

# london

bulletin

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LONDON  
COUNCILS

# Raising expectations

The government has set in motion plans to overhaul the education system and London boroughs are preparing to take the lead in improving outcomes for all of London's young people. **Laura Compton reports**

“ These proposals have the potential to ensure no young person is excluded from suitable training and education ”

In a fast changing globalised economy, raising the aspirations and skill levels of the UK's young people to engage with opportunities within the national and international workforce is a top priority for those involved in education and training.

Currently, the UK, and London in particular, has a high number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and too many leave school with few or no qualifications.

Part of the Department for Children, Schools and Families' (DCSF's) response to such unwelcome statistics has been to propose radical reforms for 14-19 year old education.

Last year, the government published its white paper, 'Raising expectations: Enabling the system to deliver', and is now working with education providers on the next steps to delivery.

The changes focus on four key learning routes, tailored to the individual needs of the learner. These will include: traditional qualifications, such as GCSEs and A-levels; diplomas; apprenticeships; and foundation learning tiers, with an entitlement to study one of the progression pathways.

The timetable for each route varies but, coinciding with the proposed raising of education participatory age to 18, 2015 has been set by the government as the deadline to fully provide all young people with the widest possible learning choices.

In June 2007, the government also announced the transfer of responsibility for 16-19 education from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to local authorities with effect from September 2010.

In 2008/09, local authorities will track LSC processes to gain a better understanding of 16-18 year old commissioning, with 2009/10 acting as a transition year before the final handover.

London Councils has already submitted its response to the reorganisation of 14-19 year old education, outlining specific challenges for the capital, and has created a pan-London Regional Planning Group to support 16-19 commissioning across borough boundaries.

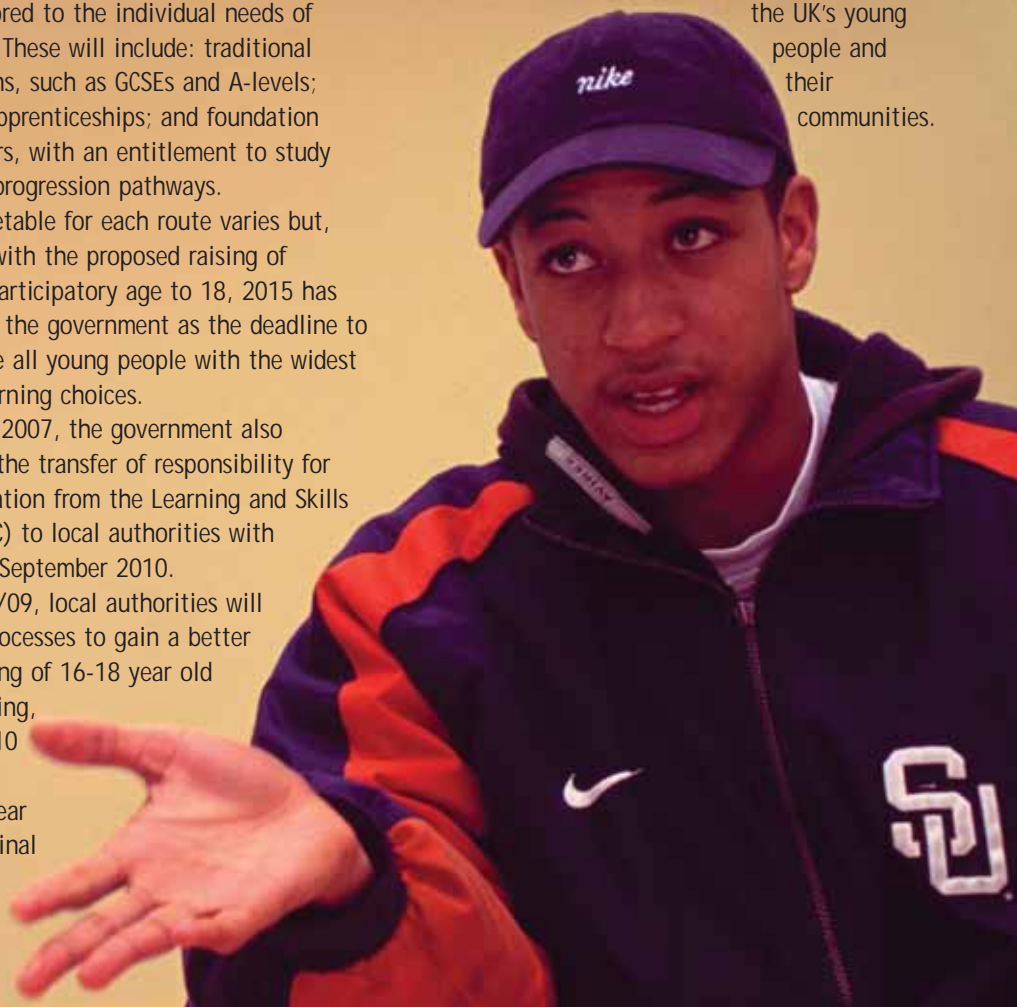
The key learning routes will be underpinned by the new secondary curriculum, introduced in September last year, which will take into account the greater flexibility from 16 onwards.

