



National Audit Office

## Partnering for success: Preparing to deliver the 14-19 education reforms in England

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# Partnering for success: Preparing to deliver the 14-19 education reforms in England

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# SUMMARY

**1** The 14-19 reforms are planned to be implemented by 2013.<sup>1</sup> The main aims are:

- to raise the participation of young people in education by increasing the relevance of learning so that all are motivated to attend and learn, and to stay in education beyond age 16; and
- to raise the educational attainment of young people, as a vital strand of efforts to improve the nation's skills.

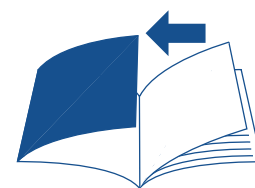
**2** Central to the 14-19 reforms is a new set of qualifications, the Diplomas (**Key Facts overleaf**). They aim to merge applied and general learning, providing alternative pathways for 14 to 19 year olds into further education, higher education and employment (**Figure 1**).

**3** Unlike most existing qualifications for young people, it will not be possible for a single institution to provide a high-quality education in all the Diplomas, because the content of each Diploma is broad and ranges across both applied and general provision. At local level, local authorities are responsible for providing strategic leadership for delivering the changes through local 14-19 partnerships involving education providers and employers, and others such as the Learning and Skills Council and Education Business Link Organisations. Many organisations will need to work together, for example:

- **schools**<sup>2</sup> as the place where almost all young people receive their education until the age of 16, with over half of secondary schools offering the opportunity to continue in learning after 16;

- **further education and sixth form colleges** as the main route for young people wishing to pursue vocational options and, in many parts of the country, the sole, or main, provider of post-16 education;
- **independent training providers** who bring relevant expertise drawn from working with employers or in the community;
- **employers** to help develop education relevant to the workplace and to provide high-quality work placements;
- **universities** to help secure the progression routes into higher education; and
- **careers advice services** to assist young people in understanding options and making the right choices.

**4** The reforms entail ambitious changes in the curriculum offered to young people aged 14 to 19, and to the way that learning will be delivered. All young people, and their families, need to be confident about the value of education to their future lives and prospects and, in particular, convinced that continuing in education beyond age 16 will be worthwhile. Linked with this challenge, and drawing on lessons from other countries, options from age 14 need to include high-quality education with clear application to real life and work, that will be valued by young people and employers.



Key Facts and Figure 1 overleaf

<sup>1</sup> Department for Education and Skills (2005), *14-19 Education and Skills White Paper*; and *14-19 Education and Skills Implementation Plan*.

<sup>2</sup> Includes all publicly funded schools; including Academies, grammar schools, faith schools and special schools. Independent schools are not required to subscribe to curriculum entitlements for learners aged 14 to 19, but are encouraged to participate in local partnerships.



## Terms of reference of our study

**5** The large programme for the 14-19 reforms involves major strands of work to be carried out in parallel. It was not feasible or timely for us to examine the whole programme. This report examines the progress that local 14-19 partnerships are making in preparing to deliver the reforms, across all areas of England. It does not examine the development of the content of the Diplomas, for which the first five specifications became available in September 2007.

**6** We decided to examine whether local 14-19 partnerships are on track to deliver the 14-19 reforms for the following reasons:

- Collaboration is a significant change for many institutions used to a regime of performance review and competition.
- A national picture of progress at the local level was clearly the least understood aspect of the programme, including by many key stakeholders.
- A study of this aspect would afford us the opportunity to build an authoritative view of how the reforms are starting to work out on the ground.

**7** The methods we used are described in Appendix 1. Our methodology included seven in-depth case studies of local authority areas, a national survey of Learning and Skills Council Partnership Directors<sup>4</sup> and a comparison with educational arrangements in three other countries (Appendix 5). Because we were examining the preparedness of local partnerships, our focus was on the supply side of the programme. Though we were able to draw on learners' perspectives about applied learning generally from our earlier work<sup>5</sup> and other research, we judged it too early to seek learner views directly on the 14-19 reform programme.

## Main findings

**8** We identified six main areas of risk that need to be managed for successful local implementation of the 14-19 reforms (**Figure 2**).

**9** The Department for Children, Schools and Families<sup>6</sup> and its partners are addressing, or have plans to address, all these areas of risk insofar as they relate to the subject of our report, the 14-19 partnerships. The level of interdependence of different aspects of the reforms is very high, and the success of the programme will also depend

on other aspects of the reforms, such as the content and quality of the Diplomas, which are not examined in this report. However, as at September 2007, the Department and its partners were on track against the relevant key milestones for the programme (Figure 20 on page 28).

**10** Some young people are more likely to engage with learning and achieve better qualifications if they are offered a combination that includes applied learning alongside traditional subjects. The strategic direction of the reforms draws on local experience of 'what works' and, in particular, the style and content of education that is likely to motivate more young people to want to learn and to continue in education and training beyond age 16. We found widespread frontline support among education practitioners for the changes, which aim to extend formerly localised provision of applied learning through the introduction of Diplomas, so that it becomes more consistently available to all young people who wish to pursue a programme that includes an applied education.

**11** Genuine collaboration between organisations leads to benefits for learners, but takes time to establish. It requires institutions such as schools and colleges, which are quite likely to be in competition for the same young people, to build trusting relationships and the confidence that would come from experience of working together for the wider benefit. Partnerships situated in areas that have a history of productive collaboration have benefited from their experience and generally have well established partnership arrangements.

### 2 Main areas of risk that will need to be managed for successful local implementation

- 1 Commitment to the reforms from all key stakeholders
- 2 Partnerships established and operating
- 3 Full involvement of all partners
- 4 Confidence at local level that the reform process is well managed and that key products are of good quality and will be ready on time
- 5 Good communication of progress and lessons learned
- 6 Clear funding arrangements and coherence of funding for capital projects

Source: National Audit Office

<sup>4</sup> Partnership Directors are positions at the Learning and Skills Council and are not posts within the 14-19 partnerships discussed in this report. Partnership Directors provide support to 14-19 partnerships.

<sup>5</sup> For example, our report *Improving school attendance in England* (HC 212, 2004-2005).

<sup>6</sup> In June 2007, the Department for Children, Schools and Families took over responsibility for the reforms from the former Department for Education and Skills. In this report we use 'the Department' to mean the body in existence at the time, except where it is appropriate to specify which Department we are referring to.

## Key Facts

### Participation in education and training by 17 year olds in England, at 82 per cent, remains low by international standards

- At the end of 2006, around 10 per cent of 16 to 18 year olds (206,000 individuals) in England were not in education, employment or training, a proportion which has remained fairly static over the last ten years.
- But more than 70 per cent of young people achieve recognised qualifications at Level 2 (five GCSEs at grades A\* to C or equivalent) by age 19; and the average young person getting five or more A\*-C at GCSE or equivalent earns at least £100,000 more over their lifetime than a person who leaves education with qualifications below Level 2.
- Total expenditure on education for 11 to 19 year olds was £21.8 billion in 2006-07.<sup>3</sup> Most development costs of the 14-19 reforms sit within the budgets of organisations such as the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and individual local authorities. However, the Department allocated £15 million in 2006-07 and £14.5 million in 2007-08 to local authorities to help meet the development costs of collaboration.

### The 14-19 reforms are seeking to improve attainment and participation in education and training up to age 19

- By 2015, 90 per cent of 17 year olds participating in education or training; from 75 per cent (2005).
- More than 85 per cent of 19 year olds to achieve at least Level 2 by 2015.
- A reduction to 8 per cent in the proportion of 16 to 18 year olds not in education, employment or training by 2010 (from the 2004 baseline of 10 per cent).
- The Government is introducing legislation to raise the age for compulsory participation in education and training to 18, starting with a rise to age 17 to take effect in 2013.

### The 14-19 education reforms consist of new elements

- Sufficient information, advice and guidance for all young people, plus online local prospectuses setting out the full range of educational provision in a local area, and a system of pastoral support across different institutions.
- A new qualification, the Diploma, available in parts of England from 2008, and as a national entitlement for all young people from 2013, by which date the Department expects around 25 per cent of young people aged 14 to 19 to be taking a Diploma either singly or alongside other qualifications such as GCSEs (Figure 1).

- The design of the Diplomas is being led by employers. There will be 14 Diplomas, which will offer general education and applied learning relevant to different occupational areas, and at three different levels: Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3. The development of the Diplomas in different occupational areas is being phased, and they will be available in parts of England as follows:

#### First phase, from 2008

- Construction and the Built Environment
- Creative and Media
- Engineering
- Society, Health and Development
- Information Technology

#### Second phase, from 2009

- Business, Administration and Finance
- Hair and Beauty Studies
- Hospitality
- Environment and Land-based Studies
- Manufacturing and Product Design

#### Third phase, from 2010

- Public Services
- Retail
- Sport and Leisure
- Travel and Tourism

- In October 2007, the Department announced a new set of subject-based Diplomas in Science, Languages and the Humanities. The design of these Diplomas is being led by a group of leading academics and employers. The three additional Diplomas will be available in parts of England from 2011.

### Implementation of the reforms requires collaboration

- Individual local education providers will have to work together to provide every young person with full access to high-quality Diploma provision, by 2013.
- Local authorities are responsible for providing strategic leadership for delivering the changes through local 14-19 partnerships, involving education providers, the Learning and Skills Council, employers and others.
- 14-19 partnerships vary in structure and complexity reflecting local circumstances. In some areas a strategic partnership will oversee the work of several delivery consortia (mainly rural areas); in others the strategic partnership and the delivery consortium are one and the same (mainly urban areas).

## 1 Choice of learning routes for young people aged 14 to 19

Young people need to make important decisions about their education, which can have long-term implications for employment opportunities, wellbeing and standard of living. The 14-19 reforms are intended to offer every young person learning that is engaging and valuable, to suit different interests and learning styles at all levels. They introduce new Diploma qualifications and build on existing qualifications, such as GCSEs and Apprenticeships. Young people will be able to choose from a range of learning options, each offering a different progression route, as illustrated below.

### Age Choice

#### 14 to 16

- **GCSEs** These qualifications remain and many young people will continue to choose them.
- **Functional Skills (new)** Qualifications in English, maths and ICT (information and communications technology) covering elements that are essential to enable individuals to participate effectively in everyday life, including the workplace. These will be incorporated into GCSEs – it will not be possible to achieve a grade C in these subjects without these elements.
- **Diplomas (new)** Offering a mix of general and applied learning, available at Level 1 (broadly equivalent to five GCSEs at below grade C<sup>1</sup>) and Level 2 (broadly equivalent to six or seven GCSEs at grades A\* to C<sup>1</sup>). Functional Skills will be incorporated into Diplomas. Diplomas are the first qualifications to be introduced which are a national education qualification recognising achievement at Level 1. Young people may choose to do one or more GCSEs alongside a Diploma.
- **Young Apprenticeships** These allow study for vocational qualifications, including in college, with training providers and in the workplace. Apprentices spend around two days a week in school studying general subjects.
- **Foundation Learning Tier (new)** Aims to establish progression pathways to Level 2 qualifications, and will focus on skills for life and work, subject and vocation-based learning, and personal and social development.

#### 16 to 19

- **A levels** These qualifications remain and many young people will continue to choose them.
- **International Baccalaureate** Entails academic study of a wide range of subjects, leading to a single qualification, rather than qualifications in individual subjects.
- **Diplomas (new)** Level 3 qualification (broadly equivalent to three A levels<sup>1</sup>).
- **Level 1 Diplomas, Level 2 Diplomas, GCSEs and Foundation Learning Tier** also available for this age group.
- **BTECs** Vocational qualifications equivalent to A level, which have practical course elements and involve work placements.
- **Apprenticeships** Offering a programme of vocational training which gives young people the opportunity to work for an employer and earn money while they learn.
- **Other work-based learning** For young people who are employed, or based largely at a workplace. Often leads to an accredited NVQ award.

### Examples of learning routes incorporating new Diplomas:

**Paula is 15 years old** and doing her GCSEs at a secondary school in London. She will be one of the first pupils in the country to undertake a Diploma. She will be staying on in sixth form and in year 12 (in 2008) has chosen to study a Level 3 Creative and Media Diploma, which will incorporate English A level as part of her additional and specialist learning. She plans to go to university to study media studies. She was motivated by the fact that media studies gave the highest proportion of full-time employment out of all degree subjects in arts and humanities.

**Peter is 14 years old** and attending a secondary school in Birmingham. He wants to be an engineer. He has decided to undertake the Level 1 Engineering Diploma and then wishes to progress onto an Apprenticeship at the age of sixteen. He will attend a vocational skills centre as well as school. He will do his Apprenticeship alongside GCSEs in English, maths, science and ICT, and has already made contact with a large local car manufacturing company to carry out his work experience.

Source: National Audit Office

### NOTE

- <sup>1</sup> The equivalences for the first Diploma qualifications are expected to be announced in early 2008.



**12** All areas in England have set up strategic partnerships. They vary widely in structure and complexity, reflecting different local circumstances. An urban local authority area is more likely to have a single partnership encompassing both strategic planning and operational delivery. Those in more rural areas commonly have two tiers: a single strategic partnership overseeing a number of delivery consortia. We found that progress in establishing delivery consortia was variable, with some areas more advanced in their planning than others. Clear structures and accountability aid collaboration and help make joint working between partners focused and effective, and the majority of delivery consortia considered that they had established appropriate arrangements for implementing the reforms. Some 80 per cent of consortia reported that roles and responsibilities were clearly defined between partners, and 85 per cent had agreed joint strategies, most planning to 2009 or beyond. However, over a third of consortia reported that they were only in the early stages of implementing their 14-19 strategy.

**13** The largest task for local delivery from now to 2013 is to implement the Diplomas. Partnerships had to apply to the Department to be among the first to deliver one or more Diplomas from September 2008, and their applications were assessed against criteria for the readiness of the partnerships. 143 local authority areas submitted applications; seven local authorities chose not to apply to deliver any of the first five Diplomas, most because they judged that their partnership would not have done enough development work to start offering any Diplomas in their area by September 2008. 43 of the local authorities that applied were not approved to deliver any Diplomas in the first round for a range of reasons, principally because their applications were judged not to be sufficiently well developed.

**14** The applications approved for delivery of Diplomas from September 2008 collectively plan to establish 39,000 Diploma places. This represents 5 per cent of the supply of places required to meet anticipated demand for the original 14 Diplomas (around 25 per cent of young people) from 2013. To date, applications approved to start delivering Diplomas from September 2009, subject to certain conditions being met, would make available a further 39,000 places, representing an additional 5 per cent of the places estimated to be required from 2013. The Department anticipates that a further 60,000 to 70,000 places will be approved in early 2008 for delivery from September 2009.

## Conclusions and recommendations

**15** Our conclusions and recommendations, set out below, are structured to address the risk areas in Figure 2. Many of the recommendations are for the local 14-19 partnerships to implement. However, given the variable state of development of partnerships, some will require substantial support from the Department and other partners to make sure that they are not left behind, and can meet the imperative of providing every young person in their area their full entitlement to the 14-19 curriculum by 2013.

### Risk area 1: Commitment to the reforms from all key stakeholders

- a **An appropriate balance across general and applied learning.** We found strong support at the local level for the flexible nature of the Diplomas and the increase in choice for young people, though there were concerns about achieving the right balance between general and applied learning. Partnerships should expect institutions to communicate the importance of both applied and general learning and to cooperate to develop effective approaches to embedded learning.<sup>7</sup>
- b **Credible new qualifications.** Understanding and acceptance of Diplomas by employers and higher education will be essential to their success and appeal to young people, and we found concerns at the local level that full acceptance of the Diplomas is still some way off. The Department and its national partners need to clearly establish and communicate progression routes into continuing study and employment.
- c **Strong leadership to build trust between partners.** Building trust between partners more used to being in competition takes time and effort. Partnerships should be led by senior representatives from the institutions within the partnership who have the necessary level of authority to establish effective relationships and drive implementation.

7 Embedded learning is where a general subject, such as English, is taught within an applied programme.

## Risk area 2: Partnerships established and operating

- d Collaboration to deliver comprehensive coverage of all 17 Diplomas by 2013.** There is a risk that areas that do not yet have approved applications to deliver Diplomas will struggle to develop effective collaboration. Partnerships and delivery consortia not currently preparing to provide one or more Diplomas from September 2008 should prepare plans of the progress they intend to make over the next two to three years, and as a minimum have an outline strategy for the implementation of Diplomas to 2013. The Department should help them to bring in relevant expertise, for example through secondments of people who have experience of leading implementation in areas that are much further ahead.
- e Continuous improvement in partnership structures and arrangements.** Many partnerships have evolved from earlier initiatives and they benefit from periodic review to ensure they remain fit for purpose and are continually improving. Partnerships should make use of self-assessment tools that help identify areas for improvement.
- f Protocols to deal with practical obstacles.** Partnerships all face a similar list of practical challenges, such as the need for schools and colleges to agree a common core timetable, so that young people can take up options that involve attending different locations. Travel between locations requires pooled resources and agreement, as do decisions about which institution retains pastoral responsibility for each young person. All partnerships should develop and agree protocols to deal with these important matters, drawing on the large amount of experience that is building up on workable, practical solutions, and investigate the use of innovative options such as e-learning, peripatetic teachers and mobile learning facilities. All partnerships should use the views of young people to inform their planning.
- g Good quality information, advice and guidance.** All areas have introduced area-wide electronic prospectuses providing information about the courses of study that are available. Young people, and their parents and carers, also need access to people with good knowledge of all the options from age 14, who are capable of giving impartial advice. All areas should provide young people access to comprehensive personalised advice about all the options available, including those delivered outside of their current school or college.

- h Effective use of technology-based products.** Well designed technology-based products have a dual advantage. They are popular with many young people. They can also be a powerful facilitator of communication between them and the wide range of people involved in their education and, potentially, in helping them navigate an appropriate career path. The Department should facilitate partnerships in developing tools to support the integration of young people's studies and their career aspirations or goals, drawing on the experience of areas that have already done so.

## Risk area 3: Full involvement of all partners

- i All relevant institutions participating in partnerships.** There are still some institutions delivering education to 14 to 19 year olds that are not actively involved with partnerships. Individual schools were most commonly cited as not yet being involved. Local authorities and the Learning and Skills Council should be prepared to use sanctions where necessary in relation to those few institutions that are unwilling to collaborate to secure a high quality provision of the full national entitlement for their students.
- j Appropriate groupings of institutions.** Strategic partnerships generally conform to local authority boundaries, and the need to work across boundaries where it would make more sense is not well known or documented. It is important that partnerships' plans take account of natural 'travel to learn' routes for learners irrespective of the local authority area. The Department should examine the case for a stock take at regional level of whether joint work across local authority boundaries is meeting the needs of young people.
- k Comprehensive coverage of all curriculum areas.** Some consortia have already determined that they will not attempt to deliver all the Diplomas, but will instead buy in some elements from neighbouring areas. The scale of the need to buy in provision is not known at the regional or national level, nor have the potential risks been assessed, such as poor access or very long travel times for some young people. Decisions about buying in provision and information on the potential impacts need to be coordinated, either by partnerships within a wider area working closely together, or by the Department commissioning an assessment of the position at a regional level.

- l **Performance management arrangements to support collaborative provision.** Current assessment of schools and colleges is focused on assessing the institution and gives limited credit for working in partnership. The absence of relevant measures creates the risk that some institutions will not give sufficient attention to developing partnerships that will help broaden the options available to young people in their own and other institutions. Assessment measures should be revised to incorporate measures of partnership working that recognises the effort that institutions make to creating wider benefits for the whole community.
- m **Sufficient good-quality teaching staff to deliver the Diplomas.** There are already staff with the skills to teach the more technical aspects of the Diplomas working in many further education colleges and in some schools, and to give existing staff the skills to teach the new Diplomas, the Department is developing a programme of support. However, the amount of development work to provide enough good quality teaching staff to deliver the Diplomas between now and 2013 is not yet known, and we found that 45 per cent of consortia had not yet undertaken a skills audit. All partnerships should undertake local audits of existing skills to determine professional development requirements. They should also explore how to deploy the expertise of independent education providers and employers' own training functions.
- n **Local employer engagement, sufficient work experience placements and work-related learning.** Engaging employers is the least developed aspect of most partnerships – 45 per cent of consortia had not yet involved employers in developing their approach to 14-19 education. Partnerships should ask schools and colleges to catalogue existing links with employers and for proposals about how these links can be expanded and coordinated, and how to establish links with more employers, particularly small- and medium-sized employers. Employers' role in providing work experience and work-related learning will be essential to the Diplomas' appeal to young people, and partnerships should seek the support of local employer organisations in encouraging employers to contribute to delivering the Diplomas.

