

## **Southend Post 16 Education Learning and Skills Strategy**

### Summary

#### Our Ambition:

Our ambition is for all young people residents in Southend on Sea Borough Council to become better qualified and more employable; to be able to participate and achieve success in education, apprenticeship or employment with training until the age of 18 and to ensure more 18 to 24 year olds can access higher learning or sustained employment that is appropriate to their needs and relevant to the local and national economy.

#### Our Aims:

We aim to achieve reduce youth unemployment, put in place better systems for local employers and learning providers to work in partnership so that we secure the higher levels of skilled young people we need in the key growth sectors relevant to the Southend and the regional economy, and have every young person participating in high quality learning or training until the age of 18, with a good outcome.

#### About the Strategy:

This strategy is designed to link the world of learning to the world of work more successfully, and to bring about more rapid transformation in young people's skills, qualifications and employability. The strategy aims to set out the overarching ambitions and outcomes that we and our partners intend to achieve. Local authorities should provide strategic leadership in their areas to support participation in education, training and employment - working with and influencing partners.

We have four key areas of focus for our strategy. These are:

- To raise attainment and skill levels
- To extend and improve vocational education, training and apprenticeships
- To increase participation and employment
- To target support to vulnerable young people

In order to succeed, we have to develop a more effective partnership working between the local authority, schools, colleges, higher education providers, work- based learning providers, employers and other agencies. It is clear that greater collaboration is needed between schools and with local FE colleges/providers, employers, and that local 14-19 partnership. To do more to develop the curriculum offer, progression pathways and work based training opportunities for local young people.

#### **Why do we need a strategy?**

Recent reports from Government, the CBI and other agencies confirm the poor track record in managing school to work transition, there is a need for radical overhaul and improvement in vocational education and training and the urgency of addressing employers' concerns about the work readiness and employability skills of many school, college leavers and graduates.

The majority of young people in Southend succeed in education and make a positive transition to higher learning and to the world of work. Nationally we are not succeeding well enough in engaging and educating all young people to a standard that ensures their future economic well being or meets the needs of the local

economy. We need to do better in Southend in how we educate young people to be more highly skilled and work ready.

### **Who will the strategy impact upon?**

To influence:

- Young people
- Parents and carers
- Employers
- Education and training providers

All young people aged 14-19, but in particular:

- Young people who would not currently choose to stay on in education and training to age 18
- Young people who would benefit from vocational pathways
- Vulnerable learners, such as care leavers, teenage parents, young offenders and young people with learning difficulties who are consistently over represented in NEET figures
- Those pursuing higher education courses and graduates

To engage:

- Schools, FE Colleges and Higher Education and their representative bodies
- Specialist providers
- Employers and employer networks
- Statutory partners
- Funding bodies
- Sector Skills Councils
- Young people and their parents/carers

### **How will the strategy be delivered and monitored?**

The strategy can only be delivered through effective partnership between all agencies and key stakeholders. The proposal is to develop a new Employment, Learning and Skills Partnership Board that will take on joint responsibility for delivery and oversight of this strategy. The Southend board will link with the Essex Employment and Skills to ensure there is a regional approach to skills strategy.

Conclusion:

The initiatives and the strategic priorities set out in this document represents one Southend Borough Council's major goals; to change the life chances and employment prospects of young people and in turn the future prosperity and growth of Southend-on-Sea . Our vision is "Creating a better Southend" and as a Community Leader and large Southend employer, it is essential we take a lead in driving developing skills and training. Learning promotes personal growth, enriches our lives, enlarges our understanding and broadens our interests. It is an asset to our cultural and community life and supports our vision.

## **Ambition for the Education and Training of 14-19 Year Olds in Southend**

Our ambition is for all young people in Southend to become better qualified and more employable; to be able to participate and achieve success in education, apprenticeships, employment with training or work based training at least until the age of 18; and to ensure more 18 to 24 year olds can access higher learning or sustained employment that is appropriate to their needs and relevant to the local, regional and national economy.

Our commitment is to seek to inspire young people in Southend to fulfil their potential in the community and in the world of work and to equip them with the academic, vocational and life skills required to succeed. We will work with partners to ensure that young people are able to access the information and gain the qualifications, skills, work experience and learning opportunities they need.

