



Report to Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee

Report of: Jayne Ludlam, Executive Director of Children's Services

Subject: *A Level and Post 16 Provision in Sheffield*

Author of Report: Sam Martin, Assistant Director, Lifelong Learning, Skills and Communities

Summary:

This note, requested by the Committee following a previous agenda item, sets out a city overview of A Level and other Post 16 education and training provision. It explains how A Level courses are organised and commissioned, sets out the Council's duties with regard to Post 16 education, and notes key trends in the uptake of provision.

Type of item: The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	x
Other	

The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:

Note the content of the report.

Background Papers: None

Category of Report: OPEN.

Report of Executive Director of Children and Young People Services

Planning and Organisation of A Level Provision in Sheffield

Briefing Note for CYPF Scrutiny Committee

Introduction

1 This note, requested by the Committee following a previous agenda item, sets out a city overview of A Level and other Post 16 education and training provision. It explains how A Level courses are organised and commissioned, sets out the Council's duties with regard to Post 16 education, and notes key trends in the uptake of provision.

Who organises and commissions A Level courses?

2 Any provider registered with the DfE as a school with a sixth form, a sixth form college, an FE college, an University Technical College, an 16-18 free school or, in some circumstances, a specialist training provider can deliver A levels. Any eligible provider will have a target enrolment number that it has agreed with the Education Funding Agency (EFA) based on historical recruitment patterns to that institution. If the institution is a new entrant to the market, it will agree with EFA a target number resulting from an evidence-based assessment of likely recruitment to A level students e.g. as happened for Bradfield and Chapeltown Academy.

3 EFA will only pay for learners recruited up to the agreed number, but an eligible institution can take the decision to exceed this number. If the additional students are retained on programme, EFA will adjust the 16-18 budget allocation to the institution in the second year of study to reflect this increase in enrolments. This is known as lagged funding. If an institution fails to recruit to its target number for which budget provision has already been made by the EFA, then lagged funding operates in reverse and this budget allocation is reduced in the following year.

4 *No institution is required to consult or even inform its local authority of its decision to commence A levels, or to increase or reduce its A level complement.* This is entirely a matter for the governing body of the institution and the EFA. The one exception to this rule is any maintained school that remains part of the local authority and that wishes to change its status from an 11-16 school to a 11-18 institution. This requirement will become redundant when all secondary schools convert to academies and the duties of the local authority relating to this matter are removed from statute. Moreover, no post-16 provider is required to report on its A level recruitment or its results to the local authority. However, in practice, all post-16 providers in Sheffield do make this information available to the council.

5 The governing body and the leadership team of any provider delivering, or intending to start delivering A levels will give careful consideration to:

- estimated recruitment
- trends in the A level subjects chosen by students
- 16-18 demographic data

- Key Stage 4 results
- any effect of lagged funding (up or down)
- the availability and affordability of staffing and accommodation

6 When making a decision about the A levels it will offer and the locations in which they will be offered. The Sheffield College will have taken these factors into account when it made its decision to terminate A level provision at the Peaks site. Equally, Meadowhead will have done the same when it took the decision to expand its sixth form provision. The tendency for FE colleges to become risk averse and to act promptly to end provision that they judge to be unviable is likely to be reinforced by the new duty on college governing bodies to deliver balanced budgets which will come into effect next year.

The council's duties

7 The commissioning arrangements, roles and responsibilities set out above illustrate the marginal role that the government now expects the local authority play in the provision of A levels in its area. Nevertheless, the local authority does retain some legal duties that are relevant to the commissioning of A level provision within its boundaries:

8 Under the Education and Skills Act (2008) councils have a duty:

- to maintain a strategic overview of provision in their area
- to resolve gaps in provision
- to secure sufficient suitable training and education provision for all young people age 16-19 (or up to the age of 25 for those with an Education, Health and Care Plan)
- to provide support and assistance to individual young people to take up appropriate post-16 education and training, to track the participation of young people and to provide assistance to secure appropriate provision for those teenagers who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs).

9 Sheffield City Council takes these responsibilities seriously and seeks to play a role in:

- maintaining an overview of A level provision and the trends that might affect this with a view to informing and influencing the strategic decisions about A level provision that individuals governing bodies might choose to make
- market making where there is unmet need – as it did when it initiated the process to select a sponsor for the city's two UTCs (University Technical Colleges), having determined that there was a gap in technical education provision linked to growth areas of the local economy
- representing its views to DfE where it is judged that an application for new provision represents unwarranted duplication that is likely to affect existing, good quality A level

provision – as it did when the proposal to create the Chapeltown Academy was brought forward by its sponsors

- challenging providers to consider the needs of the community that they serve in the decisions that they make about post-16 learning provision – as it did over the decision to end A level provision at Peaks.