Risk area 4: Confidence at local level that the reform process is well managed and that key products are of good quality and will be ready on time

- o **Robust forecasts of Diploma take-up.** The Department's forecasts of the numbers of young people it anticipates will take up the Diplomas each year to 2013 are provisional, because with courses due to start in September 2008 there is no data as yet on established demand. The Department should continue to refine its forecasts as data becomes available, including an early indication of take-up for the first five Diplomas in 2008. It should also use detailed information on the take-up of Diplomas to inform the ongoing implementation, including, for example, relative take-up between regions.
- p **Confidence in the process underpinning approvals to deliver the Diplomas.** The approvals process involves considerable work for the Department and partnerships, and was the subject of some complaints from partnerships in the first round. The Department has used the feedback to improve the process for the second round. It should review the outcome of the second round of applications to check that the changes made to the process have fully met partnerships' earlier concerns about the first round.
- q **Adequate support to all partnerships.** Several consortia suggested that there was insufficient support for those that were unsuccessful in applying to deliver one or more Diplomas from September 2008, or felt unready to apply at all. The Department has responded by increasing support for these consortia, but they are likely to need much more if they are to provide all Diplomas by 2013. The less advanced partnerships will need adequate, timely support to enable them to meet their statutory commitment to giving all young people in their area access to all 17 Diplomas by 2013. The Department should periodically re-examine the balance of support it provides to partnerships relative to their state of development.

## Risk area 5: Good communication of progress and lessons learned

- r **Learning from experience.** The Department's 14-19 Pathfinders programme has been successful at developing and trialling options for implementing the reforms. It should periodically review the experience of the implementation of the first Diplomas and continue to use well established methods to disseminate the lessons.
- s **Awareness and understanding among all frontline staff.** Awareness of the Diplomas is currently low among non-managerial frontline staff (teachers, lecturers and support staff). The Department has adopted a phased approach to communicating the reforms to different groups of staff as more aspects become better established. However, partnerships should now be planning communications and events to broaden awareness, for example to teachers, lecturers and others who need to know what future contributions they may be expected to make. The Department should create guidance that partnerships can tailor to their local circumstances.
- t **Coordinated guidance and information to partnerships.** Most general guidance and information to partnerships is good but it needs to be better coordinated. Guidance coming from too many different sources and to differing institutions or individuals within a partnership can result in some partners not receiving timely information and confusion over the precedence of information. The Department and organisations providing guidance to partnerships should coordinate their efforts.

## Risk area 6: Clear funding arrangements and coherence of funding for capital projects

- u **Clear and sustainable financial arrangements.** At this stage, the likely future costs of delivering the Diplomas at local level are not established, which is a risk to confidence. Agreeing financial arrangements that recognise real costs and are therefore acceptable to all was the most frequently cited matter of concern at local level. The Department has since indicated to partnerships the broad funding arrangements to support the delivery of the reforms, but local area pilot projects that the Department has set in hand will not report until September 2008. In the meantime, the Department should make available the results of interim reports of this work, so that the knowledge can be used to advance thinking on funding at local level.
- v **Capital programmes to support the reforms.** There are two separate major capital programmes for renewing school and college buildings. The Department has worked with partners to develop processes to enable both these capital programmes to support and take account of the objectives of the 14-19 reforms. Much of the process sits within local capital projects, and partnerships should take responsibility for checking that projects in their area support plans for 14-19 provision. The Department should continue to take soundings from local areas about how well policies and processes on capital spending support the 14-19 objectives or whether additional flexibilities, such as more pooled funding, are required.





## Why are the reforms to 14-19 education important?

- 16** In this part of the report we set out:
- the problems the reforms are intended to address; and
  - the main elements of the reforms.

### What problems are the 14-19 education reforms seeking to address?

**17** A great deal of data and research, most recently the Leitch Review of Skills,<sup>8</sup> has demonstrated long-term risks to the UK's skills base that will, if not addressed, make it increasingly difficult for businesses to compete internationally. One of the UK's most important contributory risks is the relatively low participation of 17 year olds in education and training. Participation rose to more than 80 per cent by 2004, but remains low by international standards (Figure 3). The challenge is for the progress made over recent years to be maintained.

**18** Young people who are not in education, training or employment are at particular risk of joining the relatively large number of low-skilled adults. At the end of 2006, 10 per cent of 16 to 18 year olds (206,000 individuals) in England were not in education, employment or training, up from 9 per cent (156,000 individuals) over the last ten years. The rise has been particularly rapid for 18 year olds.

**19** Although qualification success at age 16 has been rising, there are still 40 per cent of 16 year olds who do not gain at least five GCSEs at grades A\* to C, or the equivalent (Level 2), and 54 per cent who do not reach Level 2 with English and maths. Though in 2006 over 70 per cent did reach Level 2 by age 19, an important aim of Government is to see this rise to at least 85 per cent. The large

numbers of young people with low or no qualifications at age 16 indicate disengagement from education that, for most, is likely to have started at a much earlier age. Another indicator of disengagement is the increasing level of unauthorised absence among pupils in maintained secondary schools.

**20** The Leitch Review, our own<sup>9</sup> and other research studies have all pointed to the value of applied education in motivating many young people to continue to learn and improve their skills. However, applied education has, historically, been less esteemed compared with general education. This is in contrast to the other countries we researched as part of this study, where attitudes towards applied and general education are less polarised, and where progression through secondary education is more likely to blend the two (Appendix 5).

### Outline of the 14-19 education reforms

**21** There have been previous initiatives to reform applied education for the 14 to 19 age group. Major programmes were the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI, 1982–1997), General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ, introduced in 1992, and currently being phased out) and vocational A levels (introduced in 2000). In October 2004, a report commissioned by the then Secretary of State for Education and Skills recommended a new framework of 14-19 Diplomas that would be taken by all young people.<sup>10</sup> The framework recommended drawing on the best features of existing qualifications including GCSEs, A levels and good applied qualifications, but all these would no longer be available as separate qualifications.

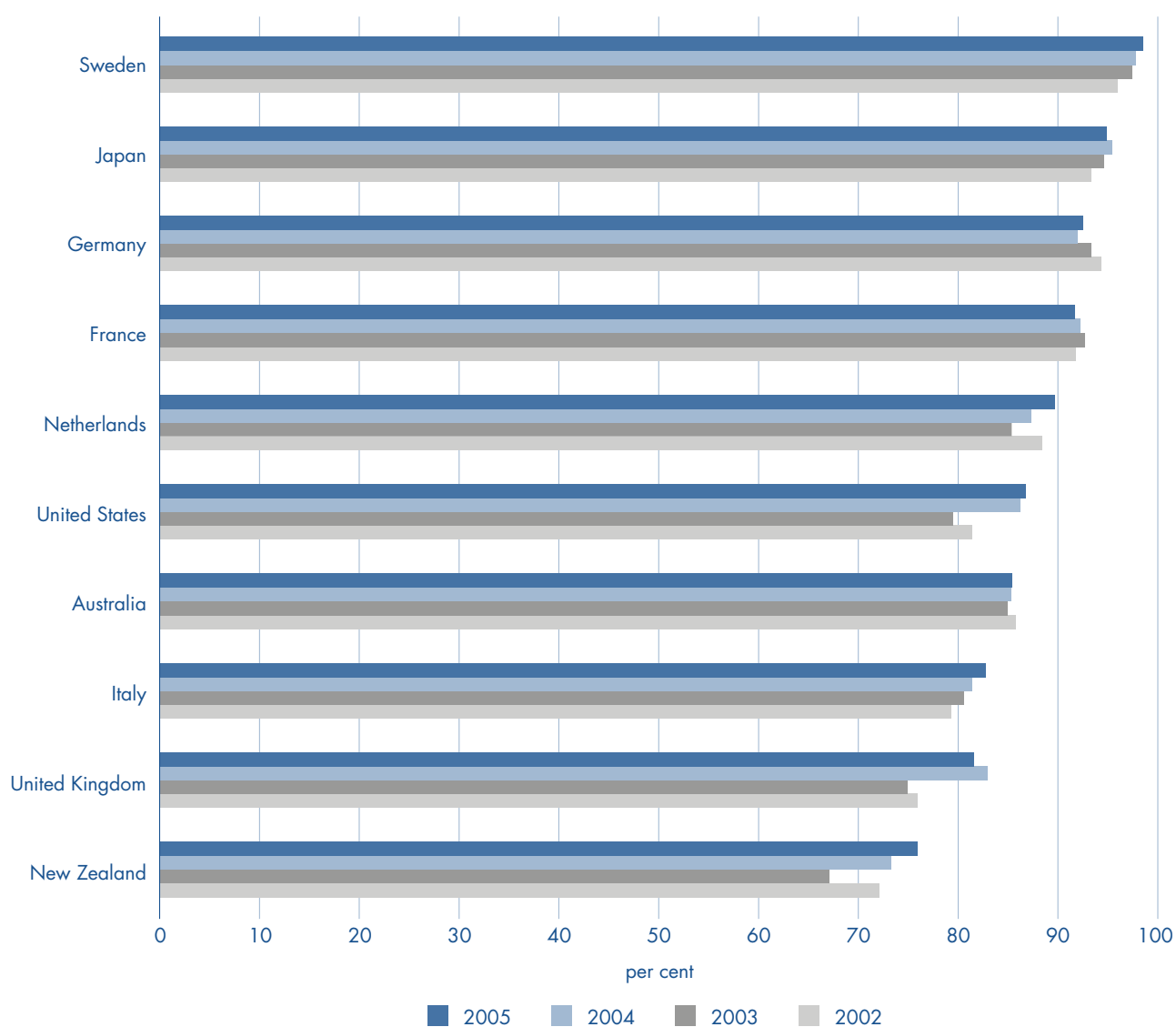
<sup>8</sup> The Leitch Review of Skills, commissioned by the Government in 2004, published its final report in December 2006. It identified that as a result of low skills the UK risks increasing inequality, deprivation and child poverty, and a generation cut off permanently from the labour market.

<sup>9</sup> In our report *Improving school attendance in England* (HC 212, 2004-2005) we concluded that providing young people with the option of alternative curricula, usually involving some form of applied learning related to a specific employment sector, was one of ten effective practices for improving pupil attendance.

<sup>10</sup> Working Group on 14-19 Reform (2004), *14-19 Curriculum and Qualifications Reform: Final report of the Working Group on 14-19 Reform* (also known as the Tomlinson Report), Department for Education and Skills.

### 3 Participation rate of 17 year olds in education and training in the UK remains below international levels

Participation rates (per cent) at age 17 (2002 – 2005)



Source: OECD Education statistics (September 2007)

**22** The 14-19 reforms are taking forward the concept of Diplomas, but alongside qualifications such as GCSEs and A levels, which will continue as separate qualifications (Figure 1 on page 4). They are being planned to blend applied and general education, through the introduction of Diplomas in 14 different broad occupational areas and three subject areas (Key Facts on page 4). A young person might take up a Diploma on its own or alongside

other qualifications; for example, the Environment and Land-based Diploma at Level 2 alongside additional studies leading to a GCSE in science. The Department has estimated that once all the Diplomas have been established by 2013, up to 25 per cent of young people will take at least one Diploma qualification at Level 1, 2 or 3, with a further 15 per cent following other applied learning routes such as GCSEs in vocational subjects.



**23** In December 2005, the Department published an implementation plan setting out how the reforms are to be developed and delivered over the next ten years. (A summary of the plan, including the milestones, is set out in Appendix 2.) It envisages that all the Diplomas will be available as an option to every young person in England by 2013, as a statutory entitlement. At local level, local authorities are responsible for providing strategic leadership for delivering the reforms. Extensive work is required locally and by national bodies such as the Department, the Learning and Skills Council and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. The main elements of the reforms are:

- Development of the Diplomas by Diploma Development Partnerships comprising Sector Skills Councils, employers, higher education providers, education professionals and other key stakeholders (Appendix 3). Sector Skills Councils (employer-led, independent organisations covering different business and industrial sectors across the UK) have a leading role in developing the Diplomas' content. Five of the Diplomas are to be available in some areas for young people to take up from September 2008, five will be available from September 2009, four from September 2010 and a further three from September 2011 (Key Facts).
- Development and piloting of Functional Skills, which are to be integrated into all learning routes. Functional Skills are practical skills in English, maths and ICT (information and communication technology) that employers and educators consider essential to success in learning and employment.
- Extension of the content of A levels to stretch the most able young people.
- Improvements in explanations and advice on options, so that all young people have the right information to inform the choice of route they take.
- Building the capacity throughout England for all young people to be offered their full entitlement by 2013. Local preparation involves developing enough teaching staff and providing appropriate facilities, establishing high-quality advice and guidance for young people, gaining the commitment of employers to support the work-related elements of the reforms, and overcoming practical barriers that can prevent full access to the curriculum, such as transport and timetabling. Institutions acting on their own will not be able to provide all aspects of the changes, so every area is expected to establish a 14-19 partnership led by the local authority, comprising schools, colleges and training providers working together with the Learning and Skills Council, careers advice services and employers.

**24** The Department's implementation plan sets out the commitment to a three-year programme of evaluation for each Diploma implementation phase. The evaluation will be carried out by independent researchers and will inform, in phases, the full implementation of Diplomas in 2013. The evaluation will include the extent to which the implementation of Diplomas succeeds in achieving progress towards key targets for young people's participation and attainment. It will also examine the value that key stakeholders, such as employers, higher education and young people come to place on the Diploma.



## Risk area 1: Commitment to the reforms from all key stakeholders

**25** The 14-19 reforms rely on a wide range of organisations working together: local government, the Department and its agencies, schools, colleges, training providers and others. Appendix 3 shows the range of organisations and outlines their role in planning and delivering the 14-19 reforms. For most, although their role is just one element of the changes, it nevertheless represents a substantial part of their organisation's activity over the next five to ten years. Gaining the commitment of every one of these organisations is therefore essential to the reforms' success.

### There is widespread support for the broad direction of the 14-19 reforms

**26** We found good support for the reforms, including the Diplomas, among people and organisations we consulted and during our local visits. Most people agreed that an increase in choice and flexibility in education for all young people is essential to broadening commitment to learning among younger age groups and raising participation for the over 16s. Forty per cent (96 out of 238) of respondents to our survey of 14-19 delivery consortia felt that currently there was an insufficiently broad range of 14-19 provision for all young people in their area.

## Earlier smaller-scale programmes have demonstrated the potential for educational benefits

**27** The Increased Flexibility Programme (**Figure 4 overleaf**) required the formation of partnerships between further education colleges and schools, and in some cases including other training providers and employers. By the second year of the programme, over 50,000 pupils aged 14 to 15 – around 9 per cent – were participating, but in some areas the programme was over-subscribed, with more young people wanting to participate than there were places available. Research found that the Increased Flexibility Programme was seen as a useful pilot for the 14-19 reforms and that partnership working was valued.<sup>11</sup> The Programme was described as successful or very successful in our case study areas.

### The interdependence of many aspects of the 14-19 reform programme means that strong leadership and trust are needed to take it forward

**28** To achieve these changes by 2013 inevitably requires major strands of work to be carried out in parallel. For example, areas approved to deliver the first five Diplomas from September 2008 had to start extensive preparatory work before the content of the Diplomas was known. Getting work underway and sustaining it requires people to feel confident about other organisations meeting their commitments. It has required particularly strong leadership in those areas delivering the first five Diplomas, especially in the year leading up to the publication of the Diploma content in September 2007.

<sup>11</sup> L O'Donnell et al (2006) *Evaluation of Increased Flexibility for 14-16 Year Olds Programme: Delivery for Cohorts 3 and 4 and the Future*, National Foundation for Educational Research, Research Report RR790, Department for Education and Skills.

## 4 Increased Flexibility Programme

The **Increased Flexibility Programme** has run since September 2002. It offers young people in school the opportunity to take one or more applied qualifications, often at a location other than their school.

Around 300 local partnerships were established to deliver the programme. Partnerships consisted of further education colleges, schools and, in some instances, other training providers and employers. By the end of the third cohort (2005) the partnerships included over 2,000 schools, representing over 50 per cent of all maintained secondary schools in England, and an estimated 90,000 pupils were participating.

Participants came from all ability ranges, but included more low attaining young people. At first there was some evidence that schools were putting only their weakest pupils forward, but by cohort 3 there was evidence that a more balanced range of abilities was being selected.

In cohorts 1 and 2, a high proportion of participants achieved the qualifications for which they were studying, with over 90 per cent of those taking a vocational GCSE achieving it. Most participants were studying for one applied subject through the programme, around half of these being a vocational GCSE. The most popular subjects were ICT, engineering and motor vehicles, and care and

childcare. Young people pursuing vocational GCSEs through the Increased Flexibility Programme appeared to achieve higher grades in those subjects than in their other subjects.

### Lessons learnt: partnership working

The programme provided experience to inform local development of the 14-19 reforms, including:

- **Common timetabling** Some partnerships made good progress on timetabling.
- **Information sharing** As experience built up, there was better sharing of information about students' progress and attendance.
- **Meetings with students to discuss progress** The importance of regular meetings between the partnership and students became very clear.
- **Shadowing of teachers by college staff** Some partnerships established productive shadowing arrangements.
- **Employer participation** There was low employer participation, but partnerships performed better where local employers were more involved.

*Source: L O'Donnell et al (2006) Evaluation of Increased Flexibility for 14-16 Year Olds Programme: Delivery for Cohorts 3 and 4 and the Future; and S Golden et al (2004) Evaluation of Increased Flexibilities for 14-16 Year Olds: Profile of Partnerships and Students 2002 and 2003*

**29** Partnerships need to be led by someone, or a group, with authority to drive forward change at the required pace. We found that the most successful partnerships were those led by respected individuals from the top tiers of management, such as headteachers, college principals and senior managers from the local authority and the Learning and Skills Council. The most effective partnerships also recognised the importance of succession planning, so that any leadership changes would not result in a loss of momentum. The Department has commissioned a programme of support for leaders and managers of 14-19 partnerships from the Centre for Excellence in Leadership and the National College for School Leadership, including coaching and leadership exchange visits.

**30** Some of the difficult issues that local leaders have to address are around the implications of the reforms for professional groups. For example, the commitment to the reforms of some teaching staff in schools is overlaid by doubts about how appropriate it is for pupils younger than 16 to be taught in further education colleges and by independent training providers, even though important reforms to the training and qualifications of all teachers,

tutors, trainers, lecturers and instructors in further education are being introduced from September 2007. Some colleges and independent training providers, for their part, express fears that schools may try to deliver applied provision themselves, rather than allow better equipped partner institutions to do so, potentially diminishing the quality and appeal of Diplomas.

**31** Our findings across all types of education provider indicated that there is a need to build trust among professional staff, especially in areas that have not historically collaborated to teach a broad applied curriculum or younger age groups. Earlier collaborative experience helps, and we found that doubts were less prominent where schools, colleges and other providers had already collaborated successfully. The Increased Flexibility Programme, for example, has demonstrated how attending a more adult learning environment for part of their week can help improve some young people's engagement with education, and institutions that have participated in that programme tend to have the greatest hopes for the reforms.

**32** Some areas are planning to have quality assurance frameworks that will monitor the quality and appropriateness of all providers of learning for the Diplomas (example at [Figure 5](#)). Such frameworks could also be designed to help build trust between them.

Concerns about the content of the Diplomas are likely to persist until more detail has been decided and communicated

**33** We encountered a common concern that too much may be expected of Diplomas. They are expected to provide progression into higher education for those who want it. At the same time they are intended to help improve disaffected young people's engagement in education. Depending on who we spoke to, Diplomas were perceived to be either too general or too applied. The National Union of Teachers expressed strong concerns about a common belief that they were being designed for less able students. The Confederation of British Industry emphasised to us that the Diplomas must not be the default choice only for disaffected young people, as this would undermine their credibility as a high-quality alternative to GCSEs and A levels.

**34** There was criticism from some practitioners that, unlike existing applied qualifications, the Diplomas do not prepare an individual to directly enter a profession. There is concern that if Diplomas replace other applied qualifications over time the opportunity to progress directly into a profession will be lost. This criticism was levelled at some Diplomas more than others, for example the Hair and Beauty Diploma, where it was felt that young people would not find the qualification attractive if it did not allow for progression directly into a vocation. In addition, it is not clear whether adults will be able to take up Diplomas either as an entire qualification or to complete elements that were started. This could mean 'late starters' are not able to take up Diplomas. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and the Learning and Skills Council are undertaking work on progression pathways which aim to offer learners clear progression opportunities towards Level 2 qualifications or to other positive destinations, such as employment.