The majority of young people in Southend succeed in education and make a positive transition to higher learning and the world of work. However we are not succeeding well enough in engaging and educating all young people to a standard that ensures their future economic well being or meets the needs of the economy.

While 61.8% of 16 year olds achieve a good standard of education (GCSE Indicator of 5+ A\*-C GCSE incl English and Maths) and nearly 40% of young people engage in higher education. A high number of young people are leaving compulsory education, whose skills and qualifications limit their prospects to low paid and low skilled employment and high risk of unemployment.

Other countries are developing faster and achieving growth through improved education and learning, by adapting their education systems more quickly to the needs of a dynamic work environment and digital age and by integrating more successfully their business, school and university systems with advances in key skills sectors. Young people in Southend are not just competing against each other for jobs they are now competing in a global economy. It is important to foster in young people flexibility, practicality and self-reliance and ensure that their education enables them to be able to do things as well as know things.

We need to do more in how young people are educated to be more highly skilled and work ready. This strategy is designed to link the world of learning to the world of work and bring about more rapid transformation in young people's skills, qualifications and employability. It also sets out the overarching ambitions and outcomes that we intend to achieve with our partners. The strategy will be underpinned by a series of policies and plans that will set out in more detail how we intend jointly, with our key stakeholders and partners, to deliver these ambitions.

The successful engagement of employers and more effective partnership arrangements are paramount. There is a need to develop new forms of school collaborative arrangements and the Southend Association of Headteachers are working with other partners to help shape the future of education in Southend.

Southend is a key partner in the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) which includes representatives from councils, businesses, universities and colleges from Kent, Medway, Essex, Thurrock and East Sussex, all are focused on driving forward prosperity by creating the right environment for growth. It is recognised that access to a world class, appropriately skilled workforce is the top factor in influencing business location and company performance, and therefore a key aspect of the SELEP agenda is to ensure that businesses have the skilled workforces needed to compete, particularly in the key growth sectors that will drive economic growth for the future. We need to build on this potential to improve engagement and collaborative working and to share information, seek feedback on new initiatives and gain commitment for

business to increase contacts with schools and colleges, develop work based learning and work experience opportunities for young people and be more involved in the design of vocational programmes.

In order to succeed, we need to develop a more effective partnership working between the local authority, schools, colleges, higher education providers, work- based learning providers, employers and other agencies. It is clear that greater collaboration is needed between groups of schools and with local FE colleges and employers, and that local 14-19 partnership needs to do more to develop the curriculum offer, progression pathways and work based training opportunities for local young people.

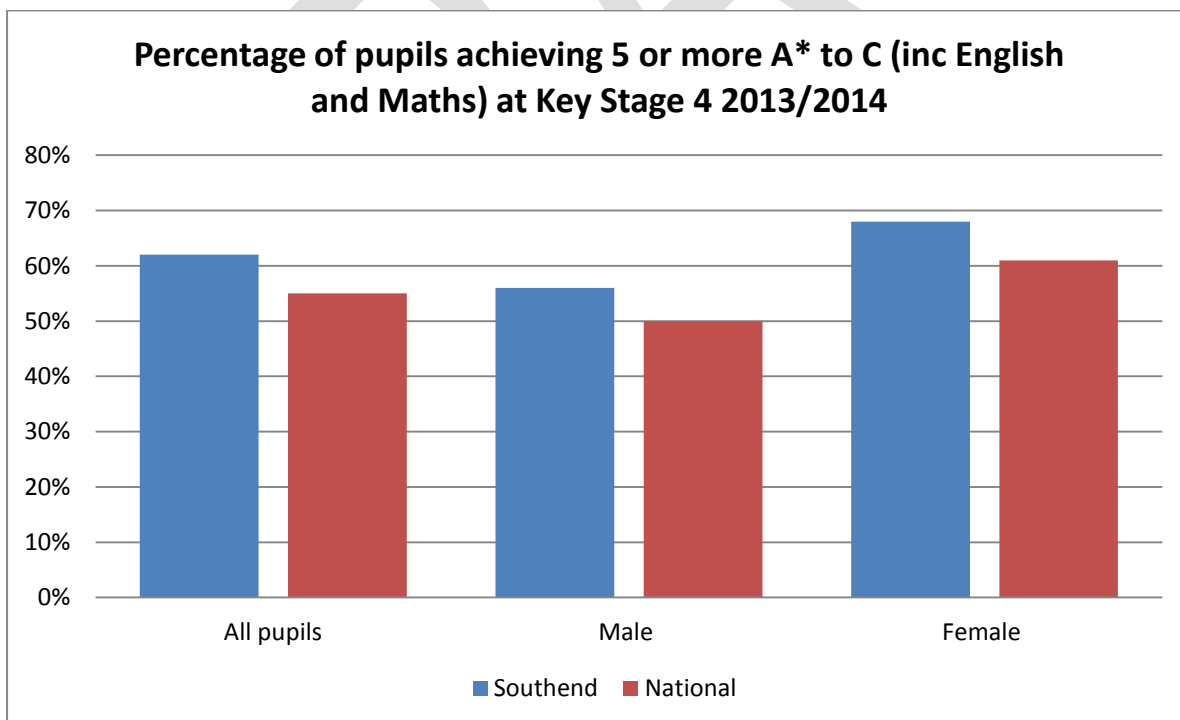
The ambitions of this 14-24 Strategy must therefore be delivered in partnership with a wide variety of organisations and stakeholders

