young people did receive impartial advice. Connexions ensured as far

⁷ CfBT Education Trust is a leading education consultancy and service organisation providing education for public benefit both in the UK and internationally.

as possible that advisers in schools were given access to young people to provide them with impartial guidance. If advisers became aware of any issues in regards to impartiality of information they would alert Connexions to the potential problems.

The review was advised that the service provided by CfBT was monitored and was linked to quality standards. When the tender process was undertaken there were 30 expressions of interest and out of those, 4 submitted bids.

The review was informed that the number of NEETs of 16-18 year olds equated to 4 – 5 % but this was not a stable picture.

Officers should examine whether Hillingdon can reduce its numbers of Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETS) by taking account of best practice in other boroughs in regard to specific categories of NEETS.

Career Information

The review was informed that from year 10, career information was provided through schools. There were no concerns regarding the provision of impartial information to students. If it became apparent advice was not impartial this would be raised directly with the school concerned.

The review was informed that that information on the choices made and where the young people had ended up was provided to the 14 – 19 strategic group. Where providers felt that information was not right or not balanced this was looked into.

The review was further informed that the choices made by young people were monitored. This included information on how they had participated and how the courses had worked for them.

Students benefited in making choices if good quality advice and guidance was provided to them. In relation to Academies, the review was advised that schools were actively encouraged to provide information. Connexions worked with every school to influence the nature of the information provided and the Schools were advised of what was expected from them.

The review was advised that within the constraints of the current legislation, schools were required when inspected by Ofsted to show that impartial careers education was provided in partnership with Connexions. Connexions do not presently have an input into Ofsted inspections.

The review was informed that the career / destination that young people had undertaken at 16 – 18 was tracked. There were a number of individual underlying issues that could indicate that wrong career choices had been made by the young people. When tracked by the personal advisers information was obtained and any issues the young people faced were resolved within resources. This enabled the Council to learn from the barriers that might face young people in following their chosen choices.

The review was advised that disengagement of students from their chosen course increased with the age of a young person or the period of time that they had been out of Employment, Education or Training.

14 – 19 Review of Vocational and Educational Training

The committee was provided with a brief summary of the recently commissioned National Review of vocational and educational training which was to report back to the Department of Education by Spring 2011. The purpose of this review was to consider how to improve progression, participation and skills. This review had a wide scope and included the following:

- Funding for vocational education
- Institutional suitability
- Role of the third sector
- Who should bear the cost of developing qualifications
- How to benchmark vocational education
- Deciding who would be the target audience for vocational education and the suitable age for young people to take this up
- What should underpin the content structure and teaching methods
- The report would not look at individual qualifications

The review would be overarching with the final report being received in March 2011. There would be tensions in Post 16 as provision would need to be made to ensure that leavers had the knowledge they needed to make decisions about further education and training. Funding would be tight and would not take into account inflation. There would be a high national increase and an increase in pupil numbers. The policy of Raising the Participation Age is now agreed, but funding per pupil is likely to decrease. The removal of the Education Maintenance Allowance has been replaced by a reduced fund called Enhanced Learner Support Fund.

Recommendation 1 - That officers provide an update on the National Review that is currently being undertaken on vocational education when the review has been completed.

The review was advised that the Adult Education Service was being reduced and that young people would need to be in education before the age of 18. Once young people reached 19 they would not be funded.

Apprenticeships would help in developing a route back into education by providing training. There may be an impact from the raising of the school leaving age to 18.

In connection with the Raising of the Participation Age, the review was advised that young people would not necessarily have to be in school for some sort of training to be provided. It was unclear how funding would work in relation to foundation learning. A programme would be drawn up, which would draw on the

experience of different providers. The Foundation learning group currently consisted of 8 schools, Uxbridge College and Hillingdon Training Ltd.

Functional Skills

The review was advised that in relation to Functional Skills (FS) Maths had been a long standing area where some schools had expert staff; ICT as indicated had not been fully timetabled.

Provision of Maths and English was easier than that of ICT and from September 2010 FS would be embedded in English, Maths and ICT. The borough Advisers in English, Maths and IT had been working with schools and they are aware that they need to address FS within the delivery of the GCSE.

Diploma students may not get the support they need on FS within their home school and additional support was being provided for them. Better communication was developing between schools due to the protocol agreements. These protocols drawn up by the Diploma Support Group made sure that students had a learning plan that made it clear which learning institution and teacher was responsible for FS delivery.

