

Services for Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel



Scrutiny Review of Staying on Rates in Post 16 Education, Employment and Training

TAMESIDE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL

REVIEW OF STAYING ON RATES IN POST 16 EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

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1. INTRODUCTION BY THE CHAIR

It has been acknowledged recently in the Council Chamber that the young people of Tameside really are this community's most important asset. Their future is Tameside's future and their future is best secured if they are in meaningful education, employment or training.



It is acknowledged, both locally and nationally that academic higher education is not for all. The government is introducing a programme of diplomas for 14 – 19 year olds in eventually fourteen subject areas. These have the potential to be excellent and Tameside is keen to be fully involved, but young people will need high class careers support at an earlier age.

Schools now have significant independence from the education Service who can only advise and support, albeit robustly. There are some excellent initiatives being piloted in Tameside by the Director of Education's Service in partnership with colleges. There are also some first class examples of good practice in Tameside's high schools, for example Alder High School, but it has to be said that we also received examples of patchy careers guidance, provided by non specialists in a very crowded timetable. Although Connexions is undertaking some good work, especially with those young people identified as being most at risk of being not in education, employment or training. With the introduction of new diplomas, however, there will be a need to provide careers advice at a much earlier age than at present and this must include the Connexions Service. The Connexions Service also needs to project a much higher profile than at present.

We are confident that if some of the good careers guidance highlighted in this report and the initiatives being followed centrally and with colleges then the number of NEETs in Tameside will continue to reduce and the lives of Tameside's greatest asset will continue to improve.

I would like to thank on behalf of the Scrutiny Panel the teaching staff, the Director of Education and his staff and the young people who assisted with this review and the invaluable support from this Scrutiny Panel's support officer.

Councillor Vincent Ricci, Chair Services for Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel.

2. SUMMARY

This review aims to evaluate the effectiveness of measures to increase the number of young people in Tameside progressing to, and remaining in, post 16 education, employment or training.

This is an important review for the Scrutiny Panel. Increasing participation in post 16 education, employment and training is integral to community development, economic sustainability and individual wellbeing. Furthermore reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training is a key national and local priority for improvement.

The review is divided into 3 key sections:

Section one - considers the potential impact on staying on rates of changes to the curriculum for 14-19 year olds; and the strategic role of local authorities in preparing for the successful implementation of the new curriculum.

Section two – considers the amount and quality of careers education and guidance available to young people in Tameside; including personal support available for young people with specific social, emotional or behavioural needs.

Section three – considers the ways in which Tameside Council and the borough's colleges and sixth forms are contributing to improving retention rates in post 16 education.

During the course of the review the Panel considered the views of key stakeholders, including young people, those responsible for providing careers education, guidance and support for young people and representatives from Tameside Council's 14-19 Partnership.

The Panel learnt that Central Government has launched a number of wide reaching reforms to the 14-19 curriculum, which aim to have a long term impact on increasing the number of young people progressing to, and remaining in, post 16 education and training. The introduction of new specialised diplomas for 14-19 year olds is central to this programme of reform.

The Panel recognise that the new diplomas offer a way of engaging in education or training young people who may be at risk of disengagement from the traditional GCSE curriculum. However this report identifies a number of long term challenges associated with the new diplomas. In particular the report emphasises the need for good quality careers education and guidance, in order to ensure that young people have the capacity to make informed and successful decisions about their future.

The review, however, reports that the level and quality of careers information and support received by young people in Tameside is very mixed. The review highlights cases of good quality Careers Education and Guidance delivered in some local secondary schools and examples of effective targeted support provided by Connexions. In addition the review highlights the recently launched area-wide online prospectus as a particularly informative resource for 14-19 year olds.

However the review indicates that some young people are not receiving an appropriate level of information and support. Careers Education and Guidance has a low profile in many schools; and the Panel is concerned that Connexions' universal services have not developed at the same rate as its targeted services and are not fully accessed by many young people. In particular, the review revealed that young people's awareness of the services provided by Connexions is very low.

This review produces a number of recommendations which aim to help further develop the existing careers information and support infrastructure, in order to maximise young people's capacity for making the most appropriate choices out of the complex range of learning and career pathways available. In the long term this review hopes to contribute to increasing the number of young people progressing to, and remaining in, post 16 education, employment and training.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Aim of the Scrutiny Review:

To evaluate the effectiveness of measures to increase the number of Year 11 school leavers in Tameside progressing to, and remaining in, post 16 education, employment or training; and to identify areas for improvement.

Objectives:

- A.** To gather accurate information about the number of 16-18 year olds in Tameside currently progressing to post 16 education, employment and training; and to identify groups of young people most vulnerable to being "not in employment, education or training" (NEET);
- B.** To consider the strategic role of Tameside Council in helping to increase the number of 16-18 year olds participating in post 16 education, employment and training;
- C.** To evaluate the availability and effectiveness of information and support for school leavers regarding post 16 education, employment and training;
- D.** To evaluate the ways in which post 16 education, employment and training is promoted in local secondary schools;
- E.** To identify and evaluate specific measures to increase the staying on rates, and reduce the drop out rates, of groups of young people with low levels of participation in post 16 education, employment and training and other young people vulnerable to becoming NEET;
- F.** To identify and evaluate the role of the Youth Service (and other out of school services) in helping to increase participation in post 16 education, employment and training;

- G.** To gather feedback from pupils and teachers relating to:
- i. The effectiveness of measures to increase participation in post 16 education, employment and training;
 - ii. Obstacles to progression into post 16 education, employment and training;
- H.** To identify examples of good practice in Tameside and other areas.