Achieving our ambition will be challenging there are wide gaps in secondary school performance at age 16, about 6% of 16-19 year olds do not participate in education or work based training and by the age of 19 over 20% of young people still do not have the basic qualifications to get a skilled job. Data information

In order to these challenges we have four key areas of focus for our strategy:

### **Raise Attainment**

This strategy will focus as a priority on developing the vocational curriculum and raising the achievement of 14 to 16 year olds, so that all young people can progress to meaningful qualification pathways to age 18. Attainment at 16 is the single most important factor in securing participation, learning and achievement between the ages of 16 and 19, especially attainment in English and mathematics. We need therefore to continue to raise the attainment of five good GCSEs including English and mathematics at age 16, and when this is not achieved at age 16 to ensure young people can attain this standard by age 17 or 18.



Most young people want to stay in education after the age of 16 to improve their levels of qualifications and most of those who follow an AS/A2 pathway (A level September 2015) do well and are well provided for in schools and colleges. However, other post 16 learners are not so well provided for and do less well, so another priority is to improve the curriculum offer and the progress and educational outcomes for all 16-19 year olds, especially those from low income backgrounds who achieve well below average Southend.

For the young people who follow a Level 3 qualification or Advanced level pathway we need to see an improvement in outcomes.

This should continue to be a focus for improvement in school sixth forms and colleges as part of this strategy.

### **Improve and Extend Vocational Education, Training, Traineeships and Apprenticeships**

The second key strand of the strategy is to ensure there is a quality vocational education and training offer in place so that all 14-19 year olds can access and succeed in following an appropriate pathway for education or employment with training. This means a much more comprehensive and systematic programme of vocational education, 14-19, in Southend and Thames Gateway that is well matched to students' needs, has clear progression to higher levels of qualification and has employer engagement in the design of the programmes and employer contribution to their suitability for the local labour market. It will include a significant increase in young people taking up and successfully completing an apprenticeship, as well as more young people following other vocational pathways that lead to higher level qualifications and a skilled job.

Local business community, employers, FE colleges and work based learning providers are the key to this ambition. Learners on full and part-time vocational courses need to develop new employment skills, and progress to the next level of learning, whilst receiving relevant and high quality work experience throughout their period of study.

### **Increase Participation and Employment:**

The third key strand is to achieve full participation to age 18 for all young people. The Education and Skills Act 2008, places a duty on all young people to participate in education or training until age 18 by 2015. This doesn't necessarily mean staying in school and young people have a choice about how they continue in education or training post-16 and they participate, through full-time education, such as school or college; an apprenticeship; traineeship, part-time education or training if they are employed, or volunteering for 20 hours or more a week

### ***Tracking progress***

Under the Raising the Participation Age (RPA) regulations the local authority has a responsibility to ensure all young people's education or training can be tracked until age 18. We recognise that effective tracking and monitoring begins much earlier as young people approach the age of 14 and make decisions about their future pathways. Need to ensure that there is an agreed approach to doing this in Southend working in partnership with schools, colleges, employers and work based training providers is a priority.