## 5 Quality Monitoring Framework for 14-19 education

Knowsley's 14-19 partnership, known as Knowsley Collegiate, has developed a Quality Monitoring Framework for assessing levels of consistency and quality in the delivery and management of applied education across all 14-19 partners. The framework consists of quality criteria against which the various elements of the provision can be scrutinised, under six themes:

- Management and Coordination
- Teaching and Learning
- Admissions Guidance and Support
- Student Entitlement
- Professional Development
- Employer Engagement

*Source: National Audit Office fieldwork*

**35** The Diplomas are being designed to provide a foundation of broad learning with options to specialise. They are planned to have components that develop generic skills demanded by employers and higher education. Positive views came from people who had recognised how having three levels of Diploma, which can also be mixed and matched with established qualifications such as GCSEs, can potentially provide the flexibility for Diplomas to be appropriate across a wide ability range. If such flexibility is achieved in practice, it should help broaden their appeal.

Progression from the Diplomas into employment and higher education is central to creating confidence in them

**36** It was clear from our local visits and focus groups with young people that the most important questions about the Diplomas for young people, parents and carers, and indeed for the people working to create them, are: What are Diplomas worth? and What will they lead to? It is therefore essential that employers and higher education institutions value the content of the Diplomas and thereby instil confidence in young people planning to take them. In autumn 2007, the Department launched a communications campaign aimed at young people which includes examples of national employers and higher education institutions endorsing the Diplomas.

**37** We found strong perceptions at the local level that a clear understanding of the Diplomas in higher education and among employers was some way off. At present, many employers have not heard about the Diplomas and will need help to understand them before they will recognise them as valid qualifications. Many people expressed the view that it takes considerable time for employers to recognise new qualifications and understand their value. In addition, Diplomas will also need to gain currency alongside existing qualifications that employers do understand, and this acceptance is known to be especially difficult to achieve.<sup>12</sup>

**38** At the national level a Diploma Champion for Employers, was appointed in January 2007 to promote Diplomas and encourage employers to become involved with them, and in November 2007 a Diploma Employer Champion Network was launched. Over 5,000 employers have been involved in developing the content of Diplomas through the Diploma Development Partnerships. The challenge to the programme will be in promoting understanding and acceptance of the Diplomas to the wider business community, in particular small and medium businesses.

**39** Most higher education institutions have so far had limited involvement in the reform programme at the local level (though at a national level they have participated in the Diploma Development Partnerships). Our survey found that higher education institutions are active members of partnerships in less than a fifth of consortia. Though there are the beginnings of such involvement in some areas, this tends to be by those higher education institutions that take a relatively high proportion of students from their local populations. In December 2006, the Department announced the appointment of two Diploma Champions for Higher Education, whose aim is to raise awareness and improve the understanding of the Diplomas and other aspects of the reforms across higher education. Recognition through the UCAS (formerly known as the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) will be vital to the attitudes of young people, their parents and carers. The UCAS tariff is expected to be set in early 2008.

## Risk area 2: Partnerships established and operating

**40** The 14-19 partnerships form the basic infrastructure for taking forward the reforms. Given that the full entitlement must be available for every young person from 2013, they needed to be established and operational quickly.

### All areas have set up a strategic 14-19 partnership

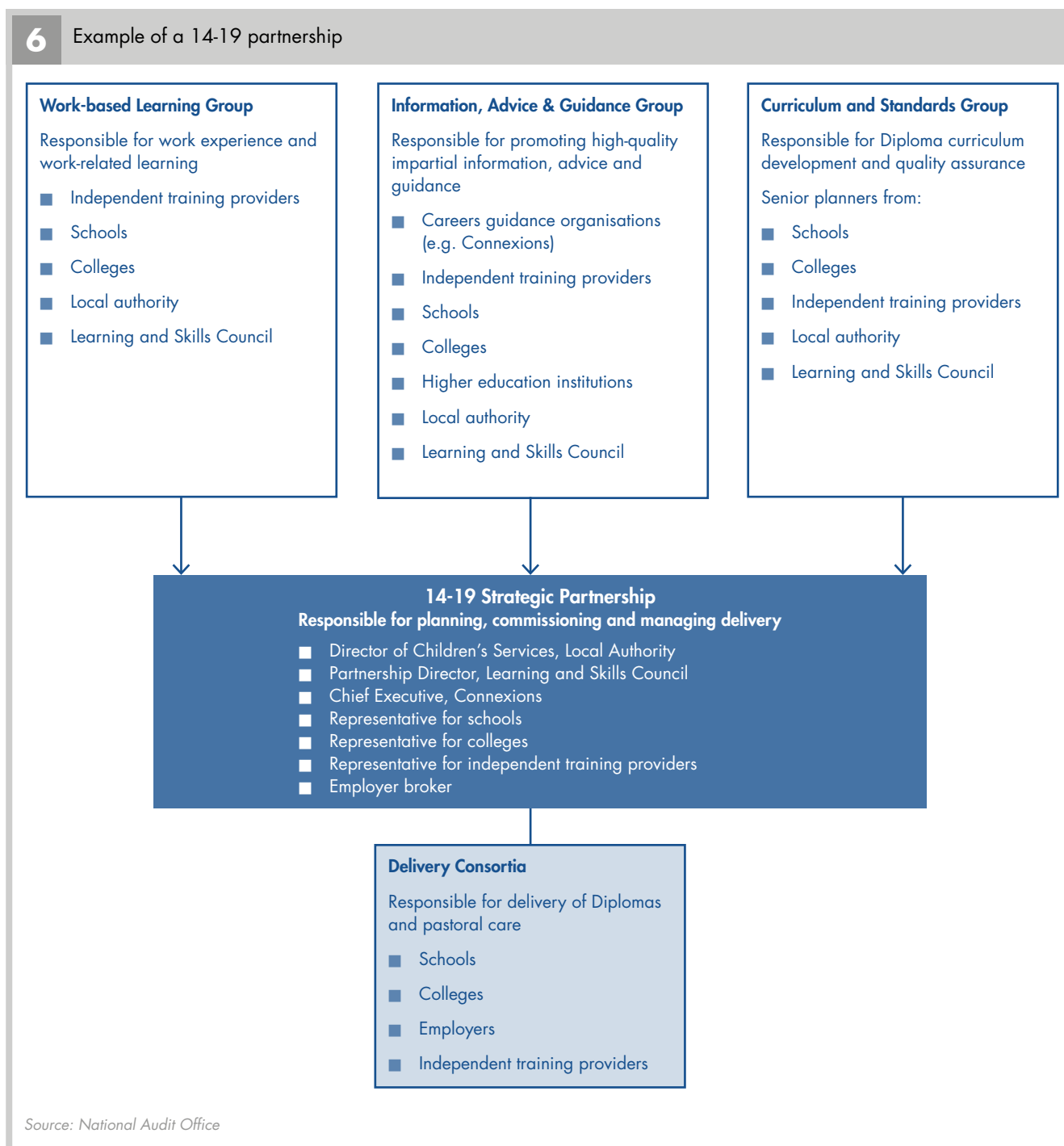
**41** All local authority areas have put in place a strategic partnership to oversee 14-19 education in their area. The partnerships are expected to build on and accommodate existing formal and informal networks, for example collaboration between schools and colleges for pupils aged 14 to 16 through the Increased Flexibility Programme. Strategic partnerships exist to take the lead on establishing:

- a local 14-19 strategy; strategies for engaging with employers and providing information, advice and guidance to young people; and related publicity and marketing;
- an area prospectus and common application process;
- learner tracking, so that no young people are 'lost' from education;
- a common timetable, to give every young person genuine choice;
- practical transport arrangements;
- an agreed funding model;
- a process for making applications to the Department to deliver the Diplomas;
- agreements on awarding body and curriculum;
- workforce development; and
- quality assurance arrangements.

<sup>12</sup> QCA Research Team (2003), *Report for the Department for Education and Skills: Employers' Perceptions of Curriculum 2000*.

42 The partnerships vary widely in structure and complexity, reflecting their different circumstances. Commonly, those in rural areas have two tiers: a single strategic partnership overseeing a number of local delivery consortia. For example, Shropshire County Council has one strategic partnership that oversees five delivery consortia. An urban local authority area is more likely to have a single partnership that incorporates strategic and delivery functions, for example Wandsworth 14-19 Partnership in Greater London. **Figure 6** provides an overview of a possible structure for a 14-19 partnership.

43 The Department has allocated a total of £15 million in 2006-07 and £14.5 million in 2007-08 to local authorities for capacity building, to help meet the development costs of collaboration, for example the costs of employing a 14-19 coordinator. This sum equates, on average, to £100,000 a year (with an actual range of £12,000 to £430,000) for individual authorities.





**44** Our survey found that 85 per cent of delivery consortia (181 out of 214) have joint 14-19 strategies in place, most of which take the form of a single agreed document. Survey responses also showed that the local partnerships are setting priorities that are consistent with the reforms (Figure 7). Half of delivery consortia (115 out of 230) have strategic plans up to at least 2009 (Figure 8). Since our fieldwork, the Department has written to local authorities and 14-19 stakeholder organisations, stating that all partnerships should be aiming to have in place, as a minimum, an outline strategy for provision to 2013, including full implementation of Diplomas.

**45** Clear structures and accountability help make joint working between partners focused and effective. Seventy per cent of delivery consortia (153 out of 219) considered that their partnership had set up appropriate arrangements for taking forward the reforms, and another 22 per cent said their arrangements were under review. Partnering institutions also need to be clear about their respective roles, and 79 per cent of consortia (169 out of 214) reported that roles and responsibilities were clearly defined. On our visits many people emphasised the importance of a 14-19 coordinator. Most partnerships have appointed a coordinator, often from a local authority or Learning and Skills Council background, whose main tasks include:

- helping develop and implement the 14-19 strategy;
- providing support to partners; and
- improving communication and collaboration.

**46** We found that successful partnerships periodically review their structures and arrangements to ensure they remain fit for purpose and are continually improving. Many partnerships have grown organically over time, evolving from earlier initiatives, and they benefit from strategic review and realignment. Partnerships have found that use of a self-assessment tool has helped with collaboration by encouraging partners to understand and be more open about strengths and weaknesses.

### Effective partnership working takes time to establish

**47** Three-quarters of delivery consortia (158 out of 215) responding to our survey reported they had been in existence for two or more years. However, there is a big difference between setting up partnership structures and accountabilities and getting them working well to produce specific improvements in education for young people. Many of the barriers that partnerships have identified to really effective collaboration require long term sustained effort to overcome them (Figure 9).

## 7 Local strategies set by local partnerships support the 14-19 reforms

Key priorities set by local partnerships for delivering their 14-19 strategies:

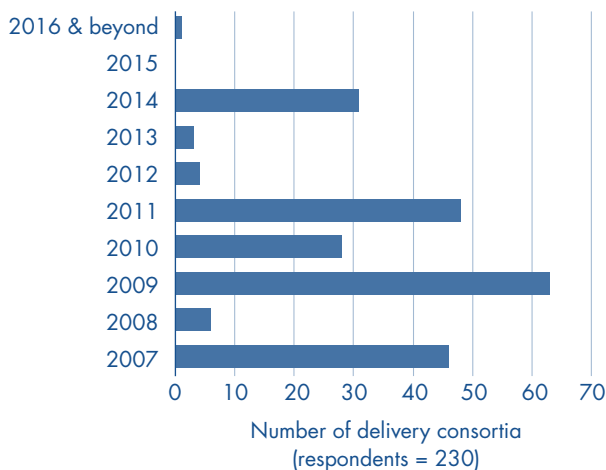
- **Enhancing and developing the curriculum to better meet learner needs:** developing broader and more flexible learning pathways to improve choice seen as a vital component to improving achievement levels.
- **Increasing post-16 participation** and reducing the number of young people not in employment, education or training.
- **Diploma delivery:** planning to deliver the Diplomas and/or preparing for the next round of applications to deliver Diplomas.
- **Strengthening collaboration and strategic management** to deliver learner entitlement. It is seen as a fundamental requirement to success that all relevant partners are actively involved and institutions are fully committed to collaboration.
- **Improving information, advice and guidance** making sure young people and parents understand clearly the opportunities available, and ensuring access to provision is available to all.
- **Employer engagement:** engaging with suitable employers and ensuring the benefits of the reforms, in particular Diplomas, are clearly understood.

Source: National Audit Office survey

## 8 How far ahead are consortia planning?

Our survey asked respondents how far ahead their current 14-19 strategy made plans.

Year strategy plans to



Source: National Audit Office survey

## 9 Main barriers identified by local partnerships

- **Securing sustainable funding.** Uncertainty over future funding streams can reduce the level of confidence and trust among partners, many of whom have responsibility for the viability of particular organisations.
- **Inadequate or limited resources and capacity** both for developing collaboration and meeting the statutory entitlement by 2013. There is a risk that organisations are tempted to 'protect their own'.
- **Shared commitment and responsibility.** Institutions have different priorities and may be in competition (e.g. performance tables). There is a fear that trust and relationships will not be strong enough to overcome these tensions.
- **Coordination and management difficulties.** Strategic planning is complex: there is a need to manage short-term, urgent work as well as extensive planning for the future with, at present, limited information on the curriculum that is to be delivered through the Diplomas.
- **Employer engagement.** Finding enough interested employers. For example, many areas have very few large businesses to work with.

Source: National Audit Office survey

**48** We found that the partnerships making the most progress are generally those that have built on existing partnerships, such as Excellence in Cities partnerships or those arising out of the Increased Flexibility Programme. Effective partnerships existed where there had historically been a strong impetus to collaborate. For example, the Knowsley Collegiate had originally formed in response to the area's low position in national education performance tables and collective agreement that the best way to address the low attainment was for institutions to work together. From our literature review and discussions with experienced education practitioners, we estimate that it takes up to five years to build enough trust between institutions to establish effective collaboration.

**49** In two-tier local authority areas we found that delivery consortia comprising institutions with a history of collaboration are more likely to be those planning to deliver Diplomas early. This result is unsurprising, but there is a considerable risk that areas without earlier practical experience of collaboration, which are also those that need to make most progress, will be slow to get started and will struggle to develop the collaboration needed to deliver comprehensive coverage in their area, for all 17 Diplomas, by 2013.

## There are wide differences in progress of delivery consortia

**50** Progress in establishing active delivery consortia at this early stage of implementation is variable. A third of delivery consortia (74 out of 213) reported that implementation of their strategy is still in the early stages. In some two-tier areas the differences arise partly from a deliberate strategy of the partnership to focus 14-19 development, and in particular the delivery of the Diplomas, within certain consortia, so that the partnership can learn from the experience before expanding provision to more consortia. Though there are virtues in this approach, there is a risk that delivery consortia that are currently undertaking relatively little development work in their area will not build up the experience and collaborative relationships necessary to make all Diplomas available by 2013. By contrast the majority of single-tier partnerships put forward applications to deliver one or more of the first five Diplomas from 2008.

**51** During our local visits, many people stressed the cost of collaboration. Though our survey indicated general satisfaction with partnership structures, it demonstrated concerns about resourcing (**Figure 10 overleaf**) which may also help to explain the relative caution of partnerships covering extensive areas towards launching development work in every area from the start.

## There are substantial logistical and practical challenges to collaborative provision which need to be overcome

**52** Transport between institutions is a considerable challenge in some areas, both urban and rural. In some urban areas there are considerable problems with traffic congestion at peak times which can create difficulties for young people moving between institutions, and in suburban areas bus routes tend to run into town and city centres rather than between suburbs. The Pathfinder evaluations found that the key challenges for partnerships in rural areas centred on transport.<sup>13</sup> Some of the schools we visited had previously experienced high drop-out rates when young people have started applied courses at institutions that entail long travelling times.

13 J Higham et al (2004), *14-19 Pathfinders: An Evaluation of the First Year*.

## 10 Partnership arrangements – resourcing and communication

Our survey of partnerships asked respondents to what extent they agreed/disagreed with the following statements. The results are displayed as a weighted average score.

Statement	Extent of agreement (weighted average <sup>1</sup> )
(i) Appropriate members from each organisation/institution regularly attend meetings	6
(ii) Those charged with partnership development and coordination are adequately resourced	2
(iii) The strategic groups of the consortium/partnership are adequately resourced	2
(iv) The operational groups of the consortium/partnership are adequately resourced	1
(v) There is an effective system of communication between the respective groups	4

Source: National Audit Office survey

### NOTES

1 -10 = strongly disagree, -5 = disagree, 0 = neither agree nor disagree, 5 = agree, 10 = strongly agree.

2 Statements (i) – (iii) based on respondents from 231 consortia; Statement (iv) based on respondents from 233 consortia; Statement (v) based on respondents from 241 consortia.

**53** Delivery challenges include the time taken to ‘travel to learn’, the cost of travel, supervision of young people when travelling and the organisation of timetables to take account of travelling arrangements. The Increased Flexibility Programme has given some schools and colleges good experience in tackling transport problems. In some areas we visited schools are already operating common or harmonised timetables which make it easier for young people to go off-site for learning without missing parts of their curriculum at their home institution. Nationally we found that progress in meeting these challenges is variable, for example almost two thirds of consortia responding to our survey are already in the process of devising common timetabling, whereas at least half of consortia are yet to start developing plans for transport arrangements (**Figure 11**). The Department has recently commissioned several pieces of research to better understand and respond to challenges around 14-19 transport and specifically in rural delivery.

**54** Where populations are dispersed, partnerships face a difficult trade-off between achieving economies of scale and education that is accessible to all young people. A number of 14-19 partnerships in such areas have developed arrangements which seek to reduce the need for young people to travel around. These include the use of distance learning and e-learning, such as Virtual Learning Environments, interactive web-enabled provision and video-conferencing, peripatetic teachers and trainers, and mobile learning facilities.

**55** From our visits we found that inter-school rivalry between pupils is regarded by some practitioners as an issue that may inhibit take-up of Diplomas in some, particularly urban, areas. In our focus groups, several students in Year 10 (aged 14 to 15) expressed strong views against mixing with pupils from other schools. However, some practitioners commented that collaboration between schools can break down even entrenched rivalries over time. For example, some of the Year 11 students in our focus groups who had made post-16 choices said that they were mentored by students from a local sixth form and this helped to break down barriers. In this and many other aspects of the reforms the views of young people – and their families – are vitally important, but our survey identified that only just over half of delivery consortia were currently collecting the views of young people to inform their planning.

**56** Young people who move between institutions still need pastoral support, and the question arises who should provide it. Protocols for providing pastoral support are widely regarded as an essential element of partnership arrangements. For example, if a young person who is based primarily at a particular school does not turn up at college for their one day per week, it is important to be clear what actions the school or college is expected to take in response. Some institutions, particularly further education colleges, collaborate with a large number of partners, so having consistent protocols is helpful to them in setting up appropriate administrative arrangements and assessing their resource requirements. Setting arrangements up can be especially difficult when, as is often the case, other services such as welfare for young people, operate over different areas. On the other hand, we found examples of local authority staff taking a central role, such as where local authority Youth Service personnel acted as learning mentors, accompanying young people and remaining with them all day.

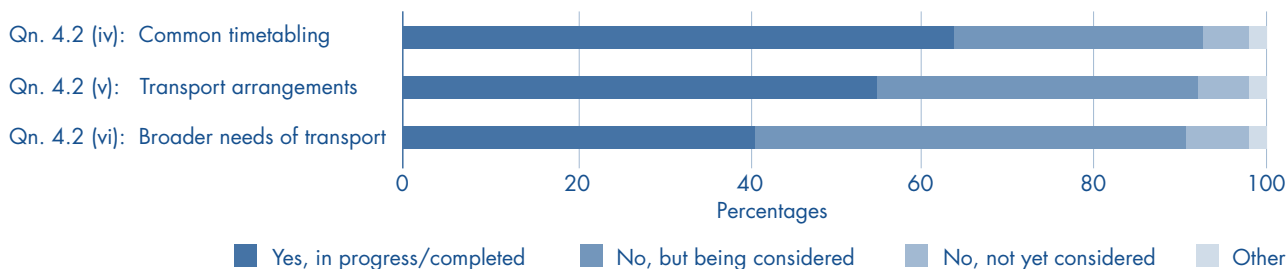
## 11 Progress in meeting logistical and practical challenges – common timetabling and transport arrangements

Our survey asked partnerships to indicate their progress against the following statements, now and in the short term (over the next two to three years), in particular in preparation for delivery of the Diplomas.