4. MEMBERSHIP OF THE PANEL

2006/7

**Councillor V Ricci (Chair),
Councillors Ambler, Beeley, Bray, R Etchells, Harrison, Highton, Sullivan,
Warrington, Wild**

**Mrs S March (Church of England)
Rev. Dean M Walsh (Roman Catholic Church)
Mr N Ahmed (The Muslim Faith)
Mrs T Sharma (The Hindu Faith)
Mr P Noblett (Parent Governor)**

2007/8

**Councillor V Ricci (Chair)
Councillors Dickinson, Bowden, Brelsford, R Etchells, Highton, S Quinn, Reynolds,
Sullivan, Warrington, Wild**

**Mrs S March (Church of England)
Rev. Dean M Walsh (Roman Catholic Church)
Mr N Ahmed (The Muslim Faith)
Mrs T Sharma (The Hindu Faith)
Mrs N Dallas (Parent Governor)
Mr P Noblett (Parent Governor)**

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 During the course of the review, the Scrutiny Panel met:

- The Council's Director of Education and representatives from the Council's 14-19 Unit, to discuss the role of the Council in helping to increase the number of young people participating in post 16 education, employment and training;

- The Head of Connexions and Connexions' Personal Advisors (PAs), to discuss the careers information and support provided by Connexions, including support targeted at young people particularly at risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training);
- Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) Co-ordinators from three local secondary schools and a representative from Hyde Pupil Referral Unit, to discuss the Careers Education and Guidance provided in schools;
- Representatives from Tameside College, Ashton Sixth Form and Audenshaw Sixth Form College, to discuss measures to increase retention rates in post 16 education.

5.2 The Panel also received a demonstration of the newly launched area-wide online prospectus for 14-19 year olds.

5.3 In addition as part of the review the Panel undertook an extensive consultation exercise with young people, in order to gather young people's experiences and opinions regarding the availability and usefulness of the careers education, guidance and support available in Tameside. The consultation exercise included the following activities:

- 600 self completion surveys were distributed to a random sample of Year 10 pupils across the borough's 18 mainstream secondary schools;
- The Panel held a small discussion group with 6 young people not in education, employment or training, who were attending Connexions' "On Your Marks Group."

6. BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

6.1 Rationale for the review

6.1.1 "Staying on rates" is an important issue for the Scrutiny Panel to review, as increasing participation in post 16 education, employment and training; and reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) are key priorities at national and local level.

6.1.2 Increasing participating in post 16 education, employment and training and reducing the number of NEET young people is integral to community development, economic sustainability and individual wellbeing. National research estimates that young people who are NEET between the ages of 16 and 18 are:

- 50% more likely to suffer poor health;
- 60% more likely to become involved in drugs;
- 20 times more likely to be involved in crime;
- 22 times more likely to become a teenage Mother;
- Have poorer life chances

In addition it is estimated that on average a young person who becomes NEET at the age of 16 will cost the country £97,000 during their lifetime, due to their impact

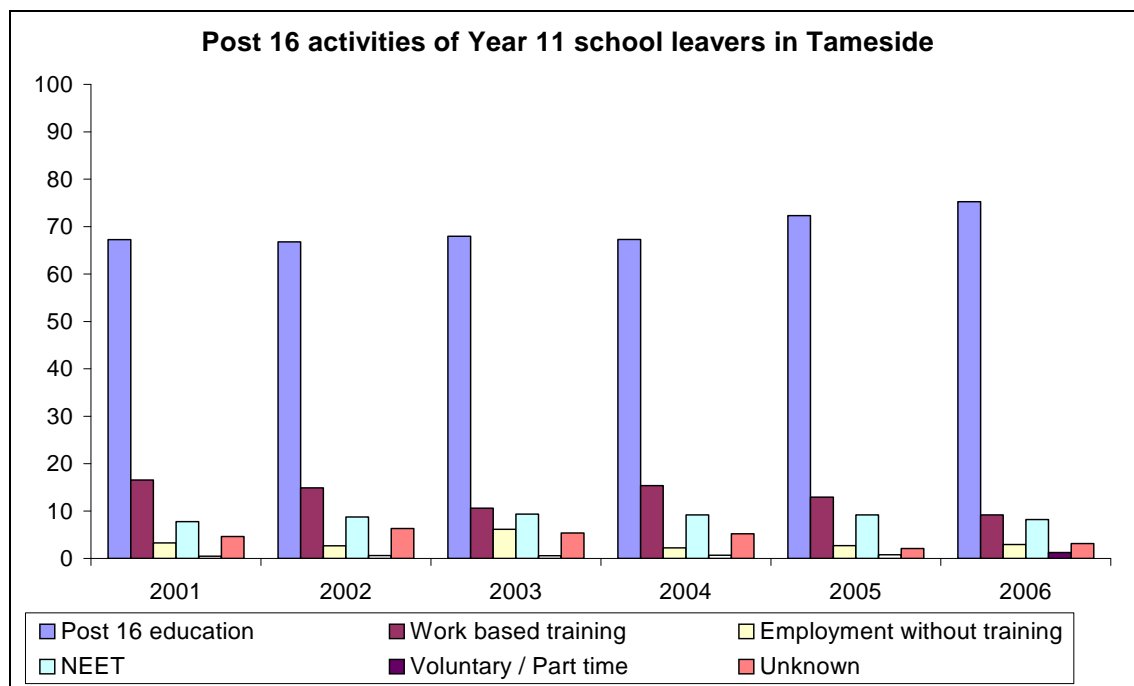
on crime, public health, anti-social behaviour, welfare benefits and lack of economic productivity.¹

6.1.3 Consequently the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DfCSF) has set a national target to reduce the percentage of NEET young people from 11% in 2005, to 8% by 2010.