### ***Preparing for employment and self-employment***

We recognise that all young people need to be educated to develop their employability skills and that employers' surveys identify the lack of these essential skills by many young people as a major concern.

Communication, problem solving, initiative, team work, time keeping, resilience and literacy and numeracy skills are as essential for employability as qualification levels and vocational specific skills.

Approximately 89% of businesses contain 1-9 employees. Self-employment and business start-ups are a destination for young people, although they probably will not be the first career choice after leaving full-time education. Young people must have access to advice and guidance about the possibilities of self-employment, along with opportunities to develop their enterprise and entrepreneurship skills.

Volunteering is a way of developing skills and gaining experience relevant to work. Student volunteers are welcomed particularly for their youth, enthusiasm, creativity, and dynamism, both in community settings and within business internships. There is a plethora of volunteering opportunities but sometimes there is a lack of co-ordination and information available, particularly for young people who have left full-time study. The strategy must ensure a managed approach to providing information for young people who want to undertake voluntary posts and co-ordinating these opportunities.

A priority for the strategy is to ensure employability, entrepreneurship and enterprise skills are taught effectively as part of the curriculum from Primary school onwards. Building on this, a priority is also to ensure young people access quality work experience as they progress through their 14 -19 education as part of the study programme. There is a need for greater employer engagement in the design and delivery of curriculum courses and work based learning. Quality work experience placements, volunteering opportunities and internships are the most effective routes into apprenticeships, employment with training and self-employment.

### ***Needs of the local economy***

For the strategy, to be effective, it is important to focus on the local economy and the needs of the key sectors not only in Southend but the wider area, also to ensure the education and training offer for young people is well integrated with employers' plans and needs in different areas of the county. We aim to improve employer engagement for young people to educated and prepare them for employment. So that the education and skills system in Southend is more responsive to the changing needs of local business and workforce requirements, and more young people are helped into jobs.

The priority will be to realign the post 16 offer to better reflect the needs of the local economy. We need to develop curriculum pathways and qualification routes, as well as sustained work experience and training for young people, which are better matched with the requirements of key skills sectors in Southend and Thames Gateway A key part of this will be to make effective use of all the available local and national schemes that are designed to increase youth employment with training, including apprenticeships.

### ***Progressing to higher education***

Where students are achieving high grades at Advanced level and want to progress to higher education, we need to ensure that they are optimising their choice of course and institution, to maximise their employment opportunities within their chosen vocational pathway.

Continue to work with regional Higher Education providers to develop vocational pathways and ensure relevant work experience opportunities are available locally. In future we aim to follow the progress of Southend learners across HE institutions to measure their course choices against employment outcomes and feedback this analysis into local advice and guidance for young people.

We aim to ensure that more young people can progress from Advanced and Higher level apprenticeships to higher education and that more young people from disadvantaged backgrounds go to university or progress to graduate level apprenticeships.

### ***Transition from learning to work***

The strategy will also focus on supporting young people to age 24 into employment. The successful transition from learning into work continues to be a key issue for young people well into early adulthood, and depends very much on the skills and qualifications they have achieved since age 16. Better qualified young people have lower unemployment, but it is also the case that many better qualified young people are unemployed because their skills do not match the needs of the local economy and the local economy is contracting rather than growing.

As of January 2015 635 18-24 year olds were unemployed but many local employers and small businesses say one of the reasons for not expanding is the lack of appropriately skilled workers, especially among young people. To address this and encourage employers to invest in skills and more sustainable workforce development for growth, this strategy will give priority to developing further our partnerships between business, schools, higher and further education.

We will also work with all partners and agencies to ensure as many unemployed 18-24 year olds as possible benefit from schemes like the Youth Contract, and Talent Match. It includes extra support through Jobcentre Plus offering young people additional adviser intervention, access to a careers interview with the National Careers Service, an offer of a work experience or sector-based work academy place, and entry into the Work Programme which provides a subsidised job with wage incentives for employers to take on young people.