Qn. 4.2 (iv): Common timetabling – The consortium/partnership is devising common timetabling.

Qn. 4.2 (v): Transport arrangements – The consortium/partnership is developing transport arrangements which help support more flexible 14-19 curriculum delivery.

Qn. 4.2 (vi): Broader needs of transport – The consortium/partnership is assessing the broader needs of students travelling between institutions, as a consequence of Diploma delivery, and has developed plans to address these needs.



Source: National Audit Office survey

### NOTE

Questions 4.2(iv) and (vi) based on respondents from 238 consortia; Question 4.2 (v) based on respondents from 237 consortia.

## Information, advice and guidance are acknowledged to require more development

**57** Information, advice and guidance on available options have historically been characterised for most young people as being complex, confusing, competitive and lacking credibility.<sup>14</sup> Good-quality, comprehensive and impartial information, advice and guidance are acknowledged to have an important role in the successful delivery of the 14-19 reforms. Otherwise there is a risk that many young people could fail to select the best option for them. There is a particular need for the advice to be impartial and comprehensive because, even where a young person’s current institution tries their best not to over-sell the benefits of staying there to continue education with them, staff working at the institution inevitably know more about its options, and less about education routes the institution has limited or no connection with. Careers advisers have commented on the difficulty in providing advice from September 2007 about undertaking Diplomas before the UCAS tariffs are announced in early 2008.

**58** Almost 90 per cent of delivery consortia (211 out of 239) responding to our survey reported they are currently working on the processes and procedures to provide learners with impartial, accessible information and personalised advice and guidance. From September 2007 national standards were put in place, which provide a framework for the providers and commissioners of information, advice and guidance services. By April 2008, all local authorities will have assumed overall responsibility for the provision of young people’s information, advice and guidance. Information, advice and guidance for families will also be important, as research has shown that families have the most impact on young people’s choices. The Specialist Schools and Academies Trust has established a group of information, advice and guidance lead practitioners to help build a network for people with a role in supporting learners.

14 Foskett, N. (2004), *IAG (Information, Advice and Guidance) and young people’s participation decisions 14-19*, Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education and Training, Working Paper 25.

**59** A basic piece of information that every young person needs is a comprehensive guide to all the education options available in their local area. All areas had introduced local area-wide prospectuses by mid-October 2007, developed by 14-19 partnerships and accessible via the Department's website. The Learning and Skills Council is developing a performance framework to enable local areas to enhance the quality of their prospectuses. Some regions are planning regional prospectuses and there is already in existence a pan-London prospectus called 'Choice'.<sup>15</sup>

**60** The involvement of Connexions (or other careers advice service) in 14-19 partnerships provides important information on the impact on young people of developments in education and their transition into further and higher education and employment. The best performing partnerships have Connexions represented at the strategic level. Connexions undertake tracking of young people through the education system, allowing for comparisons between years and across cohorts. However, there needs to be more sophisticated tracking of young people through education into employment and more generally, for example to identify and help young people who are not in education or employment. Some areas have started to develop their prospectus to give a common application process across institutions, which has the potential to help with tracking progression in future (**Figure 12**).

**61** Many young people like using information technology, and some areas are developing technology-based tools for information, advice and guidance that also seek to increase the extent to which the young person can drive the process. For example, in Wolverhampton a computer program is being used to map a young person's achievements to date, their education, and their career options into a single profile (**Figure 13**), linked to the area prospectus.<sup>16</sup>

## 12 Common application process

In Thanet young people apply for post-16 education or training via an online application form. The application specifies the institutions the young person wants to apply to, similar to the UCAS application process.

From an initial central point, the application is sent to the institutions applied for and the young person is offered a guidance interview where a Connexions adviser is present. If a young person applies for more than three institutions a Connexions adviser gets in touch immediately to help focus the young person on what they are looking to achieve. The average number of institutions applied for is 1.8 per applicant.

The process also helps to identify young people who have not applied for any course and may require particular support.

*Source: National Audit Office fieldwork*

## 13 An individual learning plan

'my-iPlan' is a dynamic web-based individual learning plan developed by Wolverhampton 14-19 Partnership with its stakeholders. It is designed to support the learner and all those involved in their learning and progress. It has a number of uses, including recording progress at Key Stage 3 (11 to 14 year olds), informing specific choices about the subjects or learning programme a learner will follow, and determining career goals. The learner and those who support their learning can view and update the iPlan through secure 24-hour online access. Learners can record their achievements and aspirations, with information validated by authorised personnel, and the software provides powerful reporting functions.

*Source: National Audit Office fieldwork*

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.yourlondon.gov.uk/choice>.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.areaprospectus.com>



### Risk area 3: Full involvement of all partners

**62** The changes to 14-19 education will require a great deal of work at local level, with a wide range of organisations working together. Local authorities are responsible for providing strategic leadership, but they need many other organisations to be fully involved, such as education providers, employers, the Learning and Skills Council and Education Business Links Organisations.

In some places all institutions are playing an active part, but in others some are taking time to become fully engaged

**63** All schools and colleges need to be fully involved in local 14-19 partnerships, for three reasons:

- all young people will be entitled to take up a Diploma, whatever school or college they happen to attend, so institutions need to be involved for the benefit of their own students;
- the amount of work to be done in terms of teacher/lecturer training, provision or upgrading of facilities, development of curricula and materials, cannot be done efficiently by a single institution; and
- some tasks – such as compiling a local prospectus, agreeing a common timetable and organising transport – can only be done collaboratively.

**64** Most areas we visited cited examples of earlier collaborations providing increased choice of curriculum options for young people that had led to greater engagement with education and improved participation in education post-16. Schools especially appreciated arrangements with local further education colleges that had enabled a young person to remain based at the institution they were familiar with while undertaking some of their study at the college. Some special schools had high expectations of the Diplomas, expecting that Level 1 Diplomas will be a good option for many of their pupils, and that some could take the Diplomas to more advanced levels.

**65** Around 40 per cent of consortia responding to our survey indicated institutions that were not participating in the consortium or partnership. Of those non-participating institutions, the most commonly mentioned were individual schools, representing all main types of secondary schools. The second most commonly mentioned were individual higher education institutions, followed by independent training providers.

**66** Although there is some evidence that competition between institutions can improve young people's attainment,<sup>17</sup> competition has been cited as a barrier to collaboration.<sup>18</sup> Respondents to our survey told us that one of five main barriers to successfully delivering their local 14-19 strategy is institutions not fully committing to collaborative arrangements and sharing responsibility (Figure 9, page 19). From our case study visits we found a common concern that institutions that are more successful in terms of student attainment may be reluctant to consider joint provision with less successful institutions, in case it affects their results. We found no similar barriers in comparator countries we examined (Appendix 5), where competition did not feature as a barrier to collaboration.

**67** Areas where there are high proportions of schools with sixth forms, or with ambitions to have sixth forms, may be less willing to collaborate where they consider themselves to be competing for 16 to 19 year olds. Schools with small sixth forms can feel especially vulnerable to the risk that the partnership will decide it is more cost-effective to concentrate post-16 education in other institutions in the partnership. The Department is currently developing a post-16 progression measure which aims to promote collaboration between schools and post-16 providers by recognising those schools which support their students to make appropriate choices as they move into post-compulsory learning.

**68** Consolidation of institutions, where appropriate and possible, would mitigate the difficulties encountered with delivery through partnership working, and could improve efficiency. Other countries have consolidated education institutions to improve the range and delivery of qualifications, for example into campus-style groupings in the Netherlands. An example of similar plans in England is a proposal by Plymouth University in Cornwall to combine a secondary school, a further education college and the university, creating an 'all in one' academy that would provide integrated education available from age 11 through to age 21.

**69** We found concern both locally and among national bodies that the amount of training and re-training available to teaching and lecturing staff will need to be extensive to meet the expected change in demand for subjects. The amount of development to ensure there is sufficient good quality teaching staff to deliver the Diplomas between now and 2013 is unknown at this point in time. Our survey results indicated that 45 per cent of consortia (109 out of 241) have yet to undertake a skills audit of the

17 Burgess et al (2005), *Who wins and who loses from school accountability? The distribution of educational gain in English secondary schools*, Working Paper No. 05/128, Centre for Market and Public Organisation, University of Bristol.

18 For example, Higham et al (2005), *Collaborative Approaches to 14-19 Provision: an Evaluation of the Second Year of the 14-19 Pathfinder Initiative*, Research Report RR642, Department for Education and Skills.



teaching workforce to determine professional development requirements. In addition less than half (106 out of 241) of consortia are planning a collaborative approach to the deployment and development of the teaching workforce.

**70** The Department has established a programme of mandatory three-day training for all Diploma practitioners, and Initial Teacher Training providers will include training on the Diplomas. The Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group, a social partnership of 11 organisations representing employers, the Government and school workforce unions, established the 11-19 Workforce Working Group in October 2007 to assess the impact of the curriculum reforms on the workforce, and to advise on associated workforce development policy.

**71** Some organisations we consulted were concerned that the Diplomas are perceived to be designed for less able students, despite the fact that they are being developed as equivalents to existing qualifications (Figure 1, page 4). In general, our visits confirmed the perception that more academically successful schools, particularly where students are likely to progress to A level, tend to be less enthusiastic about the Diplomas. Even so, we found some examples of such schools taking a positive view of the reciprocal benefits of working with other institutions in their area (Figure 14).

### Local authority boundaries can be a barrier to collaboration with the most appropriate partners

**72** In some places, earlier collaborations between institutions have historically crossed local authority boundaries for reasons of geography and ease of travel. Local authority boundaries do not necessarily match the most effective groupings of institutions from the perspective of young people working out the best and most convenient place for study. We found examples of schools that are reluctant to partner with institutions within their local authority because the majority of young people attending live in a neighbouring authority. Some partnerships are nevertheless reluctant to consider collaboration across boundaries until they have established effective partnerships in their own area. The Department is encouraging cross-boundary collaboration and there are good examples (Figure 15) that the more reluctant partnerships can learn from.

**73** Some of the more advanced consortia have already determined that they will not attempt to deliver all the Diplomas, but will instead buy some elements from neighbouring areas. This thinking exists both within two-tier partnerships where individual delivery

consortia intend to deliver specific Diplomas to other consortia within the strategic partnership, and single-tier partnerships, particularly in large metropolitan areas, which intend to buy in certain Diploma provision from neighbouring partnerships. This practice is acceptable to the Department and it has initiated a project to examine this issue in rural areas. Local authorities and the Learning and Skills Council are obliged by statute to ensure that the full range of Diploma provision will be available in their areas and the expectation is that they will communicate with neighbouring areas if they intend to buy provision in this way.

**74** We found no evidence that the scale of the need to buy in provision is known or being assessed at the regional and national levels, or that potential risks, such as poor access or very long travel times for some young people, are being evaluated in this context. Some level of regional planning of coordinated Diploma provision may be required to guarantee good access to the full national entitlement in some areas of low population.

#### 14 A grammar school's involvement in a 14-19 partnership

All schools in Kent are part of a 14-19 partnership. This includes Academies, specialist schools and grammar schools. Dane Court Grammar School is an especially active partner in Thanet. The school sees the involvement of academically high-performing schools as important to the credibility of the Diplomas.

The school is paying the largest amount towards the cost of the 14-19 coordinator, partly in order to demonstrate its commitment towards the partnership. The school considers it already has evidence of mutual benefits for both the learners and the institutions. It has young people from other schools enrolled with Dane Court to study A levels, and some of its students have attended other institutions to undertake applied studies.

Source: National Audit Office fieldwork

#### 15 Working across local authority areas

Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council have encouraged appropriate cross-authority collaborations. There is a strong partnership between the two local authorities, also involving Connexions and the Learning and Skills Council. The partnership has facilitated the pooling of resources and the development of joint strategies. Partnership working has also begun to break down an historical divide between the area's urban and rural schools.

Source: National Audit Office fieldwork

### Collaboration to support the work-related element of the reforms is the least advanced aspect of partnership development

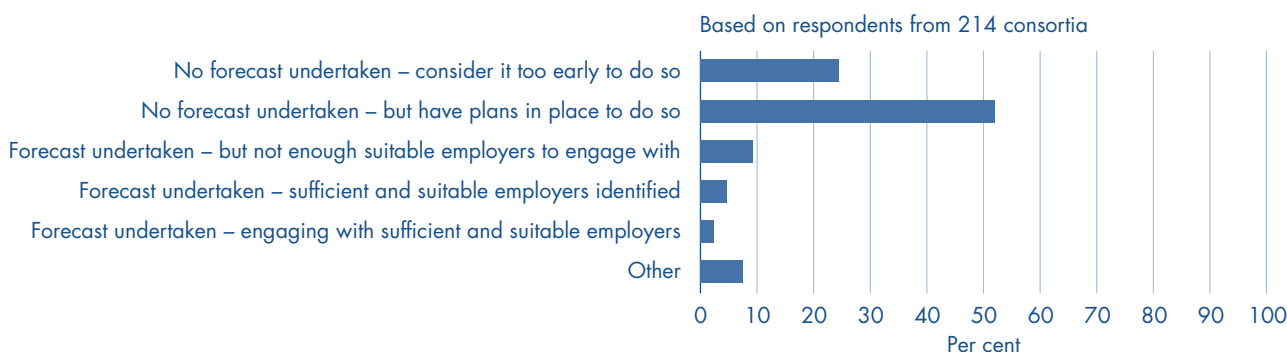
**75** On the whole, schools and colleges are well represented in partnerships. Our survey and case studies found that employers and independent training providers are less well represented. Forty-five per cent of delivery consortia (109 out of 241) have not yet involved employers in developing their local approach to 14-19 education. England does not share the strong tradition of employer engagement in education that we found in the comparator countries we examined (Appendix 5), and increasing involvement of employers is unlikely to be achieved without considerable effort.

**76** Our survey indicated that few consortia have yet attempted to forecast the future level of employer engagement needed to deliver the reforms, and that only 10 per cent had a fully developed strategy for engaging employers (**Figure 16**).

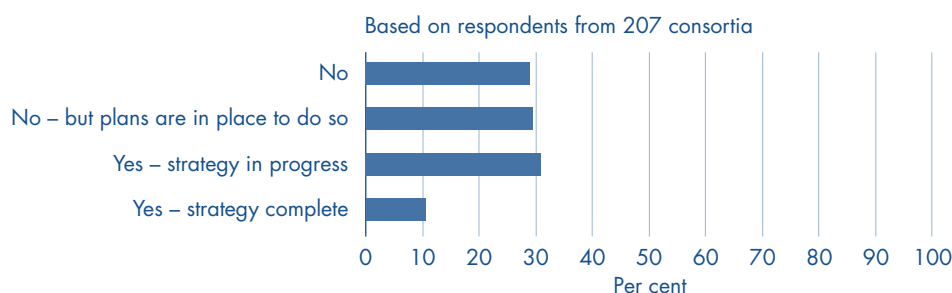
**77** Though few forecasts have been made, the likely demands on employers arising from the Diplomas are expected to be large. Despite employers currently providing around 550,000 work experience placements for 14 to 16 year olds each year, and there being around 300,000 employers engaged by Education Business Link Organisations, we encountered widespread concern that it will be difficult to engage the necessary number and range of employers to meet the requirements of the Diplomas. When asked about the current situation, two-thirds of delivery consortia (142 out of 215) reported that there were insufficient numbers of suitable employers to engage with now.

## 16 Employer engagement

Respondents were asked to select the statement which best described their situation in terms of forecasting future employer engagement in order to deliver the 14-19 reforms.



Respondents were asked if the consortium had a strategy for engaging employers.



Source: National Audit Office survey

**78** The Department's implementation plan recognises the need for employers, supported by Sector Skills Councils, to increase capacity to provide work experience for Diplomas, particularly focusing on experience relevant to the first five Diplomas to be available from September 2008. Recent research<sup>19</sup> found that employers make a unique and substantial contribution to students' learning and experience and there is clear evidence that work-related learning in the secondary school curriculum has become better established over the past three years. Findings from an employer survey reported that work experience boosts school leavers' earnings by £1,000 per year.

**79** Some consortia suggested they were finding it especially difficult to get employers involved while the content of the Diplomas was not known, as partnerships were themselves unclear about employers' potential contribution; employers understandably want to know precisely what is being asked of them and when. However, only the Level 3 Diploma requires sector-specific work experience; at Levels 1 and 2 work-related learning is focused on employability and need not be work experience related to a particular sector. Partnerships therefore have some flexibility in setting up a sufficient amount and range of work-related learning and work experience.

**80** Coordination of engagement with employers is essential because employers dislike having their time taken up by many approaches, all making similar requests. However, our survey results indicated that only a quarter (53 out of 216) of consortia are so far coordinating engagement with employers centrally across the partnership (example at **Figure 17**), and many respondents suggested that their arrangements needed to be more coherent. A range of public and private intermediaries support work experience at Year 10, at A level equivalent and in work-related programmes such as the Young Apprenticeships, so an employer could receive similar approaches from a range of organisations such as Education Business Partnerships, other Education Business Link Organisations, independent training providers, as well as direct contacts from schools and colleges or individual young people requesting work experience.

**81** Where employer engagement is well developed, it is often with large employers. Many small and medium-sized enterprises are difficult to reach, with research suggesting that the main reason is their lack of capacity to sustain links with education.<sup>20</sup> Some partnerships are addressing the difficulty in engaging with small employers through their own creation of realistic work environments (**Figure 18**).

**82** The most forward-thinking partnerships have also started to link work on 14-19 education to local regeneration and business development, for example by having dual representation on the 14-19 partnership and the Local Strategic Partnership<sup>21</sup> which deals with a range of economic and social issues. This enables the partnership to better identify the skills and professions that will be needed locally as the area is regenerated, informing the planning of 14-19 applied provision, and also identifying future opportunities for work experience.

## 17 Employer engagement brokerage

Kent County Council has established a partnership-wide service to broker all contacts with employers.

When the service was set up, there were concerns that effective employer contacts and activity already set up through the existing East Kent Education Business Partnership in Thanet could be lost. The partnership therefore took a flexible approach, retaining the Education Business Partnership and establishing links between it and the new partnership-wide service. Since this decision, the Thanet Business Partnership has grown in staff numbers as the local employers and headteachers have continued using its services, and the Learning and Skills Council is also exploring possible contracts with the Partnership.

Source: National Audit Office fieldwork

## 18 Creating a work environment for work experience and training

Berwick is an isolated town in Northumberland, which is a long distance from the main Northumberland College campus. The College has taken out a lease on a hairdresser's salon in Berwick so that, in partnership with Bridges to Work, the local school's employer engagement department, it can offer Hair and Beauty work experience and training to young people. The project involves a range of local businesses contributing to the training programme.

Source: National Audit Office fieldwork

<sup>19</sup> Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (2007), *Work-related learning at key stage 4*, First replication study: a QCA commissioned report on the development of work-related learning in the three years since September 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Learning and Skills Network (2006), *14-19: Programme of Support for Delivery of Change on the Ground – Developing employer engagement*.

<sup>21</sup> Local Strategic Partnerships are single non-statutory bodies that bring together local public, private, community and voluntary organisations, generally at the level of District, County and Unitary councils. They work with the local community to identify and coordinate action on issues such as crime, unemployment, education, health and housing.

**83** Independent training providers often have relatively well established contacts with employers. In many areas, however, their potential contribution to 14-19 education is undervalued, though we found some places where this was not the case (example at **Figure 19**).

### **19** Improving collaboration between educational institutions and independent training providers

Knowsley's Provider Network forum group comprises 23 post-16 independent training providers. The network formed because where previously the providers were working in isolation, it was felt that learners and the community were not getting the greatest possible benefits. Providers in the network consider themselves to be in a genuine collaboration, though they accept some competition still exists and that they will not agree on every issue. The collaboration involves sharing staff, agreeing on joint plans for the area and some joint marketing. For example, they approach schools as the Knowsley Provider Network rather than as 23 individual providers, which is efficient and gives schools a coherent view of what they can offer. There is a Network representative on every sub-group of the Knowsley Collegiate (Knowsley's 14-19 partnership).

*Source: National Audit Office fieldwork*

## Risk area 4: Confidence at local level that the reform process is well managed and that key products are of good quality and will be ready on time

**84** As indicated in paragraph 28, the reforms require a large amount of interdependent work to be carried out as separate tasks. People therefore need to feel confident about other organisations meeting their commitments. In particular, people working locally need to be confident that the centrally managed outputs, such as the specifications and other elements of the Diplomas, will be of good quality and ready on time.