6.1.4 Meanwhile Tameside's Children and Young People Strategic Partnership has identified reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training as one of nine local priorities for improvement in 2007/8; and Tameside's Local Area Agreement includes a target to reduce the percentage of NEET 16-18 year olds, from 9.1% in 2006 to 6.9% by 2009.

6.2 Performance data - staying on rates in Tameside

6.2.1 The graph below shows the career / educational activities of each cohort of Year 11 school leavers in Tameside between 2001 and 2006, on 1st November in the year they completed their statutory education.²



6.2.2 The graph shows that progress has been made in recent years towards increasing the education and skills base of young people in Tameside:

- The proportion of school leavers progressing to post 16 education has increased steadily during the past 5 years, from 67% in 2001 to over 75% in 2006.

¹ SOURCE: Times online Meet the NEETs – a new underclass (March 2005)

² Information supplied by Connexions, Tameside

- In addition the number of school leavers entering employment with training or another form of work based training, remains a significantly larger proportion than the number of young people taking up jobs without further training.

6.2.3 However the graph highlights that little headway has been made in reducing the number of school leavers who do not enter any form of education, employment or training after completing their compulsory education.

- Between 2001 and 2003 the proportion of school leavers not in post 16 education, employment or training on 1st November in the year they completed compulsory education, increased from 7.8% to 9.4%.
- Despite a slight decline after 2004, the proportion of school leavers not in any form of education, employment or training has remained around 8%-9% of each cohort. This accounts for approximately 265 Year 11 school leavers each year.

6.2.4 Furthermore, data collected by Connexions shows that between 42% and 50% of those school leavers who are not in education, employment or training in the November after they complete their statutory education, remain NEET 12 months later.

6.2.5 In addition Connexions' data indicates that a significant number of those school leavers who do progress to post 16 education or training after completing Year 11, drop out following their first term. Many of these young people will become NEET by the age of 17.

6.2.6 Connexions data shows that approximately 440 17-18 year olds in Tameside were NEET on 1st November 2006.

6.2.7 Therefore in November 2006, a total of 720 16-18 year olds in Tameside were not in education, employment or training. This accounts for 9.1% of all 16-18 year olds in the borough.

6.2.8 The percentage of young people in Tameside progressing to post 16 education or employment was identified as an area for improvement in the Council's Annual Performance Assessments for Services for Children and Young People in 2005 and 2006.

6.2.9 Consequently progress towards addressing this area for improvement is likely to form one of the focuses for Tameside's Joint Area Review in 2008.

6.2.10 Therefore this Scrutiny Review provides the Services for Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel with an important and timely opportunity to monitor progress towards achieving a challenging Council priority.

6.2.11 In addition this review will contribute to Tameside's performance against wider Council priorities including the "Achieving Economic Well-being" outcome identified in "Every Child Matters;" and the Tameside Community Strategy themes of a "Prosperous Society" and a "Learning Community;"

7. THE NEW 14-19 CURRICULUM AND THE ROLE OF LOCAL COUNCILS

7.1 Background information on the new 14-19 Diplomas

- 7.1.1 In 2005 Central Government launched a number of wide reaching reforms to the 14-19 curriculum, which aim to increase the number of young people progressing to, and remaining in, post 16 education and training. The introduction of specialised diplomas for 14-19 year olds is central to this programme of reform.
- 7.1.2 Between 2008 and 2013, 14 new specialised diplomas will be made available to 14-19 year olds nationally.
- 7.1.3 The diplomas will focus on a broad area of work relating to a specific vocational area such as Engineering or Information Technology. They will comprise a mixture of classroom based activities in school and college, and work related study.
- 7.1.4 Each diploma will be offered at three levels:
- Level 1 - will be the equivalent of 4-5 GCSEs at grades A*-C
 - Level 2 - will be the equivalent of 5-6 GCSEs at grades A*-C
 - Level 3 - will be the equivalent of 3 A levels.
- 7.1.5 All level 1 and 2 diplomas will include modules in "Functional Skills," which incorporate GCSE level English, Maths and Information and Communications Technology.
- 7.1.6 The diplomas will be introduced as an alternative to the current GCSE curriculum. From 2008 onwards, 14 year olds will be able to elect to study a diploma at Key Stage 4 rather than follow GCSE courses.
- 7.1.7 The Government requires that the new diplomas are delivered on an area wide basis, through collaboration between schools, colleges, training providers and local employers. Therefore each diploma will be delivered across multiple locations and pupils may be required to study for aspects of their diploma at college or at a different school from their base school.
- 7.1.8 The Government has set an entitlement that by 2013 there must be sufficient provision in all local areas to allow every young person access to the full range of diplomas.
- 7.1.9 The diplomas are designed to help increase participation in post 16 education and training in two key ways:
- i. By establishing greater continuity between the statutory curriculum and post 16 education and training, in order to reduce the perception that 16 is an appropriate point at which to stop learning;
 - ii. By providing a flexible curriculum which can be tailored to meet individuals' needs and aspirations, in order to reduce disengagement and drop out rates from post 16 education and training.

7.2 Background information on the role of local authorities in relation to the new 14-19 diplomas

7.2.1 The Education and Inspections Act passed in 2006 places a statutory duty on local authorities for ensuring that the full range of diplomas are available to all 14-16 year olds in the local area. Meanwhile the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is responsible for ensuring that the entitlement is met for 16-19 year olds.

7.2.2 Central Government has set specific criteria which local areas must demonstrate they can meet before they are granted permission to deliver the diplomas. Local authorities are expected to oversee progress towards meeting these criteria.

7.2.3 In particular, local authorities are expected to:

- i. Lead partnership working between schools, providers of post 16 education and training, local businesses and the LSC, in order to ensure that the local area is able to deliver the curriculum requirements of the new diplomas.
- ii. Develop and lead a consortium of stakeholders in order to gather, and submit to the DfCSF, evidence to show how the local area meets the set criteria for each of the 14 diplomas.