Of the ICT courses offered in schools at KS4 and KS5, no school is offering GCSE, but all are opting for the vocational option, which assumed that FS was embedded within the qualification. There had been little discrete timetabling of lessons being offered to pupils doing Functional Skills in ICT. However, in some schools Functional Skills in this subject was being taught via project work.

Within Uxbridge College, Engineering Diploma students had been given additional support with their key skills. This had been successful and all students entered for their Diploma had achieved the full qualification.

Some Foundation Learning programmes are incorporating Functional Skills at Entry or Level 1. Other learners, e.g. Key Stage 4 Engagement may take Functional Skills as part of their programme or through school-based delivery. The Foundation Learning Implementation Group is reviewing the provision of Functional Skills delivery across the borough.

The review was informed that success sharing was taking place across different sites, sharing experiences of A level subjects, which was standard across all schools. Routes taken by students would affect funding but this was not led by the Local Authority.

Reference was made in relation to funding for Further Education which was to be stopped in certain subjects and in the case of Higher Education was to be reduced. Hillingdon had very good providers in the way of Uxbridge College and Hillingdon Training Ltd.

The review was advised that the biggest challenge in introducing providers for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities was to make sure that the places needed were available. At post 16 providers work with Connexions and the Local Authority to provide an assessment of the needs required by that

young person to allow him or her to access their education or training. The Authority commissions that education.

The review was informed that where a student attended a school, which was not their home school a payment was made to the school the student was attending one day a week. This was a decision made by an individual school and was carried out through inter school arrangements. Vyners and Douay Martyrs Schools currently have a student swap system in place.

The review was provided with information from 6 students on their experience of Diploma courses. They were from Rosedale College, Bishop Ramsey School, Harlington Community School, Barnhill School and Uxbridge College.

Career Choices

The review was informed that information had been provided through information packs, option evenings and exploring options with their teachers and parents. Once they had decided on the course they wanted to do they applied, were interviewed and accepted onto their courses. Those who travelled to Rosedale College for their diploma course attended every Tuesday.

Members were informed by the students that the diploma courses they were undertaking were equivalent to 7½ GCSEs and that this had influenced the path they had taken.

<p>Recommendation 2 - That the GCSE equivalent for diplomas is not used as the only tool for students in making their choices in the course of their compulsory education and that all pathways were explained to them.</p>
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The student undertaking the hospitality diploma advised the review that he wanted to be a chef, another student wanted to do mechanical engineering, another wanted to do railway engineering and the other student was not sure at this stage, which avenue he wanted to pursue.

Completion of Diploma

The committee was informed by the students that they were advised of the pathways that were open to them following the completion of the diploma. They had been provided with information, which gave them a better understanding of engineering and the different areas that they could consider. The students advised the committee that the options had been explained and they were happy with the information they had been given.

The students were unsure whether they would consider an apprenticeship after completing their diploma.

Advantages of the Diploma

The review was informed by the students that by taking the diploma route they felt they would be better placed to get a job and would be more confident at

interviews. If GCSEs included practical work the Diploma route would not have necessarily been the route they would have chosen.

With regard to practical work undertaken on the courses the review was informed that the students on the engineering course had built a polystyrene plane, a metal nose cone for the plane, repaired a go kart, made a buggy and had worked on electrical circuits. Reference was made to the different tools and machinery they had used e.g. lathe, power tools etc. In regards to the hospitality diploma, the review was informed by one student that 3 small tasks had been undertaken so far and that he would be cooking a 3 course meal in 2 hours in the near future.

Experiences of Uxbridge College Students.

One of the Uxbridge College students had come from John Kelly School in Neasden and advised the review that he had gone down the diploma route as he was unsure which sector of engineering he wanted to go into. He advised the review that he had carried out his own research and found that he would be able to undertake Diploma Level 3 at Uxbridge College. He applied for the course and was accepted.

Another student advised the meeting that he had at been at Rosedale College and had not performed as well as expected with his exams. He had looked at engineering courses at Uxbridge College, applied and his application was accepted. The course was a good course and covered a wide variety of engineering. The course changed daily and he felt confident in the course he was now doing.

One of the students advised that as an alternative he had looked at a BTEC Course but that the exams he had were not good enough for entry to this course. Alternative courses and colleges had been considered but they only did electrical engineering and this was not the route he wanted to go down. On finishing this diploma he hoped to go to University to study a Civil Engineering.