10 Chapeltown Academy was, of course, ultimately approved by DfE and the Peaks decision was brought about by a college governing body that is not required to act on the views of a local authority. These cases demonstrate the limits of the council's powers in relation to the provision of A levels in the city. Nevertheless, the council seeks to use its resources and responsibilities to work with the post-16 provider network to shape A level provision in the city as follows:

Strategic Overview

11 Through the city's Learning for Life partnership which the council convenes, the local authority seeks to:

- collect and collate data on the take up of all post-16 provision by learners completing Key Stage 4
- manage UCAS Progress on behalf of all schools and colleges - this is the city's on-line post-16 application process used by all Key Stage 4 students
- publish an annual post-16 destination report for all learners completing Key Stage 4 to help inform post-16 planning by institutions
- compose an annual Statement of Need that seeks to set out the current and future need for A level places across the city
- contribute to work undertaken at Sheffield City Region (SCR) level to map post-16 provision so that the Combined Authority/LEP can, in the future, enter into a dialogue with the whole of the post-16 provider community about how the post-16 offer can be shaped to better meet the needs of learners and the local economy and to address the twin challenges of continuing budgetary pressures and a falling post-16 population. Sheffield City Council has played a prominent role in informing the recent Area Based Review of colleges and the recommendations that resulted from this. It will do the same in supporting the mapping of all 16-18 provision and the composition of an Education and Skills Strategy which SCR proposes to undertake in the academic year 2016/17.

Securing sufficient provision and resolving any gaps

12 The council seeks to use its analysis of post-16 provision to inform a dialogue with DfE and the provider community. The aim is to identify any gaps in existing provision or over-supply of places and to seeking mutually acceptable solutions to these challenges. For instance, strategic analysis

demonstrated the absence of coherent post-16 progression pathways closely linked to emerging employment opportunities in growth areas of the local economy including advanced manufacturing, creative and digital and healthcare technologies. The council therefore opened a dialogue with government about the creation of University Technical Colleges in the city, organised a competitive process to select a sponsor, encouraged the requisite university and employer support and supplied the land that made Sheffield the only local authority in the country to secure funding for two new UTCs. Most recently, the decision by the Sheffield College to withdraw A level provision from Peaks leaves a gap in the south east of the city that will require a similar strategic and partnership-based solution that aims to ensure that young people in this area who are seeking to pursue A levels can do so without travelling unreasonable distances.

13 Where the analysis has identified the likelihood of over-supply, the council has alerted the provider community to the emerging pressures and the likely consequences of these. In the first decade of the century a planning dialogue with sixth form schools and the city's colleges proved easier than in the period of rapid academisation that followed. This weakening of the planning relationship has persisted until the creation of Learn Sheffield. The schools and colleges that contribute to Learn Sheffield have recently agreed to make the revival of the pan-city post-16 planning dialogue a priority of the next academic year.

14 This is important because after a long period of relative stability in the pattern of A level and other post-16 provision stretching from the reorganisation of tertiary education in 1988 until the turn of the century, the relatively stability in post-16 provision has been affected by a period of accelerating change that has increasingly challenged and the pattern of A level provision in the city. The reasons for this are:

- the council's decision to address unmet need in the north east by promoting the creation of Longley Park Sixth Form College in 2002
- the introduction of the academies programme in the first decade of this century and its acceleration under the Coalition and Conservative governments: this has resulted in the number of Sheffield schools that have sixth forms almost doubling since 2007
- the government's encouragement of free school applications and the subsequent creation of the Chapeltown 16-18 Academy
- the emergence of new types of learning institution that offer A levels as part of their qualifications mix i.e. UTCs
- a growing proportion of those young people who would have been qualified at the end of Key Stage 4 to progress to A levels choosing instead to pursue an apprenticeship instead. Sheffield ranks ninth out of 152 local authorities for the proportion of its teenage population that take up an apprenticeship with an employer.

15 The increasing competition for those learners eligible to take up A levels remained manageable whilst ever the post-16 population continued to grow, but the impact of demographic decline for this cohort is now beginning to call into question the viability of A level provision in some areas and in some institutions and those pressure will remain, and possibly intensify until 16-18

numbers begin to rise again from about 2020. The Sheffield College's decision to end A level provision at Peaks is the first manifestation of the consequences of this increased competition for a smaller A level cohort and it is unlikely to be the last. For this reason, head teachers and principals, under the auspices of Learn Sheffield, have agreed to work with the council to seek collaborative solutions to this challenge in the new academic year.