With greater choice available, providing the right information and advice for young people is essential. Services for young people will become better integrated and careers advice and personal tutoring will undergo developments to help young people engage with the options from an earlier age.

From the post-qualification perspective, it is also vital that changes to 14-19 year-old education consider the needs of the UK and global workforce, and employers have already played a lead role in developing new and existing qualifications, to ensure skills are relevant and available locally.

These proposals have the potential to ensure no young person is excluded from suitable training and education. To achieve this, local authorities will need to take the lead in delivering a more integrated, tailored and rewarding education for 14-19 year olds, providing greater opportunities than ever for

the UK's young people and their communities.



# Making the most of London's potential

Bringing together its responsibilities for educational achievement and economic and social well-being, London's local government is enthusiastically taking up the challenge of building a 21st century workforce for the capital, says **Cllr James Kempton**

The transfer of 16-19 education and skills from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to boroughs in 2010 is the most significant "localism" initiative local government has seen for many years. Preparations are now well underway.

London Councils is leading this process through a new London 14-19 Regional Planning Group (RPG). This is overseeing both the transition arrangements and developing a blueprint for local authorities in London to follow.

Significantly, rather than respond borough by borough, its first detailed submission to government was signed off by every council in London – demonstrating the degree of joint working which is taking place.

The RPG represents the full range of stakeholders involved in delivering on this crucial agenda, including employers, local government, the LSC and education and training providers.

Building a world-class education system is not just about exam passes and qualifications, we also need to ensure young people acquire the skills needed to access the jobs that will be available again as this great world city emerges from the current economic gloom.

The fact that 30 per cent of Londoners were not in work even during the recent boom years, serves as a stark reminder of the challenges we face. That is why our ambition needs to be more than just take over the LSC's objectives and processes and apply them at borough level.

As the recession bites, all councils are rightly looking at emergency support packages. But we will also need to be planning for the future, and what better way to do that than investing in giving young people the best start to their careers.



We aim to create a system which allows all young people to meet their potential, through a much wider curriculum, including apprenticeships and diplomas – providing London's employers with a better skilled local workforce.

We are developing a localised and less bureaucratic model than the original national blueprint, with authorities driving commissioning decisions, based on the needs of the local economy and young people.

Because of the high degree of young people's travel to learn mobility in London, we have rejected the government's proposal for sub-regional arrangements. The RPG will collate local plans into a regional commissioning plan to guarantee learner choice across London. It will also oversee neutrality in commissioning decisions and build in quality controls.

An early innovation we have introduced in partnership with the LSC is the joint borough/LSC "dry run" 2009/10 commissioning process.