7.2.4 In addition local authorities are expected to complete statutory annual progress checks which help track the local area's progress towards implementing the diplomas; and subsequently provide a tool for evaluating the impact of the diplomas.

7.2.5 The new diplomas are being rolled out in stages. In October 2006 local consortiums were invited to submit applications to deliver the first five diplomas, which are due to commence in September 2008.

7.3 Reforms to the 14-19 curriculum in Tameside

7.3.1 The Tameside Diploma Consortium was formed in July 2006. It comprises representatives from the borough's mainstream secondary schools, Tameside College, Ashton Sixth Form College and the Learning and Skills Council; and is led by the Local Authority.

7.3.2 The consortium has two key aims:

- i. To prepare and submit successful applications for each of the 14 new 14-19 diplomas;
- ii. To oversee the creation of a "Tameside campus" infrastructure, that will enable the effective delivery of the diplomas on area wide basis.

7.3.3 The consortium submitted applications in October 2006, to deliver four of the five diplomas due to commence in September 2008. The four diplomas applied for were:

- Engineering;
- Creative and Media;
- Society, Health and Development;
- Information Technology

7.3.4 The following outcome of Tameside's application was published in March 2007:

Engineering - Tameside was granted permission to introduce the Diploma in Engineering commencing in September 2008;

Creative and Media – It was judged that the Diploma in Creative and Media may be introduced in September 2009 subject to the consortium:

- i. Providing a more detailed facilities development plan, including funding proposals for necessary improvements;
- ii. Developing more detailed partnership management arrangements, in order to ensure that the diploma can be effectively delivered on an area wide basis.

Society, Health and Development – It was judged that the Diploma in Society, Health and Development may be introduced in September 2009 subject to the consortium:

- i. Demonstrating that it can provide sufficient high quality facilities appropriate for this Diploma. In particular, assessors felt that though the lead school was currently being re-furbished, other schools involved in the delivery of this diploma would require additional funding in order to implement the planned improvements.
- ii. Implementing detailed management arrangements for the delivery of the diploma; including addressing workforce recruitment and training issues.

Information Technology – The consortium's application to deliver the Diploma in Information Technology failed and must be re-submitted. Assessors identified the following areas requiring improvement:

- i. Improvements in facilities are required to meet the full diploma line requirements;
- ii. Analysis of workforce requirements against the requirements of the diploma is needed.

7.3.5 The consortium is confident that the Diplomas in Creative and Media, and Society, Health and Development, will be ready for implementation in September 2009.

7.3.6 The consortium is currently further developing details of the new curriculum. This includes preparing for the implementation of the Diploma in Engineering and compiling applications for the next round of diploma submissions.

7.3.7 However the Scrutiny Panel was informed by the Director of Education and 14-19 Strategy Co-ordinator that reform to the 14-19 curriculum will create a number of long term challenges for the Council and other stakeholders. For example the key challenges identified include:

- Engaging local businesses in helping to deliver the aspects of the diplomas;
- Providing training for school teachers who will be involved in delivering the new diplomas;
- Practical arrangements arising from the area-wide delivery of diplomas, such as common timetabling across schools and colleges, and transportation issues;
- Accurately judging demand from young people for each diploma line, in order to ensure resources are targeted appropriately.

7.3.8 In addition the Panel felt that there would be a need to balance young people's demand for specific diploma lines with the needs of the local economy. Members expressed concern that young people may become NEET after completing their diploma if appropriate employment opportunities were unavailable.

7.3.9 Furthermore the Panel felt that the introduction of the 14 new diplomas will increase the importance of good quality careers education and guidance. The new diplomas will increase the range of learning pathways available to young people and thus increase the complexity of the choices they are required to make. Furthermore pupils as young as 14 years of age will be asked to make important decisions about their future learning. The Panel felt that making an uninformed and inappropriate decision at this stage could have far reaching implications upon a young person's future success and engagement with education.

Conclusions

- 1. The Panel recognise that the new diplomas provide a potential means of increasing young people's engagement in education and training, particularly those young people who fail to engage with the traditional GCSE curriculum.**
- 2. However the Panel feels that the introduction of the new diplomas will bring about a number of challenges for the local authority and other stakeholders; in particular:**
 - i. Balancing young people's demand for specific diploma lines with the needs of the local economy;**
 - ii. Ensuring good quality independent information and advice is available to 14-16 year olds, in order to ensure young people have the capacity to make informed and successful decisions about their future.**

Recommendations

- 1. That the Panel carries out on-going monitoring of the implementation and outcomes of the new Diplomas.**

8. INFORMATION AND SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL LEAVERS

8.1 Background information

- 8.1.1 It is widely recognised that the provision of good quality information and support regarding career and learning options is critical to increasing the proportion of young people who make an effective transition from Year 11 to post 16 education, employment or training.
- 8.1.2 Deciding what career or learning pathway to pursue at the age of 16 is often the single most important decision a young person will have been required to make; and the choices made at this age can have far reaching implications upon a young person's future development.
- 8.1.3 Consequently impartial information and support is essential in order to ensure young people are able to make informed and successful decisions about their future.
- 8.1.4 A study published by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in 2002 summarises:

“Young people who have received effective careers education alongside impartial advice and guidance from external guidance specialists make the best transitions at age 16 and are less likely to switch or drop out of courses in Year 12.”

- 8.1.5 Consequently the provision of careers advice and guidance is one of the key “building blocks” which the Government is committed to ensuring is in place as part of its policy to raise the participation age in education. The Secretary for Children, Schools and Families explained:

“Careers advice and guidance is essential to helping young people make the right choices...I'd like to see all young people consider a range of options before they decide what career path to go down.”