### The reforms are being implemented to a demanding timetable, both nationally and locally

**85** Consortia are concerned that aspects of the reforms which they have to implement, to a demanding timetable, will not be adequately thought through and trialled. In April 2007, the then Education and Skills Select Committee reported on their inquiry into the Diplomas, and expressed concerns about the readiness of the Diplomas for introduction in 2008.<sup>22</sup> Although the first five Diploma specifications were published on time in September 2007, the timeframe was felt by some to have been a missed opportunity for allowing partnerships to plan over the summer holidays. Others recognised, however, that the timescale for producing the specifications was already tight, and that everyone moving forward at a fast pace was essential, given the size of the whole programme and the importance and urgency of the issues it is seeking to address.

**86** **Figure 20 overleaf** shows the status of the Department's key milestones in the implementation plan for the 14-19 programme that are most relevant to our report. As at September 2007, the Department and its partners were on track in fulfilling these commitments.

22 Education and Skills Select Committee (2007), *14-19 Diplomas: Fifth report of session 2006-07*.

## 20 Status of key milestones relevant to the development of local partnerships

Task	Timetable	Status
Set up Diploma Development Partnerships for first five Diplomas	end of 2005	Completed
Diploma Development Partnerships develop content of first five Diplomas	summer 2006	Completed
All areas establish 14-19 partnerships	September 2006	Completed – at local authority strategic level
Learning Visits	2005-2008	Completed for first four tranches. Fifth tranche planned for October to December 2007
Awarding bodies develop Diploma specifications	July 2007	Completed
Phase 1 (first five) Diploma specifications available to schools, colleges and providers	September 2007	Completed
All areas publish local prospectus online	September 2007	Completed: all available by mid-October 2007
Full national pilot of Functional Skills	September 2007 to 2010	In progress
Teaching of first five Diplomas begins	September 2008	
Teaching of second five Diplomas begins	September 2009	
Teaching of last four of the original 14 Diplomas begins	September 2010	
Teaching of three subject-based Diplomas begins	September 2011	

Source: National Audit Office

### Partnerships apply to the Diploma Gateway to provide the Diplomas in their area

**87** Partnerships wishing to deliver one or more of the first five Diplomas in their area applied through the Diploma Gateway, a process established by the Department and commencing in October 2006. Consultants working on behalf of the Department and the relevant Diploma Development Partnership assessed each application, separately for each Diploma, against a range of criteria (**Figure 21**), and provided assessments to regional panels.

**88** The regional panels included representatives from the Department, Government Offices, Diploma Development Partnerships, the Learning and Skills Council, higher education institutions and the National Strategies programme.<sup>23</sup> In deciding whether to recommend each application, the panels took account of relevant Ofsted reports and institutional performance data, and the relevant Government Office's assessment of the strength of the partnership making the application. The panels' recommendations were then considered by a National Moderation Panel made up of representatives from the Department, Diploma Development Partnerships and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, before going to Ministers for approval in March 2007.

<sup>23</sup> National Strategies is a professional development programme for secondary school teachers, practitioners and managers. The programme comprises nine regional teams.

## 21 Diploma Gateway criteria

Applications to the Diploma Gateway were assessed against a range of criteria across five themes:

Theme	Criteria
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The consortium includes schools, colleges and independent training providers, and has links to higher education institutions and Lifelong Learning Networks (where appropriate).</li> <li>■ Roles and accountabilities are agreed, with clear organisational and administrative arrangements.</li> <li>■ The consortium has an understanding of the specific needs of each Diploma it has applied for.</li> </ul>
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The application includes details of the specialist facilities that will be needed to ensure access to high-quality applied and practical learning, showing how they will be in place in time for Diploma teaching.</li> <li>■ It shows evidence of clear responsibility for managing specialist facilities and ensuring access for the whole consortium.</li> </ul>
Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The consortium has a clear understanding of the type of staff that will be needed.</li> <li>■ It understands the training requirements of the current workforce.</li> <li>■ It understands how new recruits will be brought into the workforce and trained.</li> </ul>
Information, advice and guidance (IAG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ IAG should be integrated in the overall careers programme.</li> <li>■ It should be timely, impartial, and a range of approaches are to be used.</li> <li>■ It tackles stereotypes of race, gender, and socio-economic status.</li> </ul>
Employer engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The application shows evidence of employer involvement in planning.</li> <li>■ The consortium is drawing on existing mechanisms, such as Employer Business Partnerships.</li> <li>■ It will be able to offer high-quality work placements.</li> <li>■ Employers are involved in provision of learning resources, visits and mentoring.</li> </ul>

Source: Department for Children, Schools and Families

**89** Recommendations fell into one of four categories:

Category 1 – recommended to go through for September 2008 delivery with no conditions.

Category 2 – recommended to go through for September 2008 delivery with conditions to be met within three months.

Category 3 – not ready for September 2008 delivery but recommended to commence the following year, with conditions to be met by end of 2007.

Category 4 – Not recommended; application to be resubmitted at a later date.



## The first Diploma Gateway approved almost 39,000 Diploma places from September 2008

**90** The Diploma Gateway approved partnerships to deliver almost 39,000 places for the first five Diplomas, to be available from September 2008 (**Figure 22**). The Creative and Media Diploma received the highest number of applications (263 out of 1,127), and has the highest proportion of places available from September 2008 (30 per cent: 11,459 places out of 38,777 approved).

**91** A total of 1,127 applications were received from 361 consortia across 95 per cent of local authority areas (143 out of 150). A relatively high proportion of consortia (32 per cent: 114 out of 361) applied for all five Diplomas, and 149 consortia from 100 local authority areas were approved to deliver at least one Diploma. The majority (63 per cent) were approved to deliver one Diploma from September 2008, with a small number of consortia (10) approved to deliver all five Diplomas (**Figure 23**). There are 50 local authority areas that will not be delivering any Diplomas from September 2008.

**92** In addition to the 149 consortia approved for delivery in 2008, 195 consortia were approved to deliver a total of 321 Diploma courses from September 2009, subject to specified conditions being met.

**93** From September 2008, 1.2 per cent of young people in England will be able to take one of the 39,000 approved Diploma places, available at Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3. **Figure 24** illustrates the regional variation in numbers of places as a proportion of total eligible young people, between 0.8 per cent in Yorkshire and The Humber and 1.6 per cent in the South West. A variation of this magnitude might be expected in the first year, though it is important that all areas make plans for future progress on the first, and indeed on the later, Diplomas.

## 22 Applications, approvals and number of places, by Diploma type, from September 2008

	Construction and the Built Environment	Creative and Media	Engineering	Society Health and Development	IT	Total
Applications	213	263	188	232	231	1,127
<b>Approved for 2008</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>256</b>
Places:						
Level 1	2,075	3,109	2,373	1,860	2,518	11,935
Level 2	2,325	4,956	3,060	3,038	3,620	16,999
Level 3	1,198	3,394	1,579	1,929	1,743	9,843
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,598</b>	<b>11,459</b>	<b>7,012</b>	<b>6,827</b>	<b>7,881</b>	<b>38,777</b>

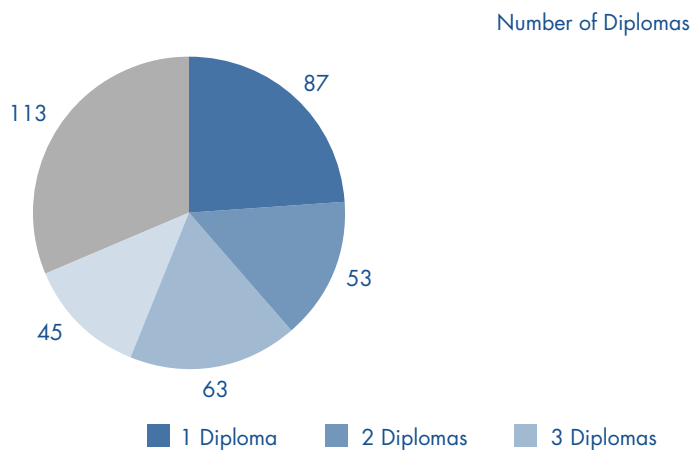
Source: National Audit Office analysis of Departmental data

### NOTE

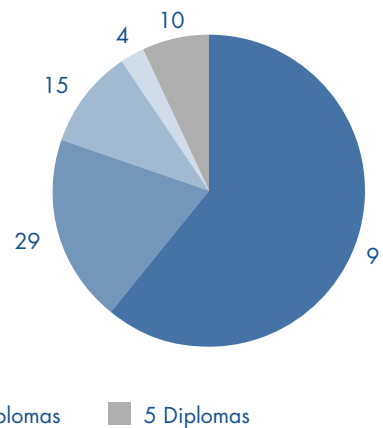
Appendix 4 presents the equivalent data on a regional basis.

### 23 Applications and approvals to deliver between one and five Diplomas from September 2008

Breakdown of the 361 consortia applications showing the number of Diplomas they applied to deliver



Result of the 149 successful consortia applications showing the number of Diplomas they will deliver

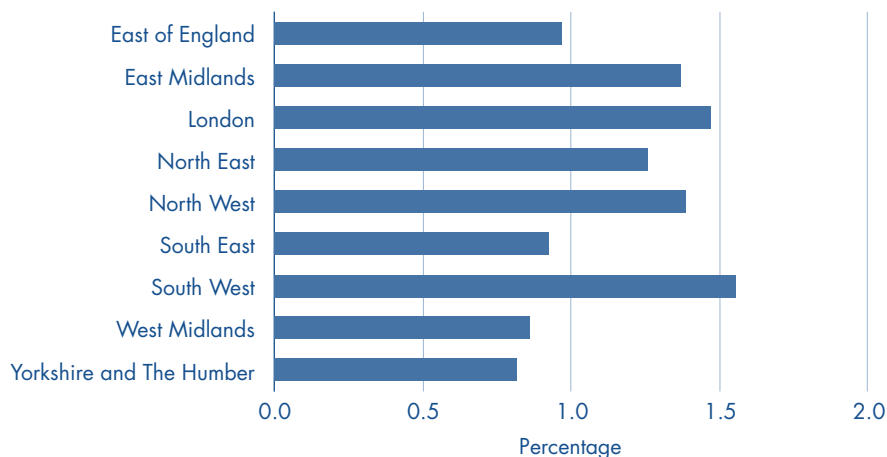


Source: National Audit Office analysis of Departmental data

### 24 Regional delivery of Diplomas in 2008

In 2008, there will be 38,777 Diploma places available across Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3, equivalent to 1.2 per cent of the projected population of 15 to 19 year olds (3.3 million) in England.

Number of places as a percentage of total learners by region<sup>1</sup>



Number of Diploma places by region

East of England	3,441
East Midlands	3,993
London	6,524
North East	2,149
North West	6,522
South East	4,997
South West	5,168
West Midlands	3,107
Yorkshire and The Humber	2,876
<b>Total</b>	<b>38,777</b>

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Departmental data

NOTES

1 Estimates of total learners by region in 2008 are based on National Statistics Subnational Population Projections, based on the 2004 mid-year population estimates (published 20 December 2005). Age ranges available at regional level are only available for 15 to 19 year olds and not 14 to 18 year olds.

2 Further breakdown of learner places by region is at Appendix 4.

**94** From our case studies we found widespread uncertainty at local level about how popular the Diplomas will be with young people. Partnerships considered that there were too many unknown factors, such as the need for young people to first have a clear idea of what the Diplomas entail, to be able to make realistic forecasts of future take-up of the Diplomas. From our survey we found that 60 per cent of partnerships were forecasting local take-up of the Diplomas, but a quarter considered that it was too early to make forecasts.

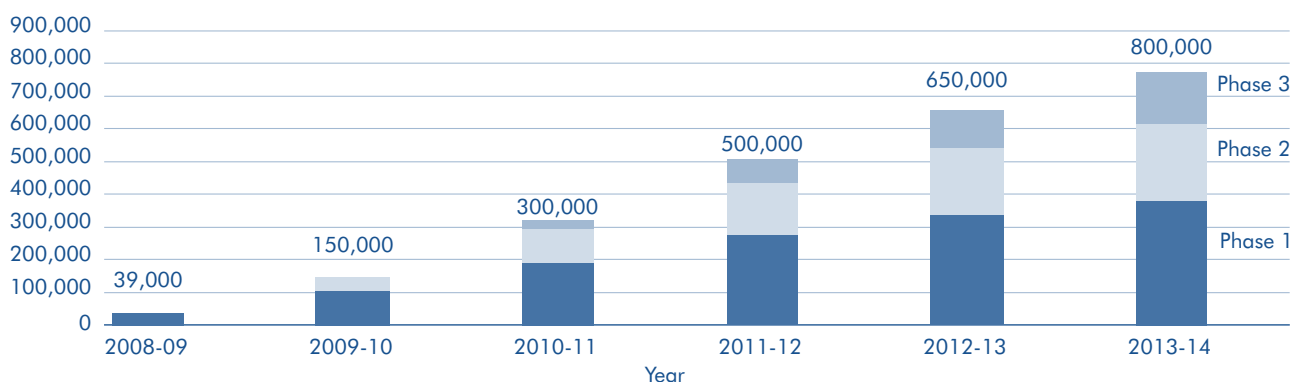
**95** The Department is making estimates of learner demand for Diplomas to 2013. Based on current available data, it forecasts that around 800,000 14 to 19 year olds could be studying Diplomas by 2013, equivalent to 25 per cent of the cohort (**Figure 25**). Forecasts are based on take-up of existing applied qualifications and the results of the first Diploma Gateway round. However,

given the uncertainty there is about demand for a qualification that has not yet been taught, these estimates should be treated with caution. The 39,000 Diploma places available from September 2008 represent 5 per cent of the forecast total. A further 39,000 Diploma places were approved for delivery from September 2009, subject to conditions being met. The Department anticipates that a further 60,000 to 70,000 places will be approved in early 2008 for delivery from September 2009.

**96** The Department will revise the estimates of learner demand when data from the second Diploma Gateway becomes available. It will continue to revise estimates up to 2013 as further data becomes available, such as the level of take-up of the first five Diplomas in 2008. In the meantime the Department is collecting information about student interest in Diplomas through options evenings from consortia delivering Diplomas in 2008.

**25** The Department's estimates of learner demand for Diplomas to 2013

Estimated number of 14-19 Diploma learners



Source: Department for Children, Schools and Families

NOTES

- 1 Phase 1 = first five Diplomas (available from 2008), Phase 2 = next five Diplomas (available from 2009), Phase 3 = next four Diplomas (available from 2010).
- 2 Estimated totals are rounded to the nearest 50,000, except for 2008-09 where the number is rounded to the closest 1,000 and is based on estimates made by consortia during the first Diploma Gateway round.
- 3 The Department will continue to revise estimates up to 2013 as more information becomes available, such as take-up of the first five Diplomas in 2008.
- 4 Estimates do not take account of the new subject-based Diplomas, announced in October 2007.

## Issues in the first Diploma Gateway round reported by partnerships have informed improvements to the second round that started in September 2007

**97** The Department regards the first Diploma Gateway round to have been rigorous and transparent. For example, the Diploma Gateway guidance and assessment criteria were publicly available. Numbers of appeals against decisions were low, with 30 appeals from over 1,000 submissions. However, criticisms of the process were a strong theme in the views expressed to us by frontline staff who made applications. The main two areas of criticism were consistency of decisions and the quality of feedback on applications. The number of appeals was unlikely to be a good measure of satisfaction, in that some local staff said they had been reluctant to appeal, because they considered the likelihood of a successful appeal to be small compared with the effort an appeal would require.

**98** Some partnerships considered that the quality of feedback on applications was poor and sometimes contradictory. For example, some partnerships making applications for more than one Diploma, and who duplicated parts of the applications common to the different Diplomas, suggested that feedback on these common aspects was sometimes contradictory. Probably the most commonly voiced complaint concerned the word limit per section in the applications, especially since negative feedback on applications frequently referred to a lack of sufficient detail. We reviewed feedback on the applications made by the partnerships in the areas we visited and concluded that the partnerships' criticisms of the feedback were largely justified, and that considerable benefits could be gained from improving its quality and comprehensiveness.

**99** The Department has acknowledged these criticisms and has made improvements to the process for the second Diploma Gateway which started in September 2007. The Department is seeking to encourage well constructed, succinct applications, so is reluctant to have no word limit. However, it has increased the word limit of certain sections in the Diploma application form where more detail could be helpful. It has also avoided the need for duplication of sections between applications by requiring only one application per consortium regardless of the number of Diplomas being applied for. A single section now covers general aspects of the consortium, and there are separate sections specific to each Diploma. The process is also to take more extensive account of other reviews of local

areas, such as Ofsted reports. The Department has also strengthened the second round of the Diploma Gateway to make more explicit the expectation of involvement by higher education institutions.

**100** The Department had not expected such a large number of applications to the first round of the Diploma Gateway, and agrees that the process for capturing feedback from the regional panels could be improved. It has developed a more sophisticated mechanism for the second round to capture more accurately and comprehensively both the views of the regional panels and the comments of the consultants engaged to undertake the initial assessment. The checklists for use by the regional panels have been updated and improved. In addition, the Department has published the features of successful self-assessment applications to assist consortia applying for future Diploma Gateway rounds.

## Emphasis of the Diploma Gateway is currently on promoting progress in the most advanced areas

**101** Some partnerships, particularly those that were less successful in the first round, perceive that resources are being targeted at the most advanced areas. For example, £30,000 was allocated per successful application to areas approved for Diplomas to start from September 2008, whereas areas that gained approval to start Diplomas in 2009, or whose partnerships had to resubmit their application, were each allocated £18,000. Partnerships which did not submit an application to the first round have received no funding. The Department considers that at this stage in the implementation it is correct to prioritise those consortia delivering Diplomas from September 2008.

**102** All areas will have to provide all Diplomas by 2013, whatever their position now. In our assessment, some partnerships were adopting a 'wait and see' approach and were not confident that they will be able to deliver the full national entitlement by 2013. Although 95 per cent of local authority areas submitted at least one application to the first round of the Diploma Gateway, some of the partnerships whose applications were unsuccessful expressed a degree of relief, seeing it as an opportunity to review the success of others establishing the first Diplomas from September 2008. The most common reason given by partnerships which did not make a Diploma application was that the partnership considered it lacked capacity and/or partnership working was not yet sufficiently well developed.

**103** Several partnerships suggested that there was insufficient support for those that were unsuccessful, to help prepare them to be successful in future rounds of the Diploma Gateway. The Department has responded

by increasing support for these partnerships (**Figure 26**), for example support from the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust.

## 26 Support for 14-19 partnerships

Two levels of support are available: general support to all partnerships, and more specific support for those partnerships and practitioners delivering Diplomas from September 2008.

### General support

#### Regional Advisers

The level of support that each area needs is determined through the Progress Check process<sup>1</sup>. Regional advisers are being appointed by the Department and Government Offices during autumn 2007; their role is to assess needs and provide support to consortia, particularly those felt to need the most help. The advisers will have access to some funding to help pay for the support.

#### Specialist Schools and Academies Trust

In September 2007 the Department agreed a programme of support to be led by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, for consortia planning to put forward applications to the second and third Diploma Gateway rounds.

#### Curriculum modelling tool

A tool, developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, to support schools and their partners in re-designing their secondary curriculum to make the most of the opportunities provided by changes to the curriculum and the introduction of Diplomas.

#### Self-assessment toolkit for strategic partnerships

A self-assessment toolkit, being developed by the Learning and Skills Council, to enable strategic partnerships to gauge progress in taking forward the 14-19 reforms.

#### Professional development for leaders and managers

Provided by the National College of School Leadership and the Centre for Excellence in Leadership: includes termly regional one-day seminars, face-to-face coaching, one-day workshops, leadership exchange programme, organisational development and support for managing change, and online material and network.

#### Regional conferences

Introducing online training tools for practitioners. To take place during January and February 2008.

*Source: Department for Children, Schools and Families*

### Support for exams officers

Including regional conferences introducing the reforms during September to November 2007, a helpdesk, workshops, Learning Visits to exemplar centres, online and written guidance, and face-to-face support from the National Assessment Agency.

### Learning Visits

To one of ten Pathfinder areas running from October to December 2007 [Learning Visits are explained in paragraph 106].

### Support for September 2008 consortia

#### Practitioner Diploma Training Programme

The Specialist Schools and Academies Trust is delivering a three-day Practitioner Diploma Training Programme which covers the vision and structure of each Diploma, effective learning and motivation strategies, and collaborative delivery. The training includes one day in a relevant workplace which will focus on effective links with employers and the work-related context. Practitioners will be able to access ongoing support from Lead Diploma Practitioners and the Quality Improvement Agency's Virtual Learning Environment.

