

REPORT OF THE  
**Executive Lead Member for Children's Services**  
PART II

**175. POST-16 EDUCATION IN THE GOSPORT AREA: DEVELOPMENT OF A PREFERRED OPTION**

The Executive Lead Member has approved the principles that will underpin the development of a preferred option for the future organisation of post-16 education in Gosport. He has furthermore agreed to the establishment of a project group to develop the preferred option, which will report back in December 2011 with the ambition to commence implementation from April 2012.

The Education Act 1996 requires that: a local education authority in England must secure that enough suitable education and training is provided to meet the reasonable needs of —

- (a) persons in their area who are over compulsory school age but under 19, and;
- (b) persons in their area who are aged 19 or over but under 25 and are subject to learning difficulty assessment.

The decision of the Secretary of State in July 2010 to transfer responsibility for post-16 funding, other than school 6th forms, from local authorities to the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) does not detract from what the Local Government Association has recently referred to as a "strong, strategic role [for local authorities] in overseeing the education and training offered in their local area" (LGA media release 20 July 2010).

The passing of the Education Bill currently before Parliament, anticipated by the end of the calendar year 2011, will amend the County Council's statutory duties, post-16. However as 'strategic commissioner' the County Council will retain a statutory duty relating to sufficiency of (high quality) provision, post-16, to support the raising of the participation age to 18 by 2015. This, along with the County Council's wider commitment to the Hampshire community, provides a legitimate basis on which to bring forward these proposals.

The review process being undertaken by Hampshire County Council also serves as a response to Gosport Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee's report on post-16 vocational education within the borough. This concluded that the identified deficiency in the skills level of the wider Gosport community, including attainment at 16 and 19, combined with the limited supply of high quality skills provision in Gosport, presented a major barrier to future economic growth and social cohesion.

Contact with local schools and colleges has highlighted a number of priorities in relation to post-16 provision. A consultation process ran from 18 November 2010 to 28 January 2011. In total, 12 formal responses were received.

In addition, the County Council has also met directly with representatives of the Royal Navy. As part of its commitment to the wider community, the Royal Navy has expressed a desire to be actively engaged in the review process and to contribute to the development of a preferred option.

On the basis of the consultation carried out, it was agreed that the following principles be used to underpin the development of a preferred option for the future organisation of post-16 education in Gosport:

- That the preferred option should be developed on the basis of collaboration, recognising that independent institutions are consenting to collaborate to bring about a sustainable solution that will benefit all young people and the wider community in Gosport
- That the preferred option must provide a basis for the expansion of high quality technical and vocational education at all levels, affording more young people the option to undertake their studies in Gosport. This will include expanding local capacity to deliver Apprenticeships for young people and adults.
- That the preferred option will address the future technical skills requirements of Gosport and wider South Hampshire economy, prioritising STEM subject areas and the marine and associated sectors. This could include the development of a 14-19 Gosport University Technical College (UTC) as a strategic development of the Gosport College initiative, supported by capital investment from Hampshire County Council. A lead HE partner and sector employer(s) should be identified.
- That in developing a curriculum model that supports young people's choice to participate locally, post 16, the preferred option should ensure the sustainability of the offer, providing both scale and value in the context of a reducing demographic and a reduction in post 16 unit funding.
- That formal collaborative and structural arrangements are developed between the two local FE Colleges. The proposed form of collaboration will be determined through the project group and will support the development of a coherent FE offer operating from facilities across both districts.
- That creating a local infrastructure that will support the delivery of a accessible and relevant adult skills and community learning programme.

The establishment of a project group to take forward the development of a preferred option was agreed. This will involve key local parties, including all members of the Gosport College executive. A condition of membership will be that the party commits to the development of a preferred option based on all of the key principals outlined above.

## **176. COLLABORATIVE TENDER FOR INDEPENDENT FOSTERING PLACEMENTS**

The Executive Lead Member has given approval to tender for Independent Fostering Placements as part of a collaboration approach involving eleven South East councils. Furthermore, he has give approval to extend the contracts for current providers for Independent Fostering Placements for a six month period to enable a smooth transition to the new contract.

The eleven authorities of Hampshire County Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council, Southampton City Council, Surrey County Council and the Berkshire Authorities (Reading Borough Council, Slough Borough Council, Wokingham Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Council, The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and West Berkshire County Council) intend to collectively procure Independent Foster Care services. The Councils have formally confirmed that they wish

to enter into a joint arrangement via a formal Partnership Agreement and have identified the benefits that can be achieved from a collaborative arrangement.

The eleven councils have approximately 650 children placed with approximately 50 different Independent Fostering Agencies. There is a wide disparity between councils on the numbers of children placed and rates charged by Independent Fostering Agencies. The Councils wish to work in partnership with a number of providers who can demonstrate that they have the ability to deliver quality services, and to ensure a range of placements are available to meet the diversity of needs of the children in these authorities.

Research into the current level of need and available provision has highlighted gaps in availability of local placements able to meet specific needs. The Councils want to identify providers who can:

- Improve services to Looked After Children by improving their life chances and providing children with stability and reduced placement moves;
- Offer children and young people the opportunity to maintain stable local networks and contact with their families by providing care that is local to their own communities;
- Provide carers who can care for young people with complex needs and who may present with high risk behaviours;
- Provide carers for children and young people of all ages, but particularly for teenagers as these are the most challenging group to place in foster care;
- Provide carers who are registered for only one child or young person to meet the need for solo placements for children or young people who require a placement where they will be the *only* child or young person in the home;
- Work in partnership with local councils to ensure all available resources are used to achieve positive outcomes for the children in their care;
- Provide placements which offer the Local Authorities good value for money.

The annual spend on Independent Fostering Agency placements across the eleven Councils is approximately £29 million, with the annual spend for HCC being £8.6 million. It is anticipated that there will be savings arising from a number of features of the commissioning process:

- Securing fixed fees for the duration of the contract;
- Achieving discounts for long term placements;
- Reduced fees for potential block purchasing;
- Retrospective rebates based on the collective annual spend;
- Sharing contract and performance management responsibility;
- Ensuring children and young people are placed locally.

It was anticipated that there would be a period of transition from the ending of the current framework at the end of May 2011 and the commencement of the collaborative contract scheduled for November 2011. Given the projected efficiencies that a collaborative approach would deliver on a contract of this size, it was considered that extensions to existing contracts would be a suitable solution to the timescale issue. In light of these circumstances a six month extension to current providers' contracts was agreed to ensure a smooth transition for children and young people.

Further details can be found at [www.hants.gov.uk/councilmeetings.htm](http://www.hants.gov.uk/councilmeetings.htm)  
by typing in the relevant reference number:

- Post-16 Education in the Gosport Area: Development of a preferred option (search item reference 2941)
- Collaborative Tender for Independent Fostering Placements (search item reference 2733)

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