- 8.1.6 Central Government places responsibility with a range of agencies for ensuring the adequate provision of integrated and effective careers information, advice and guidance. These agencies include:

- Local authorities;
- Schools and colleges;
- Connexions;

The following sections of this chapter consider the ways in which the above agencies are working together to contribute to the provision of integrated and effective careers information and support in Tameside.

8.2 Tameside Council

- 8.2.1 The Education and Inspections Act places a statutory duty on local authorities to ensure all young people are provided with guidance on the educational choices available to them. In particular the Act requires that local authorities lead the development of an online prospectus setting out the full range of courses and training opportunities available in the local area.
- 8.2.2 The Tameside 14-19 Partnership, led by the Council, launched its online area-wide prospectus in 2007.
- 8.2.3 The prospectus is targeted at 14 to 19 year olds. It contains general information and advice regarding the various progression routes available to young people post Year 11. In addition it contains more detailed information about the specific courses available at local colleges and the apprenticeships offered through Skills Solutions and other key apprenticeship providers.
- 8.2.4 Young people may use the prospectus to search for specific areas of interest, or browse the web-site in order to access information about:
- The entry requirements for specific courses or apprenticeships;
 - The institutions offering specific courses or apprenticeships, together with contact details and directions;
 - A description of each course or apprenticeship, including the curriculum content and learning expectations;
 - The duration of specific courses and opportunities for progression.
- 8.2.5 At present the directory focuses on options available to 16-19 year olds, particularly college courses and apprenticeships offered through Skills Solutions. However the Panel was informed that there are plans to expand the work based training section of the web-site.
- 8.2.6 The directory also provides a number of personalised career planning tools. For example young people receive a personal user-name and password giving them access to their own part of the web-site, which enables them to record their searches and develop their career action plan over time. In addition the web-site provides a facility for completing online applications.
- 8.2.7 The Panel was informed that the online directory will be promoted in schools by Connexions Personal Advisors and teaching staff responsible for delivering Careers Education and Guidance.
- 8.2.8 The Panel was informed that the online directory is not centrally managed. Consequently individual institutions have an essential role in checking the accuracy of course information and updating the data as necessary.
- 8.2.9 It was reported that the Council would prompt schools, colleges and key apprenticeship providers to update their data. However it was felt that monitoring the accuracy of information provided by smaller work based training providers would be challenging.

Conclusions

- 3. The Panel was impressed with the detailed information contained in the prospectus regarding courses, apprenticeships and local colleges.**
- 4. At present, however, the prospectus focuses on post 16 college courses and apprenticeships offered through Skills Solutions for 16-19 year olds. There is little information on:
 - i. Other work based training opportunities;**
 - ii. The choices available for 14-16 year olds (the Panel felt that this will be a particularly significant gap in information following the introduction of the new 14-19 diplomas).****
- 5. In addition the online prospectus is not centrally managed. Consequently individual institutions have an essential role in updating and checking the accuracy of their course information. The Panel felt that a centralised system for monitoring information may be required.**

Recommendations

- 2. That the online prospectus includes:
 - i. Information on the full range of work based training opportunities available to 16-19 year olds;**
 - ii. Information on the choices available to 14-16 year olds, especially in light of the introduction of the new diplomas.****
- 3. That consideration be given to the introduction of central monitoring of the information contained in the online prospectus, to ensure that all information is accurate and up to date.**

8.3 Careers Education and Guidance in Schools

8.3.1 Schools' statutory responsibilities

8.3.2 Secondary schools have a statutory responsibility to provide a programme of Careers Education and Guidance (CEG) for all pupils in Years 7 to 11.

8.3.3 There are no national standards for the CEG delivered in schools. However the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) produced non-statutory guidelines to help schools develop and improve their programmes.

8.3.4 The DfES guidelines state that the purpose of CEG is to provide young people with the necessary knowledge and skills “to make the right choices about their future learning and prepare them properly for working life.”³

8.3.5 The DfES identifies key learning objectives which effective CEG programmes should address. These include having the knowledge, understanding and skills to:

- use self-assessments and career-related questionnaires to help identify and set short- and medium-term goals, and career and learning targets;
- review and reflect on how their experiences have added to their knowledge, understanding and skills and use this information when developing career plans;
- use review, reflection and action planning to make progress and support career development;
- explain why it is important to develop personal values to combat stereotyping, tackle discrimination in learning and work and suggest ways of doing this;
- identify and use sources of careers information and advice, including the services provided by Connexions;
- be aware of the range of opportunities available in post 16 education, training and employment.

8.3.6 Furthermore, under the Education and Skills Bill, introduced in Parliament in January 2008, secondary schools will be legally required to deliver impartial careers advice. This includes providing information and reference materials on a full range of learning and careers options and not unduly promoting one option over another.

8.3.7 The DfES guidelines state that CEG should begin in Year 7 and progressively develop throughout secondary school. Particular emphasis should be placed on supporting pupils to make informed choices about their learning and development at the ages of 14 and 16.

8.3.8 CEG in schools is usually developed and managed by an allocated “careers co-ordinator” and delivered as part of the PSHE curriculum. However the DfES recommends that it is also delivered through other subjects (such as English and Information and Communication Technology) and through special activities (such as work experience and college taster days).

8.3.9 Careers Education and Guidance (CEG) delivered in Tameside secondary schools

8.3.10 During the course of the Scrutiny Review, the Scrutiny Panel met PSHE Co-ordinators from 3 local secondary schools, a teacher from Hyde Pupil Referral Unit and representatives from Tameside MBC 14-19 Unit, to discuss the CEG provided in the borough’s secondary schools. In addition the Panel consulted Year 10 pupils regarding the CEG they had received in school.