Tackling NEETs

16 Following the introduction of austerity measures by the new government in 2010, the council recognised the need to prioritise the use of its rapidly shrinking resources for youth services to provide a targeted service for those teenagers most likely to, who had already disengaged from learning. The council worked with Sheffield Futures, its main provider of youth provision, to redesign the service. The council did this in acknowledgment of its statutory duties to track and report 16-18 year olds who were NEET and to take measures to re-engage them in learning or employment with training. The reorganisation involved

- the design with schools of the Risk of NEET Indicator that allowed for the identification of those teenagers most likely to disengage
- the strengthening of this tracking arrangements for those who had left school and become NEET
- the creation of Community Youth Teams that were charged with connecting with and supporting teenagers to remain in, or to return to education and training.

17 In the period 2011-16, the proportion of 16-18 year olds in the city who were NEET was more than halved from 12% to 5.6% and the continued tracking of the NEET caseload made it possible to demonstrate the impact of these new arrangements in drastically reducing NEETs.

Take up of A level provision by 16 year olds resident in Sheffield

18 The pattern of A level recruitment for Sheffield students is complicated and changing:

- The proportion of 16 year olds taking up A levels has not diminished, but the absolute number has as a result of the demographic decline of the 16-18 cohort. The tables at APPENDIX 1 illustrate this. There were 298 (5%) fewer young people in the Y11 cohort in 2015 compared to 2013. The number of students progressing to A level courses fell by 42 (2%) in the same period but the overall *proportion* of the cohort progressing to A levels provision slightly increased (+1.2%).
- Fewer Sheffield learners are choosing FE providers for programmes where A Levels are the primary learning aim and more are choosing school sixth forms. The trend is most noticeable in relation to the Sheffield College where students primarily enrolling for A levels has almost halved between 2013 and 2015. This fall is accompanied by the concentration of A level

provision at Hillsborough College following the closure of the Norton College site. By contrast, learner numbers for those primarily studying A levels at Longley Park have remained relatively stable.

- There is a correlation between the fall in numbers taking up A level provision in FE and the increase in the number of Sheffield schools offering A level provision – since 2007 the number of schools offering A levels has more than doubled from the seven schools allowed to keep their sixth forms at tertiary reorganisation of 1988 to the 15 that were offering this provision in 2015 (including Chapeltown Academy and Sheffield UTC).
- The proportion of learners either choosing to study beyond the city boundaries remains largely unchanged in the period 2013-15 inclusive with an average of just over 9% choosing study in other local authority areas, mainly Rotherham and North East Derbyshire. It is also to be noted that, with the exception of Penistone, sixth form schools beyond the city boundary attract very few Sheffield students pursuing A levels and the biggest beneficiary from the export of A level students from Sheffield is Thomas Rotherham College.

19 It is also worth noting that only 37% of those completing Key Stage 4 in Sheffield go on to take up A levels. In other words, to focus exclusively on A level analysis is to ignore the destinations, experience and future achievement of a majority of the city's teenagers who do not pursue A level study. An overview of the data on Post 16 destinations from 2015 is shown at APPENDIX 2. The picture is complicated further by the growing trend in colleges for students to take up a blend of A levels and vocational qualifications such as BTEC. When taking a strategic overview of future post-16 needs it is therefore critical to consider the needs, choice and progression of all students completing Key Stage 4 and to recognise that the pattern of provision and choice is changing as students increasingly study for a blend of qualifications.

20 Of those learners completing Key Stage 4 in Sheffield:

- about a quarter remain in, or enrol at a school with a sixth form and almost exclusively pursue A level study
- just over half enrol at a college and pursue either A levels, vocational qualifications, or a blend of the two. A significant proportion of these will be those who have not achieved five or more GCSEs at grade C or above, including English and maths – a group sometimes referred to as the 'forgotten 40%' because of the policy focus on A levels and sixth forms to the exclusion of other types of provision
- about a fifth enrol with training providers and take up vocational qualifications only- mainly made up of those drawn from the 'forgotten 40%'
- the remainder do not enter education or training – - mainly made up of those drawn from 'forgotten 40%' as well.

21 This pattern changes over the course of the two years or more that these learners are involved in post-16 education. For example, just over 10% of learners fail to complete the first course of study they move on to, or fail to progress from the first year into the second year or a 2 year course.

What strategic trends might impact upon the development of A Level provision in coming years?