Under this scheme, all boroughs will have the chance to shadow and contribute to the LSC 16-19 commissioning process as a dry run for when local government takes this on the following year. This is a great opportunity to share expertise, build capacity and road test the systems we are developing. Councils who wish to can be involved more intensively in the process, and about half London's authorities have signed-up to do so.

Another area that needs strengthening is the provision of independent information, advice and guidance on careers and course options. We have secured £500,000 from the Government Office for London (GoL) to develop new and improved ways of offering this service to young people in London.

Councils have signed up to creating 2,000 apprenticeships. And with TfL working with the RPG to trial using the skills needs of Crossrail as a way of driving the commissioning of 16-19 training, it is no surprise that London is being seen as the national leader in taking up these important educational and economic powers.

**Cllr James Kempton is leader of Islington council and London Councils' executive member for children and young people**



Read more about the London proposals at [www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/children/education14to19](http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/children/education14to19)

# The real apprentice

Apprenticeships are an attractive option for many young people to learn while earning, and Barking and Dagenham is ahead of the game in delivering these opportunities

Changes to delivery of 14-19 education include a commitment to ensure that by 2013 every suitably qualified young person who wants to take up an apprenticeship place will be able to do so.

London currently only provides 5 per cent of apprenticeships nationally. And with high demand for vocational skills in the capital, London Councils has proposed a target of at least 2,000 apprenticeship starts across London local authorities by 2012.

Of these, 750 places are planned for Barking and Dagenham. The council is offering 100 of these within its own services.

Teri Jewkes, apprenticeship development manager at Barking and Dagenham and herself a former apprentice, says: "Barking and



Third Avenue

Dagenham has one of the largest NEET groups in London and the council wants to provide the community with the right skills for employment in the borough.

"Apprenticeships are about getting directly involved in the work and learning on the job - this makes apprentices more sought after than those with more traditional qualifications as their skills carry forward directly into each new role"

The opportunity to learn a trade and earn a living simultaneously is a popular option for many young people.

Vicky Fox, a 17 year-old construction apprentice, is training to be a painter and decorator on a three-year placement with Enterprise, a private sector contractor that delivers repairs and maintenance services to Barking and Dagenham.

"I didn't know what I wanted to do", says Vicky. "At first, I started training in childcare but then decided I wanted more of a career.

"I think I get more help to learn on the job here than I would do at school. In 10 years' time I'd like to be painting and decorating still - there may be opportunities to find work within Enterprise, or I can go elsewhere."

# Investing in London's future

One of the toughest challenges London faces is to ensure that its young people have the skills and aspirations to build successful lives for themselves and for future generations, says **Harvey McGrath**, deputy chair of the London 14-19 regional planning group

Many of us are lucky and are brought up in households where we are encouraged or are able to gain from the education system. But so many young people in London are growing up without those aspirations or opportunities. Despite London's global success, over 400,000 children in London are living in poverty, and over 1 in 5 children in the capital live in households where nobody works.

The evidence base which the London Skills and Employment Board prepared to inform its Strategy – *London's Future* – presents some stark facts about the reality of the London labour market. Competition for jobs – with international and national migration – is high and the proportion of jobs that require higher

level skills is significantly higher in the capital than elsewhere in the country. From a low base, we are now seeing real improvements in educational attainment across London. But this needs to accelerate to ensure young people in London have the skills to compete for the predicted 50 per cent of jobs in London requiring higher level skills by 2020.

And the current economic climate will make it even harder for those young people without skills or experience of work to gain a foot hold in the labour market. As well as raising attainment and aspirations, we want to see more apprenticeship opportunities within the public and private sector as a route to skills and work. And we are also working closely with London Councils to ensure close alignment between 14-19 and adult skills strategies so that we have a shared understanding of future employment and skills needs.

**Harvey McGrath is Chair of the London Development Agency and vice chair of the London Skills and Employment Board**