8.3.11 The Panel found that there were significant differences in the way in which CEG is organised in individual schools. For example:

³ Department for Education and Skills, Careers Education and Guidance in England – A National Framework (2003) p5
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- Some schools deliver CEG in an ad hoc way rather than as an integrated module of work. Pupils in such schools receive CEG through a variety of specially organised events including Business Enterprise Days, Guided Options Evenings and work experience placements.
- In other schools CEG is incorporated into the PSHE curriculum as a specific module of work, usually in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9 CEG is often taught by form tutors. It was reported that in such cases, the amount and content of CEG provided in Years 7 to 9 is often determined by the individual tutor's discretion, leading to some inconsistency in quality and curriculum content.
- One school had a single PSHE Co-ordinator responsible for teaching CEG as part of the PSHE curriculum in Years 7 to 11. The Panel felt that appointing a single teacher to this role facilitates the development of consistent and progressive CEG.

8.3.12 The Panel found that in the vast majority of cases CEG was not co-ordinated and taught by specialist careers teachers. It was reported to the Panel that teachers usually accept responsibility for co-ordinating and / or teaching CEG as an additional supplementary responsibility. For example CEG Co-ordinators are often PSHE Co-ordinators who specialise in different aspects of PSHE such as Citizenship or Health; or teachers who specialise in completely unrelated subjects.

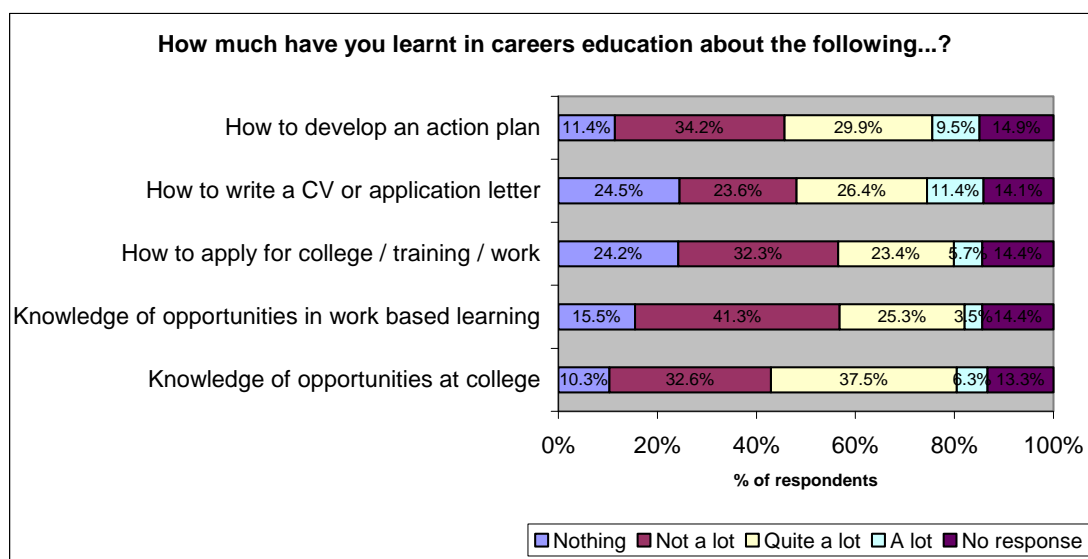
8.3.13 In addition the Panel was informed that these teachers usually receive little or no training for co-ordinating and / or delivering CEG. It was found that the majority of teachers acquire knowledge about careers education through experience rather than formal training.

8.3.14 One Co-ordinator, however, informed the Panel that she had obtained a Diploma in Careers Education. She felt that the Diploma had helped prepare her for delivering CEG in school and recommended that all PSHE Co-ordinators attend the course.

8.3.15 The Panel identified some significant gaps between the CEG delivered in schools and the recommended curriculum outlined in the DfES Framework. For example in one school the CEG curriculum failed to cover "learning outcomes" relating to writing an application letter, preparing a CV and interview skills. It was also brought to the attention of the Panel that some teachers who deliver CEG are not aware of the DfES Framework.

8.3.16 The Panel found that CEG has a low profile in many schools. It was reported to the Panel that schools are required to focus on Key Stage results and other statutory National Curriculum requirements, which constrains the amount of time available for non-assessed subjects such as CEG. The PSHE Co-ordinators the Panel consulted expressed the general feeling that the DfES' recommendations regarding curriculum content and time allocation for CEG are not feasible.

8.3.17 The inconsistency and gaps in the delivery of CEG was reflected in the Panel's consultation with Year 10 pupils.⁴ Pupils were asked to rate their learning in relation to a list of objectives contained in the "National Framework for Careers Education and Guidance." The results are displayed in the graph below:



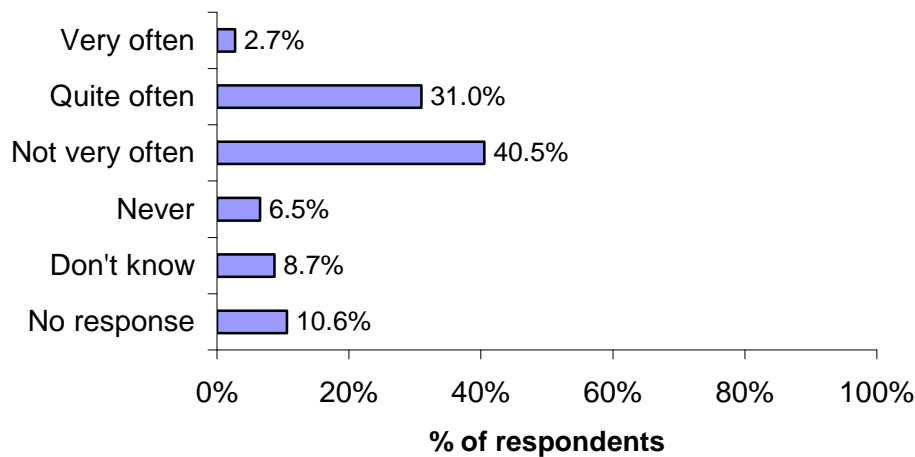
8.3.18 The graph shows that respondents had very mixed views about the amount of learning they had acquired in careers education in relation to each objective.