### **4 Target Support to Vulnerable Young People**

The fourth key strand is to target support more effectively to young people who are at greatest risk of poor outcomes and future unemployment. The strategy recognises that many young people face challenges in their lives and need additional support. The number of young people not in education, employment or training is rising and there is over representation in this group of vulnerable and disadvantaged young people who are looked after by the local authority, care leavers, adopted young people, young offenders, young parents and refugees and asylum seekers. Too many young people remain outside the mainstream education system, with poorer prospects for achievement as a result.

Additionally, there is not enough provision for 16-19 year olds with learning difficulties and disabilities to help them access further learning and achieve independent living and employment. There is a need to take steps to improve the provision for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Reducing exclusions and the NEET figures for vulnerable groups.

- Improving participation, provision and outcomes for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities.
- Developing integrated adolescent support services that will provide targeted help for vulnerable young people and those at risk of poorer outcomes and future unemployment.

## **Our Strategic Priorities**

The key priorities for the 14-24 Learning and Skills Strategy are to:

### **Raise Attainment by:**

- Ensuring more young people achieve five good GCSEs including English and mathematics at age 16 and 19, and we close the gap so that more 16 to 19 year olds achieve level 2 and Level 3 qualifications especially those from low income backgrounds.
- Ensuring more young people from disadvantaged backgrounds go to university and more young people can progress from advanced level and higher apprenticeships to higher education.
- Ensuring more young people who follow an AS/A2 pathway complete their courses and achieve better grades, so that they can access higher level apprenticeships and professional pathways, move to higher education of their choice so that we widen participation in higher education, and for those young people with the best grades that more should secure a place at the top universities.

### **Improve and Extend Vocational Education, Training and Apprenticeships by:**

- Ensuring the 14-16 curriculum provides vocational options for young people that lead to higher qualifications and better progression to post 16 vocational learning and training.
- Ensuring the post 16 curriculum continues to meet the needs of young people also to support the requirements of local employers
- Increasing the take up and completion of apprenticeships, and ensure there is better progression to higher level apprenticeships for all 16-24 year olds.
- Expanding other vocational options that lead more directly to employment in the Kent economy.

### **Increase Participation and Employment by:**

- Ensuring all young people participate in learning and training to age 17 by 2013 and to age 18 by 2015
- Developing curriculum pathways and progression for 16-19 year olds so that those who do not follow an A level pathway have high quality options that deliver a good outcome and access to skilled employment.
- Developing young people's employability skills as an essential part of the curriculum
- Improving access to high quality information and advice, and work experience, so that young people have a better understanding of the labour market and FE options.
- Ensuring new courses and pathways 14-19 are more responsive to the needs of local skills sectors and are better integrated with the needs of the local economy, as well as being supported by local employers' investment and engagement.
- Minimise travel being a barrier to learning.
- Developing an effective system of local 14-19 learning and employment partnerships that engage schools, colleges, work based learning providers, employers and Jobcentre plus in delivering planned coordinated improvements in young people's skills, qualifications and employability.
- Delivering increased youth employment through support for apprenticeships, traineeships, internships, work placements, re-training opportunities, targeted work with those out of work for more than six months and engagement with employers and other agencies to promote wage and training incentives.
- Developing employer engagement in education, more opportunities for young people to have contact with, and careers advice from employers, through study programme.
- Preparing 19-24 year olds for a lifetime of learning in order to enhance their employment prospects, earnings potential, wellbeing and personal development.



**Target Support to Vulnerable Young People by:**

- Ensuring disadvantaged young people get good quality work experience and more support for progression towards further education and work, so that achievement gaps narrow and unemployment for this group is not disproportionately higher.
- Improving early intervention, support and pathway planning for young people most at risk of becoming NEET so that we rapidly reduce the NEET figures.
- Developing an integrated support programme so that all young people at risk of poorer outcomes have tailored support to improve their well being, to participate in learning, training and other positive activities and are helped to access employment.
- Improving 16-24 learning and employment opportunities, and outcomes, for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities. This will include access to work experience opportunities, vocational learning and preparation for the world of work, especially providing additional support for those who cannot access mainstream schools and colleges.
- Developing effective tracking and monitoring of all young people from the earliest years of secondary school and more particularly from age 16, so that all young people's needs can be addressed and they are supported to participate and succeed to age 18.
- Developing more intensive and integrated programmes of support and provision
- Supporting the learning and achievement of young people at risk of exclusion from school and those following alternative curriculum provision.