22 Demographic change is the most significant consideration. 16-18 learner numbers are anticipated to fall slightly over the next 2-3 years, but then increase to 2024 and stabilize thereafter into the next decade.

23 Recent years have seen secondary schools that have not historically offered A Levels set up their own sixth form provision. This is often popular with students who can then 'stay on' at their secondary school into Post 16 education. This has had an impact on numbers choosing college provision. If more students choose these pathways then demand for A Level provision will change.

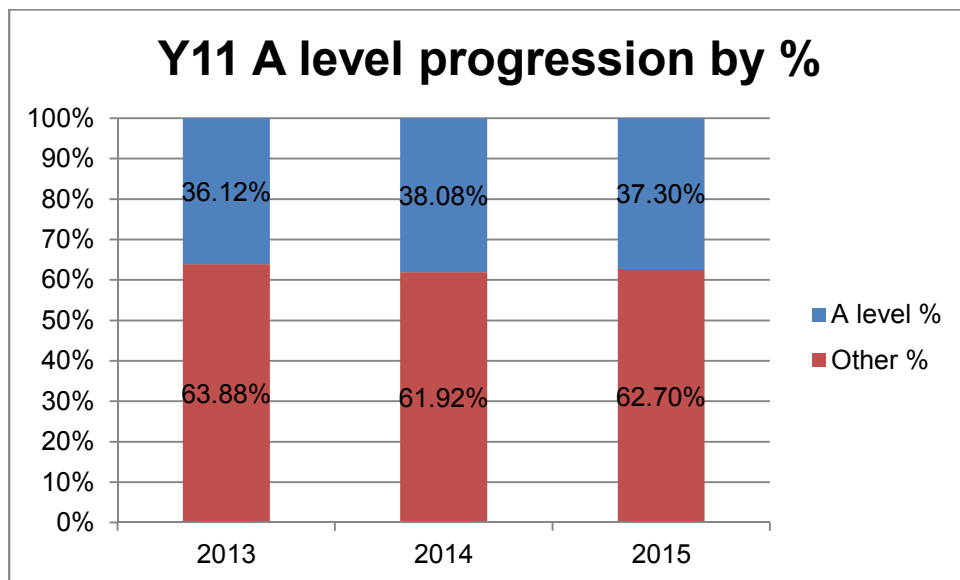
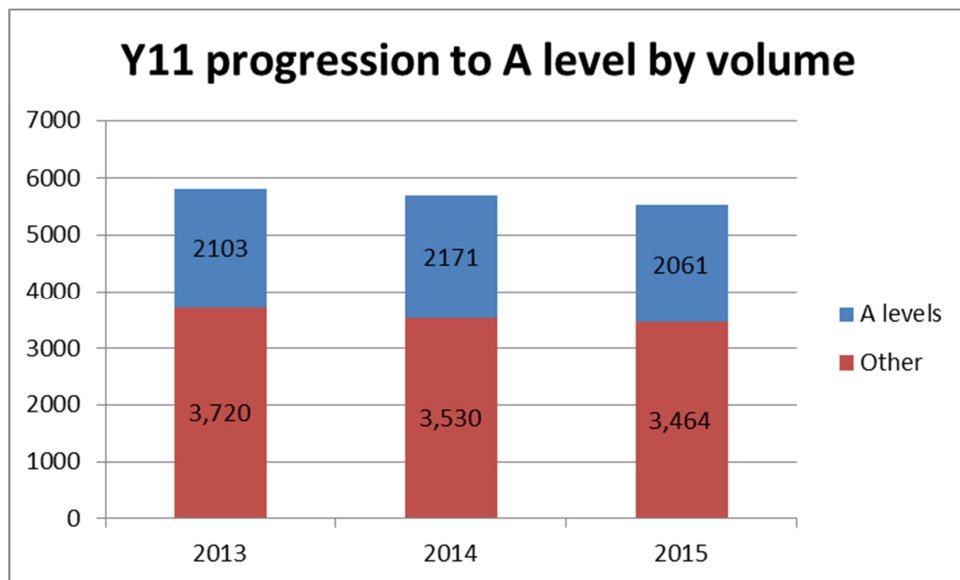
24 As the supply of A level places grows and the demand, due to demographic decline, falls, the element of choice increases and a greater proportion of young people are likely to move across the city to pursue A levels at those institutions that are perceived as delivering better results. This can see numbers fall in some other institutions to the extent that, in a period of tightening post-16 budgets, it becomes unviable and educationally unsound to deliver A levels at that location.