#### Online and written support materials

For both practitioners and leaders/managers.

#### Online training needs analysis

Provided by the Training and Development Agency and Lifelong Learning UK, for teachers and support staff.

#### Twinning Network

The Department has set up a Twinning Network, pairing consortia who are preparing to deliver the Diplomas from 2008 with staff from the Department's 14-19 Reform Group. 41 consortia took up the offer. The pairs work on specific delivery issues and seek to identify good practice for sharing more widely.

### NOTE

<sup>1</sup> Progress Checks are completed by local authorities on an annual basis. They include self-assessments against 15 quantitative and qualitative criteria, such as progress in setting up collaborative arrangements.



## Risk area 5: Good communication of progress and lessons learned

**104** The reforms entail substantial changes to the curriculum offered to young people, and to the way that learning will be delivered. Local partnerships and others delivering the reforms therefore need to have timely access to well coordinated and good quality information and guidance.

### A programme to trial different options has identified and disseminated useful lessons

**105** The Department established a Pathfinders programme to trial possible approaches to implementing the reforms. From January 2003 until August 2005, 39 Pathfinders, introduced in two phases, tested options in a range of geographical and socio-economic circumstances. The Pathfinders tested collaborative working among, for example, schools, colleges, independent training providers and higher education institutions. They focused mainly on offering young people opportunities tailored to their aptitudes and aspirations, including increased opportunities for work-related learning. **Figure 27** outlines the main lessons learned from the Pathfinders programme in establishing partnerships and implementing aspects of the reforms.

#### **27** The Pathfinders programme, 2003-05: lessons learned

Lessons learned in establishing partnerships and implementing reforms collaboratively:

- It is essential to have an impartial, senior-level coordinator dedicated to delivering the 14-19 programme.
- The involvement and support of senior management is needed throughout.
- It is important to have representation from independent training providers in the delivery group.
- It is vital to listen to young people about their needs.
- Partners need to feel a sense of ownership of the programme, as well as being proactive and reliable.
- The local authority has a key role in coordinating planning.
- There may be a reluctance to commit long-term when future plans are uncertain.
- It may be harder to generate effective collaboration with different types of school (such as special schools or Academies).

Source: National Audit Office review of Pathfinder evaluations

**106** In 2005-06 the Department established a programme of structured Learning Visits, hosted by successful Pathfinder areas, so that strategic planners and practitioners could learn from their experience. Representatives from new and existing local partnerships were encouraged to attend Learning Visits together. People from 140 local authority areas attended at least one visit in the first four tranches. Feedback about the Learning Visit programme has been positive, with participants taking away ideas and models of delivery for adaptation in their own area, though a small number of people we interviewed commented that the information gained from the visit was not directly applicable to their situation. On the whole, being a Pathfinder area helped in forging links with other areas. A fifth tranche of Learning Visits focusing on Diploma delivery has been set to run from October to December 2007.

### Most general guidance and information to partnerships is good but it needs to be better coordinated

**107** The Department has used a range of communication tools to disseminate information and guidance to consortia about the reforms. These include a dedicated internet site, conferences, information packs and the Learning Visits already mentioned. Partnerships have generally appreciated the range and number of 14-19 awareness raising events for the people directly involved in development work and consortia report they are making use of the Department's website. Also, it is encouraging for a programme of this size that over half of consortia (109 out of 214) feel that they can help inform and influence the Department and its agencies over current and future delivery.

**108** However, at the time of our visits, some partnerships were starting to feel overwhelmed by information and cited examples of information that went to one particular institution but was not disseminated to partners in timely fashion. Many complained that guidance is coming from too many different sources and has, in some cases, not been timely. Respondents to our survey also expressed the need for a more coherent system of support from the Department, with better coordination between all 14-19 agencies. The appointment of 14-19 regional advisers (Figure 26) is intended to improve coordination of advice.

**109** Partnerships, and particularly delivery consortia, would especially welcome guidance they can tailor to their own circumstances, for example frameworks or models to help them with various aspects of the reforms, such as samples of communications that have worked well in involving employers. Many cited a particular area of confusion around Functional Skills (**Figure 28**) that they considered required clearer guidance. At the time of carrying out our fieldwork we found that Functional Skills were not well understood. This may be remedied for those institutions who are piloting Functional Skills as they will have received training so that they can deliver them, although this may not be the case for those institutions who are not involved in the pilots. It is important to ensure that those institutions and partnerships that will not be delivering aspects of the reforms for up to several years are nevertheless provided with adequate information, pitched at an appropriate level, recognising that it would be too early to provide guidance and training specifically about delivery.

## 28 Functional Skills

*“Functional Skills are those core elements of English, maths and ICT that provide an individual with the essential knowledge, skills and understanding that will enable them to operate confidently, effectively and independently in life and at work.”*

Functional Skills are a key element of the reforms.

- They are being piloted from September 2007, with every consortium that applied successfully to start Diplomas in 2008 piloting them in up to a maximum of six centres.
- They are a mandatory component of the Diplomas.
- They will be part of GCSEs in 2010 and will be available to adults, replacing key and basic skills.

Source: Department for Children, Schools and Families

## The Department is adopting a phased approach to communicating the Diplomas

**110** The frontline teaching workforce (teachers, lecturers and support staff) is at present generally unaware of the Diplomas. The Department's strategy for communicating the reforms to education practitioners has, at this early stage in the implementation programme, been aimed at senior management in the education sector through, for example, regional conferences. We found that partnerships were generally deciding to defer raising awareness of the Diplomas amongst frontline staff until closer to the time when they will be delivered within their area.

**111** The Department had not launched a national marketing campaign for Diplomas at the time of our fieldwork. During the first Diploma Gateway round, communications were deliberately low-key as the Department wanted to avoid raising expectations in areas where Diplomas will not be available in 2008. From autumn 2007 communications, including leaflets and local radio slots, are focusing on those areas where at least one Diploma will be available from September 2008, as young people approach the time when they will have the opportunity to select a Diploma.

## Risk area 6: Clear funding arrangements and coherence of funding for capital projects

**112** Clear funding arrangements are essential to underpin local work to deliver the Diplomas and to sustain local partnerships. It is also important that the major capital programmes currently underway in schools and further education colleges are coherent and take account of the changes in curriculum and delivery arising from the 14-19 reforms.

### Future funding arrangements are not yet established and were the most frequently cited local concern

**113** The need for adequate and sustainable funding to implement and deliver the reforms was the most frequently cited matter of concern at local level. Applied qualifications are known to be more expensive to deliver than general qualifications, and the Diplomas will require funding to meet additional costs such as transport and pastoral care. However, the revenue costs of Diploma delivery proposals have not been routinely estimated at the local level – partnerships submitted Diploma applications in advance of the publication of the Diploma specifications and were not required to estimate delivery costs.

**114** The Department has set up funding and organisation pilot projects<sup>24</sup> in 12 local authority areas to inform the development of a longer-term approach to funding and to the delivery structure of 14-19 education. However, this work is not planned to be finally reported until September 2008. The pilots have been exploring issues relating to the role of the partnership in supporting collaborative delivery including savings achievable, cost-effective transport, and the role of the partnership in coordinating costing, pricing, contract management and quality assurance.

**115** Lack of clarity over future funding makes collaboration and planning difficult. At the time of our fieldwork many partnerships did not consider they had clear information about current funding arrangements (Figure 29) and many expressed concerns that additional funding may not meet the actual costs of delivering the

reformed curriculum. Although 78 per cent of delivery consortia (190 out of 243) were in the process of collectively planning how best to use current funding streams, less than one-fifth (44 out of 242) were forecasting future funding required to deliver the reforms, through to 2013.

**116** There was concern that funding levels will be based on the cost of initiatives trialled by the 14-19 Pathfinders. However, it is possible that solutions identified by the Pathfinders may not be sustainable as increasing numbers of young people take up Diplomas. For example, using existing local authority vehicles to transport young people is a relatively simple option adopted by some Pathfinders, but it will quickly reach full capacity if the numbers taking up Diplomas increase in line with forecasts. Of particular concern was whether the new funding will cover the administrative and logistical costs of collaboration. Up to now, schools and colleges have been funding partnership activities, such as a 14-19 coordinator and administrative roles, from their mainstream funding, in addition to contributing large amounts of management time to partnership development. In many cases the local authority and the Learning and Skills Council have also contributed funds to partnerships, and partnerships have been creative in identifying and obtaining funding from other sources, for example, European Union funding. However, most such funding has been short-term, frequently renewed each year, and posts have been recruited to on a temporary basis.

### 29 Do consortia think current delivery is supported by clear funding arrangements?

Our survey of partnerships asked respondents whether current delivery is aligned with, or supported by, clear funding arrangements. The results are displayed as a proportion of responses from 237 delivery consortia.

Strongly agree	3%
Agree	32%
Neither agree nor disagree	25%
Disagree	39%
Strongly disagree	1%

Source: National Audit Office survey

24 [www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19/documents/FundingandOrganisationalPilots.doc](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19/documents/FundingandOrganisationalPilots.doc).

**117** The Department has consulted with stakeholders on changes to the funding system to support the additional cost of Diploma delivery. Subsequent to our fieldwork, the Department wrote to all local authorities in August 2007 indicating the future funding arrangements to support the additional costs of the delivery of the 14-19 reforms (Figure 30). It has also held conferences and issued bulletins to inform partnerships of the funding arrangements to support practical learning and prepare for Diplomas. Currently the majority of funding for 14 to 16 year olds is administered via local authorities, whereas funding for 16 to 19 year olds is via the Learning and Skills Council. Following Machinery of Government changes in June 2007, the Department announced plans to route the funding for 16 to 19 year olds through local authorities, rather than through the Learning and Skills Council. This change is subject to consultation and is expected to take effect from 2010-11.

**118** Though collaboration is resource-intensive it can create opportunities for efficiency gains and economies of scale. While efficiency savings may not be realisable in the developing stages of collaboration, there should,

over time, be the potential to realise savings as existing non-collaborative provision is reduced. The Department's national level modelling includes school-level savings in numbers of pupils equivalent to entire classes. However, partnerships are concerned that such savings will be factored into funding arrangements when in reality it is not possible to reduce the number of existing classes or the number of existing teaching staff by equivalent amounts. Some areas are looking into creating, in the much longer term, federations of schools which could more readily realise efficiencies through delivering education in very close collaboration.

**119** In most cases, it is not financially viable for education providers to deliver qualifications that attract only a small number of learners. Some areas, particularly sparsely populated areas, may find it difficult to balance providing an entitlement to all Diplomas for all young people with keeping the costs of Diploma provision within reasonable limits. It is important that the manner of delivery of Diplomas does not deter some young people from studying them, through, for example, overly long travel times or the transfer of transport costs to learners.

## 30 Funding sources for applied provision, 2008-09

**Funding for 14 to 16 year olds** taking Diplomas will draw on three funding sources:

- £110m Dedicated Schools Grant earmarked for applied learning;
- £27m Learning and Skills Council funding to support practical learning provision and collaborative 14-19 activity locally; and
- a new specific formula grant to support the additional costs of Diploma delivery (details to be announced in late December 2007).

This approach is designed to allow 14-19 partnerships the flexibility to choose the most appropriate applied provision for their area without penalising those with a currently limited range of planned Diploma provision. There is an expectation that funds will be increasingly expended on Diplomas as local provision expands.

**Funding for 16 to 19 year olds** will be set out in plans for local 16-19 provision, including expected numbers of learners and associated funding allocations, to be agreed by local authorities and the Learning and Skills Council, working with their 14-19 partnerships.

Prior to the planned transfer of responsibility in 2010-11 (paragraph 117), the Department has announced that for 2008-09 and 2009-10 school sixth forms, colleges and other providers will be funded using a common funding methodology

which provides comparable funding for comparable activity irrespective of provider type.

Funding for the delivery of Diplomas to post-16 institutions will include a premium to recognise the additional costs of delivery. The specific amount is still to be announced.

### Timetable for announcement of allocations

November 2007

- Dedicated Schools Grant allocations to local authorities
- Learning and Skills Council funds for post-16 sector

December 2007

- Specific formula grant allocations to local authorities for Diploma delivery at Key Stage 4 (14 to 16 year olds) with supporting guidance on implementation
- Learning and Skills Council funding rates for Diplomas

January 2008

- Funding allocations to school sixth forms

February 2008

- Funding allocations from local authorities to 11-16 schools

March 2008

- Funding allocations to colleges

Source: Department for Children, Schools and Families

## Local plans for capital expenditure need to be aligned with the 14-19 reforms

**120** Applications for funding for the Building Schools for the Future programme<sup>25</sup> must demonstrate how they support the 14-19 reforms and the relevant sections are reviewed by the Department's 14-19 unit. However, the programme is being rolled out in 15 waves between 2005 and 2020, introducing the risk that in some areas a mismatch in timing will result in capital projects not supporting the 14-19 reforms. The Department is seeking to mitigate this risk through £608 million of targeted capital support available for areas in later waves, although this amount is intended for Special Educational Needs capital projects in addition to the 14-19 reforms. The constraints on Learning and Skills Council capital funding have been relaxed to allow it to be used more flexibly to address the entire 14-19 phase. Local areas are being encouraged to coordinate their various capital programmes and the Department is planning a survey of all local authorities to better understand what facilities are needed and what the capital requirements specific to the 14-19 curriculum will be.

**121** The capital strategies of institutions within individual partnerships need to be aligned. More than half of delivery consortia (129 out of 242) responding to our survey were not yet collectively considering and aligning capital programmes. We found that in some areas it is proving difficult for partners unused to collaboration to be open with each other regarding plans for capital investment. For example, there are concerns in the further education sector that more school sixth forms will open, with fewer young people attending local colleges as a result. Local areas suggested they were having difficulty planning capital investment while key variables, such as the content and take-up of future Diplomas, are unknown. There have been only a few attempts to estimate the impact of Diplomas on student numbers at the local level. For example, the London Borough of Wandsworth commissioned independent consultants to model the impact of Diplomas.

**122** There are, nevertheless, a small number of good examples of recent capital projects which have stemmed from a collective vision and do support the reforms (**Figure 31**).

**123** Partnerships could bid to the Diploma Gateway for capital funds to support the Diplomas. The Department initially had £40 million to distribute, later increased to £47 million, but partnerships made bids totalling £190 million. Part-funding of bids has led to difficulties for some projects. For example, one area that we visited received 60 per cent of what it requested and was unable to start the capital project until further funding had been identified, introducing delay.

**124** The Department has indicated that discrete capital funding will not be available for future Diploma Gateway rounds. Similarly, partnerships have been given to understand that bids to the first Diploma Gateway round that were approved for Diplomas to start from September 2009 will not receive any capital funding, though some applications were predicated on an accompanying bid for capital investment. However, the Department has opened up existing capital streams for 14-19 development and expects local authorities and 14-19 partnerships to use the funds now available to meet these needs, negating the requirement for a separate and additional bidding process.

### 31 Examples of capital projects

**The Knowsley Vocational Skills Centre**, based at Knowsley Community College, opened in 2004 and was the first dedicated centre of this type for 14 to 16 year olds. £2.4 million was invested by the Learning and Skills Council, Connexions and Knowsley Council. The centre offers young people purpose-designed workshops and facilities for hairdressing, beauty therapy, catering, IT/multimedia, engineering and electronics, as well as project and refectory areas.

**Thanet Skills Studio** was set up by Kent County Council. It opened in September 2006 and is set to deliver programmes for 14 to 16 year olds in construction, motor vehicles and retail. The centre is based on an industrial site and access is easy for young people across Thanet. This environment is very different from school, for example because it has recreational facilities such as a pool table and juke box.

*Source: National Audit Office fieldwork*

<sup>25</sup> Building Schools for the Future is a 15-year capital investment programme which aims to rebuild or renew all secondary schools in England. It was launched by the Department in 2003.



# APPENDIX ONE

## Study methodology

**1** The large programme for the 14-19 reforms involves major strands of work to be carried out in parallel. It was not feasible or timely for us to examine the whole programme. This report examines the progress that local 14-19 partnerships are making in preparing to deliver the reforms, across all areas of England. It does not examine the development of the content of the Diplomas, for which the first five specifications became available in September 2007.

**2** We employed the methods described below to investigate whether local 14-19 partnerships are on track to deliver the reforms.

### Survey of Learning and Skills Council Partnership Directors

**3** We conducted an electronic survey of 153 Learning and Skills Council Partnership Directors, to gather data on progress in implementing the reforms with the intention of providing a national picture of local collaboration and how far partnerships have progressed. Although called Partnership Directors these are positions at the Learning and Skills Council, covering 153 areas across England, and are not specific posts of the various 14-19 partnerships and delivery consortia discussed in this report. However, a Partnership Director is likely to take a lead supporting role in one or more partnerships within their local area. We chose to survey local 14-19 partnerships via the Learning and Skills Council for the following reasons:

- the Learning and Skills Council has a key role in the development and coordination of 14-19 partnerships, supporting the strategic lead of local authorities; and
- Partnership Directors were newly established positions at the Learning and Skills Council and the information being requested was the type of data they would typically need to gather when taking up post.

**4** We devised a questionnaire to be completed for each delivery consortium within a Partnership Director's area. A single completed questionnaire was requested from single-tier 14-19 partnerships, where the partnership and the delivery consortium are one and the same (mainly urban areas). We requested completion of several questionnaires where the strategic partnership oversees several delivery consortia (mainly rural areas). The questionnaire sought information on key features of each consortium and asked questions about activities the consortium was undertaking or planning.

**5** We conducted the survey from June to July 2007 and received responses from all areas. The 100 per cent response rate translated into 351 completed questionnaires, covering all 150 local authority areas. However, some partnerships with more than one delivery consortium completed their questionnaire at the strategic level of the partnership rather than the delivery level. Consequently we critically reviewed all responses and identified 283 questionnaires representing delivery consortia. We used these questionnaire responses as the basis for our quantitative data analysis. Our quantitative analysis does not, therefore, cover every delivery consortium across England, but it does cover a large proportion of consortia, which we estimate at roughly 55 per cent. In a small proportion of questionnaires, responses to individual questions were invalid due to corrupt formatting and we therefore excluded these responses from the analysis.

**6** We were able to use all 351 responses in our qualitative analysis.

**7** A full survey analysis is available on our website [www.nao.org.uk](http://www.nao.org.uk).

## Independent assessment of Departmental data

**8** We analysed data collated by the Department and its partner organisations to assess progress in implementing the reforms, including:

- **Progress Checks** completed in October 2006 by 150 local authorities. These include self-assessments against six qualitative criteria, such as progress in setting up collaborative arrangements.
- **Applications from partnerships to the Diploma Gateway** for delivery of Diplomas from September 2008. These contain (for those partnerships that applied to the Diploma Gateway) each partnership's detailed assessment of its current situation, its understanding of what it needs to do to be in a position to deliver the Diplomas in 2008, and its plans for getting there.
- **Annual reports from the 39 14-19 Pathfinder areas.** An analysis of the reports identifies innovative and successful practices that have been introduced through the Pathfinder pilots, and issues which proved difficult to overcome at the local level and require further attention and development.
- **Ofsted Joint Area Reviews** of individual local authorities' progress at providing joined-up services for children and young people, including 14-19 arrangements (49 reports reviewed).
- **Sample of local area prospectuses.** We reviewed a sample of local area prospectuses to assess the progress in developing them and the quality of planned (or actual) output.
- **Feedback from participants on Learning Visits.** We examined an assessment of the value attributed to the Learning Visit programme by participants that indicated how successful and appropriate it had been as the principal means of disseminating good practice across England.

## Case studies

**9** We undertook in-depth local case studies to understand to what extent schools, colleges and other partners are on track to deliver the reforms and how partnerships are overcoming barriers to achieving the reforms. The areas we visited were: Bracknell Forest, Knowsley (Merseyside), Leicester, Northumberland, Shropshire, Thanet (Kent) and Wandsworth (London). These areas were selected to take in areas geographically

across England and to include both urban and rural areas. We used the Progress Checks to help identify a range of partnerships. The selection provided coverage of:

- partnerships involved in 14-19 Pathfinders;
- partnerships accepted via the Diploma Gateway to deliver the first Diplomas from September 2008;
- partnerships that applied to, but were not accepted via, the Diploma Gateway for September 2008 delivery; and
- partnerships that did not apply to the Diploma Gateway.

**10** During our visits we conducted semi-structured interviews with key practitioners, including 14-19 Partnership Coordinators, headteachers, college principals, teaching staff, local authority staff, Learning and Skills Council staff, independent training providers, providers of information, advice and guidance, higher education representatives, and local employers engaged in the partnership. In total 84 separate interviews were undertaken with more than 150 individuals. We used coding techniques to analyse interviews to identify key themes and areas of consensus.