- The greatest variation in learning was evident in relation to the learning objectives for “developing a career / learning action plan” and “learning about the opportunities available at college.” For example:
 - 45.6% of respondents felt that they had learned “nothing” or “not a lot” about how to set goals and develop an action plan for their future; by contrast 39.4% felt that they had learned “quite a lot” or “a lot” about this learning objective.
 - Meanwhile 42.9% of respondents felt that they had learned “nothing” or “not a lot” about the opportunities available at college; whilst 43.8% felt that they had learned “quite a lot” or “a lot.”
- Learning was particularly low in relation to “knowledge about the opportunities available in work based training”. 56.8% of respondents felt that they had learned “nothing” or “not a lot” about the opportunities available in work based training. By contrast only 28.8% of respondents felt that they had learned “quite a lot” or “a lot” about work based opportunities.

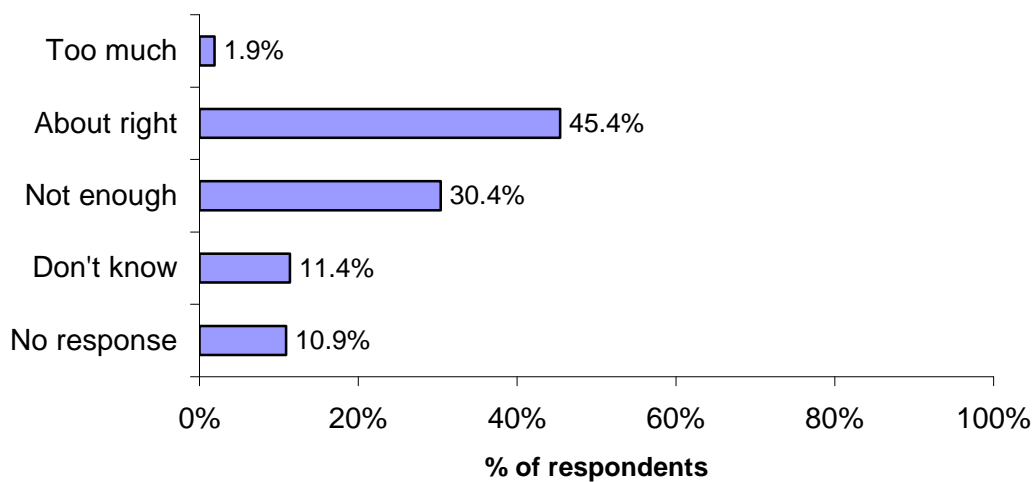
8.3.19 In addition respondents had very mixed experiences regarding the amount of CEG they receive in school, as shown in the graphs overleaf.

⁴ See appendix 1 for full consultation report

How often do you receive careers education at school?



Do you think you receive enough careers education at school?



8.3.20 It was, however, reported that some schools are currently exploring ways to incorporate CEG into other curriculum areas such as English and ICT, as a means of easing the problems associated with the congested school timetable.

8.3.21 In addition the Council's School Improvement Team is also proactively encouraging schools to incorporate general employability and life skills into other subject areas. This holistic style of teaching is promoted in the Building Schools for the Future Vision and will be supported through the design and construction of new school buildings.

8.3.22 Furthermore, the Director of Education informed the Panel that the School Improvement Team would be working with schools to improve the quality of CEG provided by teaching staff. In particular, it was reported, emphasis would be placed on improving schools' capacity for delivering independent and personalised advice

and guidance (in line with the proposals contained in the Education and Skills Bill). The Council has already organised training for Head Teachers and Deputy Head Teachers in order to raise their awareness of the reforms to the 14-19 curriculum and the new opportunities and complex choices this will produce for young people. Further training is planned to help teachers support pupils in identifying appropriate personal learning pathways.

8.3.23 In addition the Panel was informed the Council plans to take a proactive role in reducing the inconsistency in the amount and content of CEG delivered across Tameside schools. It was reported that the School Improvement Team will be carrying out an audit of the quality of CEG provided in secondary schools across the borough. It is intended that this audit will provide a benchmark for developing an accredited “kite mark” standard which all schools will be encouraged to achieve.

8.3.24 Links between schools and local employers

8.3.25 The Panel found that many schools are developing important links with local employers in order to add a practical element to the CEG curriculum. The Panel was informed, for example, that some schools offer Business Enterprise Days, which involve employers visiting schools to talk to pupils about employability skills and work related issues. It was reported that these events provide young people with an insight into employers’ expectations and help develop generic skills which are necessary in any workplace.

8.3.26 However it was reported that many of the employers who attend these events represent local branches of large national companies such as Norwich Union, the Royal Bank of Scotland and the Armed Forces. It was felt that pupils have less contact with representatives from smaller local businesses and traditional manual trades such as the construction and electrical industries.