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## Targets and Performance Measures

If this Strategy is successful we will achieve the following outcomes by 2016. We will monitor performance against these measures and report progress and improvements on an annual basis. The key targets for success and performance measures are:

1. Key Stage 4 attainment will be amongst the best for our statistical neighbours and improve to at least 70% of pupils attaining 5 good GCSEs including English and mathematics.
2. There will be a significant impact on unemployment among 18-24 year olds so that current levels reduce to below 2008 levels.
3. The number of assisted employment opportunities for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities will increase by 10%.
4. Attainment in English and mathematics will improve so that at least 50% of 16 year olds that do not attain Level 2 will achieve the qualification by age 17.
5. The number of young people, especially those from low income backgrounds aged 16 with skills below level 2, to achieve a level 2 qualification and progress to level 3 by age 18 will increase by 20%.
6. The number of 16-19 year olds who follow courses and do not raise their level of qualification will decrease to below 5%.
7. There will be improved participation, provision and outcomes for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities and all young people with learning difficulties and disabilities aged 16-19 in Special Schools will have access to appropriate provision.
8. All young people aged 16-19 will be tracked by the LA working in partnership with schools and colleges so that their participation can be monitored, as required by statutory duty.
9. There will be full participation in education and work based training for all 16-18 year olds following year on year reductions in the NEET figures to no more than 2%.
10. The employability skills of 19 year olds will have improved, especially in English and mathematics, so that level 2 attainment at age 19 is above the national average.
11. The outcomes for 19 year olds from disadvantaged backgrounds will be above the national average and the achievement gap between this group and other students will have reduced by 10% from the 2012 baseline.
12. The uptake of Level 2 and 3 vocational training in skills shortage areas will increase by 10%.
13. The Southend Borough Council Apprenticeship scheme will continue with at least 40 currently looking to increase to 60 young people.
14. At least 50% of schools will have provided one or more apprenticeships which have been taken up successfully by young people.

## **The Role of the Local Authority**

National policy recognises that local authorities make a difference, and where local authorities have effective strategies and 14-19 partnership arrangements in place participation rates and outcomes are better. The role of the local authority is, therefore, to provide strategic leadership and coordination, promote effective partnership working and effective commissioning, and to bring together all the available resources needed to ensure success for this 14-24 strategy. Southend is a local authority with clear ambition for better outcomes for young people and a strong sense of its leadership role in developing an improved education and skills system.

The Local Authority also has clear statutory duties in relation to 16-19 year olds: to secure suitable education and training, support young people to participate and target support to those who are NEET. Local authorities also have a duty to undertake learning difficulty and disability assessments setting out the education and training for those young people who had statements of Special Educational Needs at school. From 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014 these have now been replaced with Education and Health Care Plans (EHCP). Furthermore, Section 68 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 places a duty on local authorities to make available to young people below the age of 19 and relevant adults (i.e. those aged 20 and over but under 25 with learning difficulties) support that will encourage, enable or assist them to participate in education and training.

### **The Statutory Duty for Raising the Participation Age**

The Education and Skills Act 2008, also places a duty on all young people to participate in education or training until their 18th birthday. The local authority duties are to:

- promote the effective participation in education or training of all 16 and 17 year olds resident in their area; and make arrangements to identify young people resident in their area who are not participating.

These complement the existing duties to:

- secure sufficient suitable education and training provision for all 16-19 year olds encourage, enable and assist young people to participate have processes in place to deliver the 'September Guarantee' of a suitable education or training place for every young person track young people's engagement and participation

In carrying out these responsibilities the local authority should respond to those young people who are at risk of not participating and low achievement, or who do not participate, by providing targeted support to improve their skills and qualifications and access to employment with training.

When responsibility for health improvement is transferred to local authorities, funding through the health grant can be used to include targeted support to those young people whose lifestyle choices, for example drug and alcohol misuse, prevent them from participating in education and training.