The review was informed that there were 6 or 7 pathways that could have been followed but Uxbridge College was the best option for the diploma they wanted to study. There had been slight pressure at the time to remain in their schools but after undertaking their own research they had the confidence to move on. Some students had remained but they felt that more advice would have been helpful to enable others to make other choices. The students advised the review that they were in the process of looking and applying for University place.

As shown from the evidence provided by the students it was clear that there were issues around advice and guidance. It also showed that there were pressures placed on young people to remain at their home school to continue their education. Some students would have the ability to look at other courses

outside of their home school and there were concerns as to whether impartial advice and guidance was being provided.

In relation to the higher education students it was clear that they had looked for Universities that they could move to once their current Diploma course had finished. Clearly this related to the quality of advice that they were being given to help them move on to the next stage of their higher education.

Recommendation 3 - That officers look at ways to ensure that impartial advice is provided to students to enable them to make an informed decision on their education path.

The review was informed that the course being undertaken was equivalent to A Levels. With a distinction, a place at a good University would be a possibility. The students had in liaison with the careers adviser at the college carried out their own research to find the Universities that were available to them.

Recommendation 4 - To ensure that sufficient impartial information, advice and guidance is available to enable students to prepare adequately for progressing to the next stage of education/training after they have reached post compulsory school age.

In answer to a question asked in relation to the number of students on the course they were doing members were informed that in the first year there were 19 students on the course and the second year there were 16.

The students felt that the course was good and could not see what could be changed to make it more popular. It would have been more helpful if further information was available on the courses for each college.

Conclusions from the Student Witness Session

In conclusion the committee agreed that from the information provided by the witnesses it was apparent that the younger students enjoyed the practical side of the course. Members had concerns as to whether the students were receiving the right support. It was felt that there was a weakness in two areas in that maths was not being taught in the first year and students are only examined on the specific topics taught in the classroom.

The committee recognised the age difference between the students studying at Rosedale College and Uxbridge College and the greater confidence from the Uxbridge College students. It was felt there needed to be further enquiries made on how far the exam results in relation to what was taught around the syllabus as there was a risk this would become narrow.

Members raised issues around the frequency of the retake of exams on the diploma and how this was handled. The diploma courses needed to show that all aspects of engineering were being covered at a level and depth that would enable the students to move onto University if this was the route they wanted to follow.

Disappointment was expressed that students had focused on moving to University and not given consideration to other routes e.g. Apprenticeships. It was encouraging that the students did not see any problems with having to travel to other schools for their diploma courses. Concerns were raised as to whether the advice being given to students by the schools as part of the careers options was impartial. There were also concerns that the GCSE equivalent for diplomas was not to be used as a tool to take the diploma route at the cost of other pathways.

Further concerns were raised about the information that was being provided on the courses. It was important that the courses provided the right information and critical that the courses encouraged students to participate in education. It was felt that the students were not focusing on where they wanted to be on the conclusion of the diploma course. From the information given to the review it to whether the courses were doing what they were supposed to do.

Examination for Diplomas

The Committee was advised that with the diploma if the pass was not good enough you would be able to re-take the first or second year of the course. In regard to the content of the course the students could only be questioned on the work they had undertaken in the class. Students had to be in attendance for at least 85% of the lessons and assignments needed to be completed within 2 weeks of being set.

Consortia

There was discussion about consortia⁸ which might justify more emphasis. The relevant points were that there was a greater need for co-operation between institutions, provision of adequate support to pupils, the importance of time-tabling and travel arrangements.

The review raised concerns about the viability of providing small sixth forms and that given the new priority in regard to apprenticeships there should be greater importance on finding adequate employers.

Routes available for 14 – 19 Education

⁸ There are 3 Consortia in Hillingdon, following geographical lines:

The purpose of the Consortia is to organise and share out resources, expertise and to maximise opportunities for efficiencies.

- i. the North Consortia consists of Bishop Ramsey, Queensmead, Ruislip High, Haydon, Harefield Academy, Northwood
- ii. the Middle Consortia consists of Swakeleys, Vyners The Douay Martyrs, Bishopshalt, Abbotsfield, Uxbridge High
- iii. the South Consortia consists of Harlington, Stockley Academy, Mellow Lane, Rosedale College, Barnhill, Guru Nanak
- iv. The following work across all 3 Consortia: Uxbridge College, E&HEBP, ACL, Brunel, WBL, Connexions, Bucks New University

It was asked whether it would be possible to provide a diagrammatical or list to indicate the routes that are available for 14-19 education, if this was not possible a list or summary would be useful. A list of the National Qualifications in England is attached as an Appendix to this report.