## Pupil focus groups

**11** Because we were examining the preparedness of local partnerships, our focus was on the supply side of the programme. We judged it too early to seek learner views directly on the 14-19 reform programme. However we were offered the opportunity to conduct two focus groups with young people to elicit views on applied learning. They consisted of 21 young people aged between 14 and 16 from schools in Thanet, Kent.

## International benchmarking

**12** We commissioned RAND Europe to undertake a comparison of aspects of the 14-19 reforms with comparable arrangements in Australia, the Netherlands and Sweden. The findings are summarised in Appendix 5. The full report is available on our website [www.nao.org.uk](http://www.nao.org.uk).

## Literature review

**13** We reviewed relevant literature to identify the research that exists in this field. This included findings of the Nuffield Foundation 14-19 Review and a LEACAN 14+ survey of 56 local authorities conducted in summer 2006. We also reviewed the findings from the evaluation and annual reports of the Pathfinders, and the Education and Skills Select Committee Fifth Report of Session 2006-07 (HC249) on 14-19 Diplomas.

## Interviews with key stakeholders

**14** We carried out semi-structured interviews with a wide range of stakeholders and interest groups to obtain views from a national perspective on the progress of implementing the reforms:

- Association of Colleges
- Association of School and College Leaders
- Confederation of British Industry
- Learning and Skills Network
- Learning and Skills Council
- National Union of Students
- National Union of Teachers
- Office for Standards in Education
- Quality and Improvement Agency
- Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
- Sector Skills Development Agency
- Specialist Schools and Academies Trust

**15** Throughout the study we met with relevant staff from the Department with responsibility for aspects of the implementation of the 14-19 reforms, to keep up-to-date with Departmental actions and plans.

## Conferences and seminars

**16** We attended a number of seminars and conferences on the 14-19 reforms to hear about ongoing developments and listen to the wide range of views expressed by delegates:

- London 14-19 Conference, October 2006
- Association of Colleges Annual Conference, November 2006
- LEACAN conference, December 2006
- Westminster Education Forum, December 2006

- Institute of Education Open Lecture, March 2007
- Westminster Briefing: 14-19 Diplomas, June 2007
- Second annual 14-19 Diplomas conference, September 2007

## Learning Visits

**17** During the planning stage of the study, in November 2006, we attended three Learning Visits to Pathfinder areas to examine how solutions to particular aspects of the reforms were being developed:

- Cumbria
- Wolverhampton
- South Gloucestershire (Kingswood Partnership)

## Expert panel

**18** We set up an expert panel of stakeholder representatives to advise on the scope of the study and consider the findings emerging from our work.

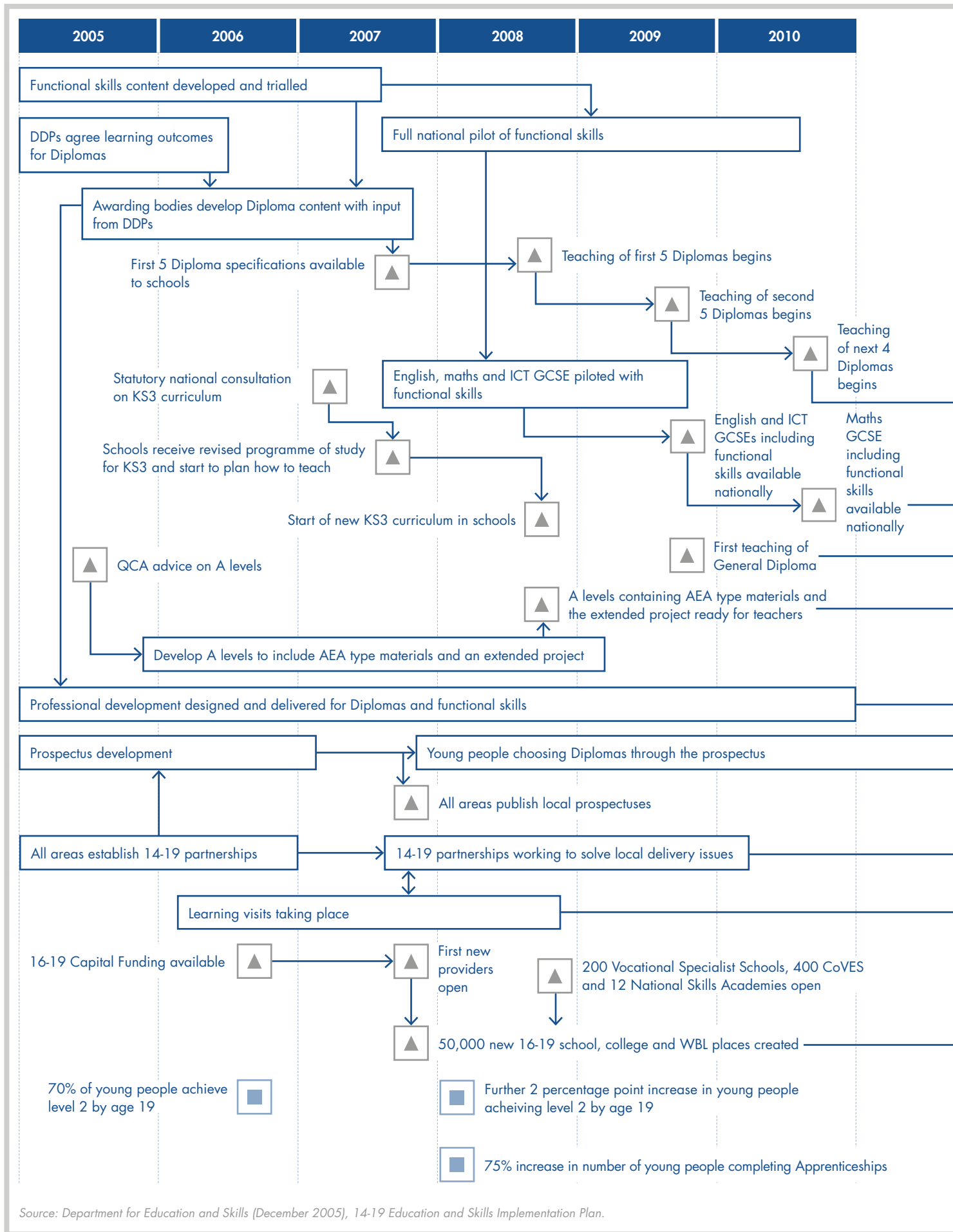
- Jon Coles  
Director 14-19 Reform Group  
Department for Children, Schools and Families
- Julia Dowd  
National Director of Young People's Learning  
Learning and Skills Council
- Corrie van der Stege  
Head of Skills for Young People  
Sector Skills Development Agency
- Heather Sillitoe  
Head of 14-19 Strategy  
Specialist Schools and Academies Trust
- Mary Curnock Cook  
Director of Qualifications and Skills  
Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
- Mike Cox  
Programme Manager  
Quality Improvement Agency
- Kathy Turner  
Children and Young People Services Policy Lead  
Audit Commission
- Jim Tirrell  
Principal Inspector, 14-19 Dorset Children's Services  
LEACAN

## APPENDIX TWO

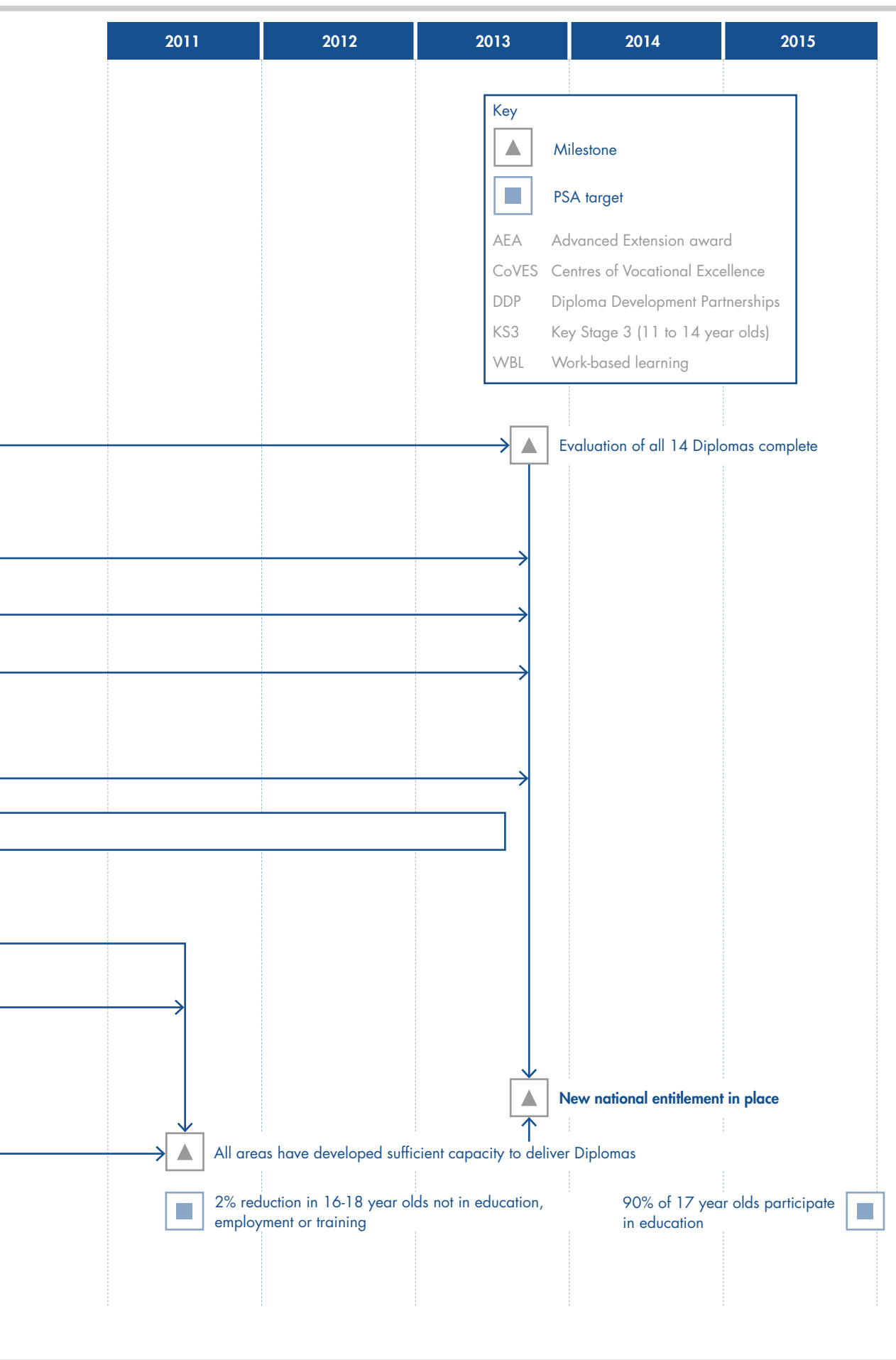
## 14-19 Implementation Plan

The Department's Implementation Plan (overleaf) as at December 2005









**Key**

- ▲ Milestone
- PSA target

AEA Advanced Extension award  
 CoVES Centres of Vocational Excellence  
 DDP Diploma Development Partnerships  
 KS3 Key Stage 3 (11 to 14 year olds)  
 WBL Work-based learning

# APPENDIX THREE

## Stakeholders

**Many organisations have an important role in planning and delivering the 14-19 reforms.**

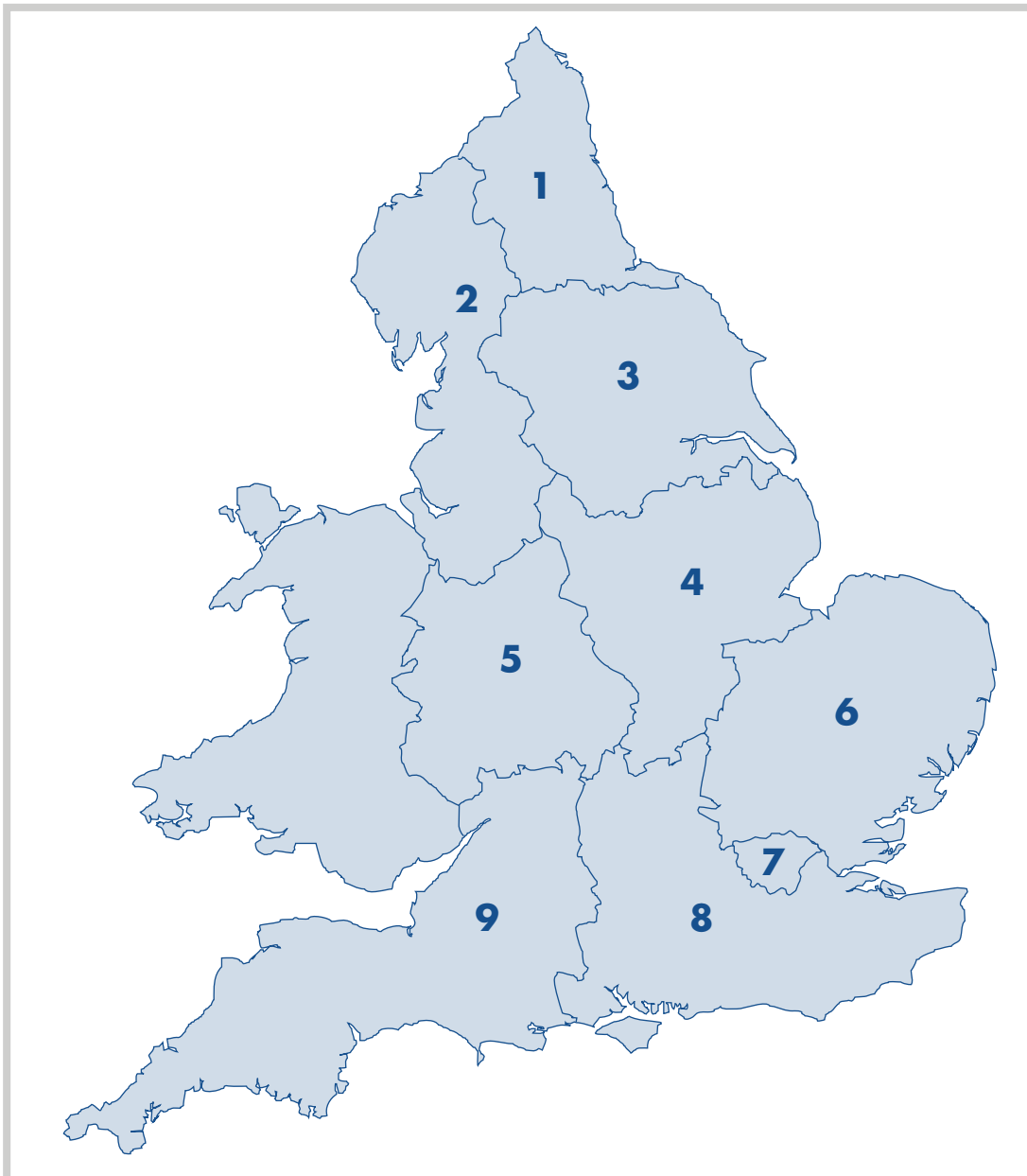
Organisation	Role in 14-19 reforms
Awarding bodies	Offer accredited qualifications for the constituent parts of the Diploma e.g. Functional Skills, specialised learning as well as the Diplomas themselves.
Aimhigher	Aimhigher is a national programme to engage and motivate young people who have the potential to achieve in higher education. Aimhigher will include Diplomas among progression routes to higher education.
Centre for Excellence in Leadership	In partnership with National College for School Leadership, provides professional development for senior management in schools, colleges and sector partners to build leadership and management skills required to successfully prepare for and deliver the reforms.
Connexions Partnerships	Provide information, advice, guidance and access to personal development opportunities for young people, to include advice on taking up a Diploma.
Diploma Development Partnerships	The 14 Diploma Development Partnerships are each led by the relevant Sector Skills Councils as representatives of employers, with members from key stakeholder groups, including higher education and education professionals. They are responsible for steering and signing off the key stages of the Diploma qualification.
Department for Children, Schools and Families	Responsible for all aspects of policy affecting children and young people, as part of the aim to deliver educational excellence. The Department is managing the 14-19 implementation programme.
Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills	Leads work to deliver a long-term vision to make Britain one of the best places in the world for science, research and innovation. Diplomas will contribute to the Skills Strategy which includes developing an improved qualification structure to support both 14-19 and adult education reforms.
Education Business Link Organisations	An infrastructure of national, regional and local intermediaries referred to as Education Business Link Organisations which link employers with education and training activities.
Education Business Partnerships	Help partnerships, schools and colleges engage employers in work-related learning, work experience and other support for Diplomas. They operate in almost every area of England. In most cases they belong to an Education Business Link Organisation Consortium.
Employers	Involved at the national level in the development of Diplomas. At the local level are members of 14-19 partnerships and provide opportunities for work experience and work-related learning.
Further Education Colleges	Comprising general further education colleges, sixth-form colleges and specialist (e.g. agriculture) colleges, are key constituents of 14-19 partnerships and taking forward local development, piloting and delivery of reforms.
Government Offices	Chair regional Diploma Gateway panels (paragraph 88) and provide regional support to partnerships.

<i>Organisation continued</i>	<i>Role in 14-19 reforms continued</i>
Higher Education Institutions	Members of some 14-19 partnerships and involved in Diploma Development Partnerships.
Independent Training Providers	Key constituents of 14-19 partnerships and taking forward local development, piloting and delivery of reforms.
LEACAN	National network supporting local authority and Learning and Skills Council staff who have responsibility for 14-19 education. Undertakes research on 14-19 education and training.
Learning and Skills Council	Role in overall programme governance. Currently funds all post-16 provision, except for higher education. Learning and Skills Council staff have a key role in the development and coordination of 14-19 partnerships.
Learning and Skills Network	Delivers improvement and staff development programmes. Develops and publishes guidance on the reforms. Responsible jointly with Secondary National Strategy and Quality Improvement Agency for Functional Skills training.
Lifelong Learning UK	As the Sector Skills Council for further education practitioners, provides support for future Diploma practitioners in assessing their skills, in partnership with the Training and Development Agency for Schools.
Local authorities	Lead responsibility in development and coordination of 14-19 partnerships and the development of local prospectuses.
National Assessment Agency	Developing a programme of support to prepare people who will administer testing for Diplomas and Functional Skills.
National College for School Leadership	With the Centre for Excellence in Leadership, provides professional development for school and college leaders and sector partners. Provides support to partnership leaders and managers to improve Diploma set-up and rollout.
National Strategies	The Secondary National Strategy is a professional development programme for secondary school teachers, practitioners and managers. It trains advisers at local and regional level to deliver the Functional Skills training to those who will teach them. National Strategies comprise nine regional teams.
Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)	Inspects and reports on local 14-19 provision.
Qualifications and Curriculum Authority	Coordinates the development, accreditation and regulation of Diplomas and Functional Skills qualifications. Manages the relationship between Awarding Bodies and Diploma Development Partnerships.
Quality Improvement Agency	In partnership with Specialist Schools and Academies Trust and Secondary National Strategy, provides professional development and support for practitioners in Functional Skills and Diploma teaching.
Secondary schools	Key constituents of 14-19 partnerships and taking forward local development, piloting and delivery of reforms.
Sector Skills Development Agency	Oversees Sector Skills Councils and development of Diplomas.
Sector Skills Councils	Set up and coordinate Diploma Development Partnerships for the development of Diplomas.
Specialist Schools and Academies Trust	In partnership with Quality Improvement Agency, provide professional development and support for practitioners in Diploma teaching; use their existing networks and good practice forums to support the Diploma in the preparation and delivery phases.
Teaching unions	Represent the teaching workforce.
Training and Development Agency for Schools	Develops models for teacher training in relation to the new qualifications. Provides support for Diploma practitioners in assessing their skills, and developing Diploma-specific routes to qualified teacher status.
Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group	A social partnership of 11 organisations representing employers, the Government and school workforce unions that supports schools in raising standards and tackling workload issues of the workforce.

## APPENDIX FOUR

### Regional analysis of applications to the first Diploma Gateway

Regional analysis of applications to the first Diploma Gateway includes those successful for 2008 delivery, and for 2009 delivery subject to specified conditions being met, and anticipated numbers of learners undertaking each Diploma at the three levels.