25 Government is promoting technical pathways as an alternative to traditional post 16 A-Level routes. FE colleges are often in a good position with their infrastructure to deliver these. It is therefore possible that over the next 5-10 years there will be an increase in school based A level provision as the FE sector focuses more on technical and vocational pathways.

Recommendations

26 That the Scrutiny Committee notes the information in this report.

APPENDIX 1: Year 11 Progression to A Level Provision 2013-2015



APPENDIX 2: Post 16 Destinations 2015 all provision

Y11 Activity Survey 2015

Locality	Cohort Total		Full Time Education		Full Time Education of which A levels			Training (non Emp)		Employment With Training		Employment Without Training		Part-time Employment		NEET		Cannot be Contacted		Current Situation Not Known		Into Learning	
	No.YP	% of Total	in FE	% of Total	in Schools	Total	% of Total	No.YP	% of Total	No.YP	% of Total	No.YP	% of Total	No.YP	% of Total	No.YP	% of Total	No.YP	% of Total	No.YP	% of Total	No.YP	% of Total
Locality A	679	77.9%	90	25.8%	85	175	25.8%	51	7.5%	65	9.6%	7	1.0%	0	0	20	2.9%	2	0.3%	5	0.7%	645	95.0%
Locality B	702	89.2%	117	28.3%	82	199	28.3%	26	3.7%	17	2.4%	5	0.7%	0	0	21	3.0%	4	0.6%	3	0.4%	669	95.3%
Locality C	619	83.5%	24	24.9%	130	154	24.9%	37	6.0%	31	5.0%	3	0.5%	0	0	26	4.2%	2	0.3%	3	0.5%	585	94.5%
Locality D	866	83.1%	126	28.8%	123	249	28.8%	23	2.7%	85	9.8%	8	0.9%	0	0	26	3.0%	1	0.1%	3	0.3%	828	95.6%
Locality E	539	87.6%	10	40.4%	208	218	40.4%	16	3.0%	37	6.9%	3	0.6%	0	0	9	1.7%	0	0.0%	2	0.4%	525	97.4%
Locality F	1413	93.6%	16	58.5%	810	826	58.5%	31	2.2%	34	2.4%	3	0.2%	0	0	17	1.2%	4	0.3%	2	0.1%	1387	98.2%
Locality G	584	86.8%	25	38.5%	200	225	38.5%	12	2.1%	49	8.4%	3	0.5%	0	0	12	2.1%	1	0.2%	0	0.0%	568	97.3%
City Wide Totals 2015	5525	85.9%	408	37.3%	1653	2061	37.3%	210	3.8%	321	5.8%	36	0.7%	0	0.0%	153	2.8%	25	0.5%	35	0.6%	5276	95.5%
City Wide Totals 2014	5701	86.0%	464	38.1%	1707	2171	38.1%	206	3.6%	296	5.2%	35	0.6%	3	0.1%	165	2.9%	41	0.7%	53	0.9%	5404	94.8%
City Wide Totals 2013	5823	85.9%	536	36.1%	1567	2103	36.1%	231	4.0%	261	4.5%	30	0.5%	1	0.0%	189	3.2%	25	0.4%	86	1.5%	5492	94.3%
Trend 2013-2015	-298	0.0%	-128	1.2%	86	-42	1.2%	-21	-0.2%	60	1.3%	6	0.1%	-1	0.0%	-36	-0.5%	0	0.0%	-51	-0.8%	-216	1.2%
% change (number of YP)	-5.1%	-5.1%	-23.9%	5.5%	5.5%	-2.0%	-9.1%	23.0%	20.0%	-100.0%	-19.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-59.3%	0.0%	-3.9%							

Schools in Each Locality Area

Locality	
Locality A	CHAUCER
	ECCLESFIELD
	HOLGATE MEADOW
	YEWLANDS
Locality B	Firth Park Academy
	FIRVALE
	HINDE HOUSE
	PARKWOOD ACADEMY
Locality C	ALL SAINTS
	HERITAGE PARK
	Seven Hills
	Sheffield Inclusion Centre
	SHEFFIELD PARK ACADEMY
	SHEFFIELD SPRINGS ACADEMY
Locality D	BIRLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
	CITY (Outwood)
	HANDSWORTH GRANGE
	MEADOWHEAD
	WESTFIELD SCHOOL
Locality E	NEWFIELD
	TALBOT
Locality F	BENTS GREEN
	HIGH STORRS
	KING ECGBERT
	KING EDWARD VII
	NOTRE DAME
	SILVERDALE
	TAPTON
	University Technical College
Locality G	BRADFIELD
	FORGE VALLEY
	STOCKSBRIDGE HIGH

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