## WHOLE OF ENGLAND

### 100 out of 150 local authorities delivering in 2008

	Con	C&M	Eng	SH&D	IT	Total
Applications	213	263	188	232	231	<b>1,127</b>
<b>Approved:</b>						
<b>for 2008</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>256</b>
<b>for 2009</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>324</b>
2008 Places:						
Level 1	2,075	3,109	2,373	1,860	2,518	<b>11,935</b>
Level 2	2,325	4,956	3,060	3,038	3,620	<b>16,999</b>
Level 3	1,198	3,394	1,579	1,929	1,743	<b>9,843</b>
<b>Total places</b>	<b>5,598</b>	<b>11,459</b>	<b>7,012</b>	<b>6,827</b>	<b>7,881</b>	<b>38,777</b>

### Key

Con	Construction and the Built Environment
C&M	Creative and Media
Eng	Engineering
SH&D	Society, Health and Development
IT	Information Technology

## 1 North East

### 7 out of 12 local authorities delivering in 2008

	Con	C&M	Eng	SH&D	IT	Total
Applications	10	11	11	10	9	<b>51</b>
<b>Approved:</b>						
<b>for 2008</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>for 2009</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>13</b>
2008 Places:						
Level 1	132	100	205	83	35	<b>555</b>
Level 2	249	230	335	107	120	<b>1,041</b>
Level 3	83	130	170	110	60	<b>553</b>
<b>Total places</b>	<b>464</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>710</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>2,149</b>

## 2 North West

### 18 out of 22 local authorities delivering in 2008

	Con	C&M	Eng	SH&D	IT	Total
Applications	29	36	31	39	30	<b>165</b>
<b>Approved:</b>						
<b>for 2008</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>for 2009</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>48</b>
2008 Places:						
Level 1	264	548	369	235	499	<b>1,915</b>
Level 2	449	901	565	395	619	<b>2,929</b>
Level 3	247	509	340	315	267	<b>1,678</b>
<b>Total places</b>	<b>960</b>	<b>1,958</b>	<b>1,274</b>	<b>945</b>	<b>1,385</b>	<b>6,522</b>

## 3 Yorkshire and The Humber

### 12 out of 15 local authorities delivering in 2008

	Con	C&M	Eng	SH&D	IT	Total
Applications	21	23	11	18	18	<b>91</b>
<b>Approved:</b>						
<b>for 2008</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>for 2009</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>42</b>
2008 Places:						
Level 1	171	335	50	215	156	<b>927</b>
Level 2	183	373	65	350	178	<b>1,149</b>
Level 3	147	237	55	265	96	<b>800</b>
<b>Total places</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>945</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>830</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>2,876</b>

## 4 East Midlands

### 8 out of 9 local authorities delivering in 2008

	Con	C&M	Eng	SH&D	IT	Total
Applications	20	26	25	21	24	<b>116</b>
<b>Approved:</b>						
<b>for 2008</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>for 2009</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>47</b>
2008 Places:						
Level 1	71	220	405	65	316	<b>1,077</b>
Level 2	96	430	599	125	491	<b>1,741</b>
Level 3	60	480	335	50	250	<b>1,175</b>
<b>Total places</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>1,130</b>	<b>1,339</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>1,057</b>	<b>3,993</b>



## 5 West Midlands

10 out of 14 local authorities delivering in 2008

	Con	C&M	Eng	SH&D	IT	Total
Applications	25	33	23	34	32	<b>147</b>
<b>Approved:</b>						
<b>for 2008</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>for 2009</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>45</b>
2008 Places:						
Level 1	171	190	219	150	330	<b>1,060</b>
Level 2	171	285	255	195	400	<b>1,306</b>
Level 3	90	210	106	110	225	<b>741</b>
<b>Total places</b>	<b>432</b>	<b>685</b>	<b>580</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>955</b>	<b>3,107</b>

## 6 East of England

6 out of 10 local authorities delivering in 2008

	Con	C&M	Eng	SH&D	IT	Total
Applications	29	28	20	26	27	<b>130</b>
<b>Approved:</b>						
<b>for 2008</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>for 2009</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>26</b>
2008 Places:						
Level 1	155	343	218	150	285	<b>1,151</b>
Level 2	114	543	198	210	320	<b>1,385</b>
Level 3	58	452	70	165	160	<b>905</b>
<b>Total places</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>1,338</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>525</b>	<b>765</b>	<b>3,441</b>

## 7 London

18 out of 33 local authorities delivering in 2008

	Con	C&M	Eng	SH&D	IT	Total
Applications	20	32	18	26	28	<b>124</b>
<b>Approved:</b>						
<b>for 2008</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>for 2009</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>
2008 Places:						
Level 1	474	513	471	440	400	<b>2,298</b>
Level 2	459	833	510	531	583	<b>2,916</b>
Level 3	240	315	222	334	199	<b>1,310</b>
<b>Total places</b>	<b>1,173</b>	<b>1,661</b>	<b>1,203</b>	<b>1,305</b>	<b>1,182</b>	<b>6,524</b>

## 8 South East

11 out of 19 local authorities delivering in 2008

	Con	C&M	Eng	SH&D	IT	Total
Applications	34	43	27	31	35	<b>170</b>
<b>Approved:</b>						
<b>for 2008</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>for 2009</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>62</b>
2008 Places:						
Level 1	422	164	271	336	284	<b>1,477</b>
Level 2	397	263	248	828	526	<b>2,262</b>
Level 3	203	177	141	417	320	<b>1,258</b>
<b>Total places</b>	<b>1,022</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>1,581</b>	<b>1,130</b>	<b>4,997</b>

## 9 South West

10 out of 16 local authorities delivering in 2008

	Con	C&M	Eng	SH&D	IT	Total
Applications	25	31	22	27	28	<b>133</b>
<b>Approved:</b>						
<b>for 2008</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>for 2009</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>26</b>
2008 Places:						
Level 1	215	696	165	186	213	<b>1,475</b>
Level 2	207	1,098	285	297	383	<b>2,270</b>
Level 3	70	884	140	163	166	<b>1,423</b>
<b>Total places</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>2,678</b>	<b>590</b>	<b>646</b>	<b>762</b>	<b>5,168</b>

### Key

Con	Construction and the Built Environment
C&M	Creative and Media
Eng	Engineering
SH&D	Society, Health and Development
IT	Information Technology

# APPENDIX FIVE

## International comparisons

### Introduction

**1** We commissioned RAND Europe to carry out an international comparison of how qualifications with an applied component, which are comparable to the new Diplomas, are delivered in three other countries: The Netherlands, Sweden and Australia. In this three-month investigation the RAND Europe team engaged in desk research to gather information and data.

**2** The full report *Implementation of new curriculum arrangements for 14-19 year olds: International comparisons* (July 2007) is available on our website at [www.nao.org.uk](http://www.nao.org.uk). The views expressed in the report are the author's alone and do not reflect those of the National Audit Office. A summary of the report is presented below.

**3** The main objectives of the comparison study were to:

- provide an overview of selected countries' systems of secondary education;
- describe education qualifications analogous to Diplomas;
- review the approaches used to implement the relevant qualifications; and
- identify possible lessons that might be applicable to the English context.

**4** It was recognised at the outset that contextual differences between countries can limit the extent to which processes or lessons can be borrowed from one country and transferred to another. However, an understanding of the nature of the differences can reveal new possibilities and suggest alternative approaches or directions. The main findings were as follows:

### Curriculum, school organisation and funding affect programme delivery at the local level

**5** The extent of partnership for education programme delivery appears related to different factors, especially the structure of the curriculum, qualifications, schools and funding arrangements. The Netherlands and Sweden are less likely to form partnerships for education delivery, partly because their education programmes emphasise general education up to age 16 even within occupationally defined pathways. The Netherlands recently consolidated schools and regional training centres, which means that more programmes can be offered wholly within one local institution. Sweden's modularised curriculum provides flexibility for municipalities as courses that make up a programme of study can be organised in different ways. Partnership among education providers is more common at the advanced applied level, when the curriculum becomes more specialised.

**6** The Australian system permits flexible partnership arrangements, but these are underpinned by their qualification structure. National training package qualifications can only be offered by registered training organisations. Different types of public and private institutions can become registered training organisations. At the local level, for example, schools can become registered training organisations and thereby offer nationally recognised applied and technical education programmes or they can collaborate with registered training organisations to provide part of the curriculum.

**7** In contrast to the other systems considered, the performance tables in England create incentives for schools to compete, not collaborate. Failing schools can be taken over by the Government. Differences in funding streams for 14-16 and post-16 learners create barriers to collaboration between schools and colleges by raising complications over who pays. This type of

competition is not present in The Netherlands or Sweden, as municipalities have the responsibility and funding for education provision up to at least age 18. The Australian system creates incentives for schools to collaborate with registered training organisations.

### Social partnership relationships support employer involvement

**8** Employer participation in the education system is historically strong in The Netherlands and Sweden, and is based on a tri-partite system where Government, employers/industry, and employees (unions) have equal representation. The Australian system is bi-partite (government and employers) and also features input from labour leaders, although not as strongly as in the other two countries. These 'social partner' arrangements are often backed up by other regulations with respect to the employers' role in design of qualifications, monitoring of provision, and funding arrangements. In contrast, the relationship between the Government and employers around education policy in England is historically voluntary – the Government preferring to use inducement policies or to exhort employers to participate rather than regulate them.

### Employer/sectoral bodies drive the education system

**9** The Government has charged the relevant Sector Skills Councils in England with developing Diplomas in partnership with other stakeholders including education providers (schools, colleges, higher education institutions). The Sector Skills Councils are government established and funded bodies, and the Diploma and its development process follow the government's design and initiative.

**10** In contrast, in Sweden and the Netherlands the sectoral bodies are independent of government yet have legal responsibility for developing, updating, and monitoring provision of applied qualifications. The sectoral bodies set the framework for education providers to use to develop educational programmes, and determine when changes are needed. Collaboration among social partners is the expected norm at the municipal level.

**11** The Australian system is more like England as the Industry Skills Councils are government funded, and they must also coordinate with a variety of other bodies at the state/territory level. Industry Skills Councils have authority over design of national training package qualifications, but the states/territories remain responsible for monitoring

quality in the registered training organisations. Even after a decade there are still concerns that employers are not fully represented (especially small and medium size employers).

### Extent of integration between general and applied learning

**12** In the Netherlands and Sweden, integration between general and applied learning can be seen to operate at a number of different levels. At the curriculum level both of these systems emphasise a common core of general learning up to at least age 16, even though most students are pursuing occupationally oriented pathways. Specialisation generally occurs at upper secondary levels (post-16) for some students. A second level of integration concerns school and work-based learning; in Sweden for example this amounts to 15 weeks of work-based training organised by schools and employers at the municipal level. Linkages between school-based initial applied education and continuing applied education (including for employed adults) represents a third level of integration. Employer/employee bodies are central players at all levels of applied education and training; their current and forecasted skill needs are fed into the whole system. Similarly, Australia's training package qualifications count towards the secondary school leaving certificate and must provide progress toward an Australian Qualifications Framework standard, the same system used for adult education.

**13** The Diploma programme followed a review of 14-19 education commissioned by the then Secretary of State for Education and Skills<sup>26</sup>, which proposed a radical reorganisation of the curriculum that would have abolished GCSEs and A levels as separate general qualifications. The Government rejected this proposal and created Diplomas as a way to bridge the gap between the existing general and applied routes. The Diploma is meant to incorporate work-based learning experiences, but the depth and extent of work-based learning, and infrastructure needed for implementation is unknown at this time. The Diplomas are meant for 14-19 learners and their relationships to already existing national applied qualifications, or progression routes to apprenticeship and higher education have not yet been worked out. Adult and continuing applied education policy is proceeding on a separate trajectory from Diplomas. Our international comparison work indicated that the absence of clear progression pathways for applied qualifications in England marks a clear distinction from the other countries studied.

<sup>26</sup> Working Group on 14-19 Reform (2004), *14-19 Curriculum and Qualifications Reform: Final report of the Working Group on 14-19 Reform* (also known as the Tomlinson Report), Department for Education and Skills.

## Factors affecting partnerships, employer involvement and system integration

	The Netherlands	Sweden	Australia	England
<b>Factors affecting partnership for delivery</b>	<p>Partnership not main feature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ school/regional training centre consolidation</li> <li>■ curricular emphasis on general education</li> <li>■ funding to municipal level for students to age 18</li> </ul>	<p>Partnership in some cases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ curricular emphasis on general education</li> <li>■ modular curriculum supports flexibility at local level</li> <li>■ municipalities sometimes partner with each other, or with independent schools</li> <li>■ different providers partner at advanced applied level</li> <li>■ funding to municipal level for students to age 20</li> <li>■ funding to establish 'Idea Schools'</li> </ul>	<p>Partnership in some cases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ designated providers (Registered Training Organisations) for training package qualifications</li> <li>■ Registered Training Organisations can be public or private institutions</li> <li>■ non-qualified institutions may partner with Registered Training Organisations</li> <li>■ flexible</li> </ul>	<p>Partnership in certain programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ partnership experience in some programmes (e.g. Pathfinders)</li> <li>■ separate funding streams for 14-16 and post-16 creates complications</li> <li>■ performance tables instil competition</li> </ul>
<b>Factors affecting employer involvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ strong tri-partite system at all levels</li> <li>■ sectoral bodies have legal responsibility for setting standards, monitoring delivery</li> <li>■ financial/tax incentives</li> <li>■ sectoral bodies independent of government</li> <li>■ sectoral bodies drive changes to education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ strong tri-partite system at all levels</li> <li>■ sectoral bodies independent of government</li> <li>■ involvement of sectoral bodies regulated at national level</li> <li>■ local employer/union involvement expected, not always regulated</li> <li>■ sectoral bodies carry out labour market analyses to assess demand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ sectoral bodies responsible for setting national standards</li> <li>■ sectoral bodies government funded</li> <li>■ unions involved, but not equal representation</li> <li>■ states/territories monitor delivery</li> <li>■ coordination across local/state sectoral bodies</li> <li>■ sectoral bodies carry out labour market analyses to assess demand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ voluntary system</li> <li>■ sectoral bodies government funded</li> <li>■ government drives education reform</li> <li>■ guidelines, not regulations, for stakeholder involvement</li> <li>■ other non-sectoral bodies have influential roles</li> </ul>
<b>Factors affecting system integration</b>	<p>Stronger integration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ programmes mix general and applied learning</li> <li>■ equal status of curricular pathways</li> <li>■ knowledge centres link to education groups</li> <li>■ ratio of school/work-based learning adjusts to economic change</li> <li>■ qualifications framework unifies applied education and training at different levels</li> <li>■ sectoral bodies carry out labour market analyses to inform education provision</li> </ul>	<p>Stronger integration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ programmes mix general and applied learning</li> <li>■ applied programmes incorporate work-based training</li> <li>■ overlap between secondary and adult applied education and training</li> <li>■ sectoral bodies carry out labour market analyses to inform education provision</li> </ul>	<p>Mixed integration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Australian Qualifications Framework applies to all levels of applied education and training</li> <li>■ Senior secondary certificate includes Australian Qualifications Framework/Training Package Qualifications</li> <li>■ sectoral bodies less powerful than education sector</li> <li>■ federal system; states have own policies, agenda</li> <li>■ local school/employer collaboration may require special funding</li> <li>■ sectoral bodies carry out labour market analyses to inform education provision; flow of information from local to national can be incomplete</li> </ul>	<p>Weaker integration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ separate general and applied qualifications</li> <li>■ too soon to assess extent of integration with Diplomas</li> <li>■ "schools" and "skills" now in different Departments; could hamper integration</li> </ul>

Source: RAND Europe (2007), *Implementation of New Curriculum Arrangements for 14-19 year olds: International Comparisons*, commissioned by the National Audit Office

# GLOSSARY

14-19 Reforms	A programme of education reforms set out in the 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper (2005).
A level	A level is normally taken by 16 to 19 year olds as a two-year course progressing from either GCSE or an equivalent qualification.
Additional and Specialist Learning	Young people taking Diplomas will be able to tailor their personal programmes to their own interests and aspirations through their choice of additional and specialist learning.
Applied learning	Acquiring and applying knowledge, skills and understanding through tasks set in sector contexts that have many of the characteristics of real work, or are set within the workplace.
Apprenticeships	A structured programme of training which gives young people the opportunity to work for an employer, learn on the job and build up knowledge and transferable skills.
BTECs	An A Level equivalent vocational qualification, available in several sizes. There are considerable practical elements to the courses with work placements offered. Available in a wide range of subjects.
Delivery Consortium	Sub-arrangement of the 14-19 partnership; responsible for delivery of 14-19 provision, including Diplomas. Refer to Figure 6.
Diplomas	New qualifications for 14 to 19 year olds that will give young people an alternative to traditional learning styles by offering a high-quality blend of general education and applied learning. The first Diplomas will be available in parts of England from September 2008, and by 2013, 14 Diplomas will be available across England.
Foundation Learning Tier	Includes a range of provision below Level 2. A key feature will be the establishment of progression pathways; clear stepping stones that will enable learners to access a first full Level 2 programme or will enable them to develop the skills necessary for living independently. Consists of three curriculum strands: skills for life and work; subject and vocational based learning; and personal and social development. Available nationally from 2010.
Functional Skills	Functional Skills are the core elements of English, maths and ICT (information and communication technology), which provide the essential knowledge, skills and understanding needed to operate confidently, effectively and independently in life and at work. Available nationally from 2010.

General learning	Theoretical or ‘academic’ learning, as opposed to applied or vocational learning. Qualifications which comprise general learning include GCSEs and A levels.
GCSE	GCSE stands for General Certificate of Secondary Education. This qualification is normally taken by 15 to 18 year olds in schools and colleges across the country but GCSEs are available to anyone who would like to gain a qualification in a subject which they are interested in.
Increased Flexibility Programme	The Programme (launched in 2002) offers vocational learning to improve opportunities for 14 to 16 year olds, and to extend participation in education and training post-16. It is delivered through partnerships of schools, further education colleges and providers of work-based learning.
Information, advice and guidance	The process of informing, advising and guiding learners on entry to, during or on exit from a learning activity, course or programme.
International Baccalaureate	The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme is an internationally recognised qualification for students aged 16 to 19. It is based around detailed academic study of a wide range of subjects, including languages, the arts, science, maths, history and geography. It leads to a single qualification, rather than separate qualifications for individual subjects.
National Vocational Qualification (NVQ)	Vocational awards that are achieved through assessment and training. They are practical qualifications based on being able to do a job.
Pathfinders	The Department set up the Pathfinders programme to test local collaborative delivery of 14 to 19 education and training in a range of settings. Pathfinders consist of local schools, colleges and training providers. Between January 2003 and August 2005, 39 Pathfinders were set up. They tested aspects of 14-19 education in a range of geographical and socio-economic circumstances.
Qualification levels	<p>The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority established the National Qualifications Framework in 2000, revised in 2004, which sets out the levels at which qualifications can be recognised. Levels are used to define specific levels of achievement. They are generally linked to specific qualifications, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Level 1 focuses on basic work activities and is defined as below GCSE level, or the equivalent of a D–G grade at GCSE</li> <li>■ Level 2 is broadly equivalent to GCSE level. A full Level 2 qualification is defined as five GCSEs at grade A*–C, or an NVQ at Level 2</li> <li>■ Level 3 is broadly equivalent to A level. A full Level 3 qualification is defined as two good A levels or their vocational equivalent</li> </ul>
Strategic Partnership	The group of institutions that are tasked with planning, commissioning and managing the delivery of 14-19 provision at the local level. Refer to Figure 6.
Vocational learning	Learning that relates to a learner’s current, future or intended employment, often resulting in a qualification. There are many subjects and qualifications that could be classed as vocational, for example; Vocational GCSEs; Vocational A levels; NVQs; BTECs; and Apprenticeships.



**Work-based learning**

Learning and training in vocational, occupational or general areas by people employed, or based largely, at a workplace. Apprentices and trainees who are employed by the company (but need not be) develop and consolidate their skills and abilities through supervised tasks, training, mentoring and learning while at work. Includes Apprenticeships and NVQ learning.

**Work experience**

Defined as 'a placement on employer's premises in which a pupil carries out a particular task or duty, or a range of tasks and duties, more or less as would an employee', but with the emphasis on the learning aspects of the experience. It provides opportunities for learning about the skills and personal qualities, careers, roles and structures that exist within a workplace or company.

**Work-related learning**

Planned activity that uses work as a context for learning. It encompasses a broad range of activities that allow students to experience working life. It involves learning about working practices, experiencing the working environment, developing skills for working life and learning through activities and challenges set in work-related contexts.