8.3.27 The Panel’s consultation with Year 10 pupils revealed that pupils favour methods of teaching and learning which provide firsthand insights into the reality of college / working life. In particular respondents felt that representatives from local colleges and businesses should be invited into school to talk to pupils. This, however, was felt to be the least common method of teaching currently used.⁵

8.3.28 The PSHE Co-ordinator from Alder Community High School informed the Panel, however, that she was exploring the possibility of establishing a Careers Day which would involve local employers from a range of trades. However she explained that developing the necessary network of contacts was proving a long process.

8.3.29 In addition all pupils in Tameside secondary schools have the opportunity to undertake a two week work placement during Year 10 or 11. The key purpose of the work placement is to provide pupils with a “hands on” insight into working life and experience of interacting with adults in a working environment.

8.3.30 The majority of work placements are organised by Trident, however some young people contact companies of interest to arrange their own placement.

⁵ See appendix 1 for full consultation report

- 8.3.31 The Panel was informed that a wide variety of careers are represented on Trident's register. However there are some gaps, particularly in the construction and electrical industries. It was reported that many construction and electrical companies sub-contract to self employed small businesses that do not have the capacity, insurance and resources to accept work experience pupils.
- 8.3.32 The Panel noted that the shortage of placements particularly affect industries that tend to appeal to young people at risk of becoming NEET. It was acknowledged that difficulty in securing work placements in these industries could have a detrimental impact on the engagement of young people who are at most risk of becoming NEET.
- 8.3.33 However the Panel acknowledge that work experience is not solely a taster session for a particular career; rather it has an important role in providing young people with a hands-on insight into "working life" and the generic behaviour expected by employers.
- 8.3.34 The Council is also currently working with schools and employers to consolidate further links between education and employment. For example the Panel received an overview of a "pathfinder" scheme recently piloted by Two Trees High School, which gave pupils identified at risk of under-achieving the opportunity to participate in a study skills project based at Manchester City Football Club. It was reported that the scheme provided young people, who were identified as vulnerable to becoming NEET, with an insight into working life and experience of interacting with adults in a very different environment from school.
- 8.3.35 The Panel was informed that the scheme had received positive feedback from pupils and parents. It was felt that the scheme had helped to re-engage young people who may not otherwise have made a successful transition from school to post 16 education, training or employment; by providing them with a taster of life after Year 11
- 8.3.36 The Panel was informed that further links between schools and local employers would be built into the curriculum for the new 14-19 Diplomas.
- 8.3.37 Careers Education and Guidance (CEG) delivered in Hyde Pupil Referral Unit
- 8.3.38 The Panel found that CEG has a higher profile at Hyde Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and is not affected by the time constraints experienced by mainstream schools. All pupils attending the PRU receive 40 minutes of CEG per week, in addition to 40 minutes of PSHE per week.
- 8.3.39 The Panel was informed that the high profile of CEG at the PRU reflects the main focus of the PRU's curriculum and the specific needs of the pupils attending the Unit. For example it was reported that the young people who attend the PRU often have multiple issues which require in-depth pastoral support; and as a result the main focus of the curriculum is to prepare young people for life after leaving the Unit.

Conclusions

6. The Panel found that in many cases, Careers Education and Guidance (CEG) is not taught by specialist careers teachers. CEG is often accepted by teachers as an additional responsibility and teachers usually receive little or no training for co-ordinating and / or delivering CEG.
7. There seem to be gaps between the CEG delivered in schools and the curriculum recommended by the DfES Framework. For example the Panel's consultation with Year 10 pupils revealed mixed views regarding the amount of learning respondents felt they had acquired in CEG.
8. CEG has a low profile in many schools. Time constraints effect non assessed subjects such as CEG (and PSHE). However some schools are exploring ways of incorporating aspects of CEG into other curriculum areas.
9. The Council is taking a proactive role in improving the quality of CEG across Tameside schools. For example training has been organised for Head Teachers and Deputy Head Teachers; and further training is planned to help teachers support pupils in identifying individual learning plans. In addition a "kite-mark" standard for CEG is being developed, which all schools will be encouraged to achieve.
10. The Panel's survey of Year 10 pupils indicated that pupils favour methods of teaching and learning which provide firsthand insight into the reality of college / working life. In particular respondents felt that representatives from local college and businesses should be invited into school to talk to pupils. This, however, was felt to be the least common method of teaching currently used.

Recommendations

4. That the Council continue to encourage teachers to take up training for delivering CEG; and for schools to adopt the "kite-mark" standard that is currently being developed.
5. That a further report be presented to this Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 7th October 2008, on the development, take up and outcomes of the "kite-mark" initiative.
6. That the Council encourage representatives from business and industry, in particular (due to the difficulty in identifying work placements) representatives from the construction and engineering industry, to visit schools to inform pupils of the realities of work and training and the qualities they seek from employees.

8.4 Support provided by schools for young people “at risk” of becoming NEET

- 8.4.1 In addition to providing a general level of careers education and guidance for all pupils, schools also have a key role in helping to ensure that young people with specific social, emotional, behavioural and motivational issues receive appropriate personal support.
- 8.4.2 Schools offer a range of support facilities for young people identified as particularly vulnerable to becoming NEET. For example many schools employ Pastoral Managers or Learning Mentors to provide in-depth support tailored to meet pupils' individual needs.
- 8.4.3 In one school, it was reported, the percentage of young people who became NEET after Year 11 reduced by 5% following the appointment of a Pastoral Manager. The PSHE Co-ordinator at this school attributed the reduction to the combined effect of the personalised support offered by the Pastoral Manager and the allocation of a specific curriculum slot for CEG.
- 8.4.4 In addition schools have an important role in identifying pupils at risk of becoming NEET, and referring such pupils to appropriate external agencies for support. The close contact schools have with young people places them in a unique position to identify at an early stage, and refer to appropriate agencies for support, young people who are experiencing difficulties which may affect their progression after Year 11.
- 8.4.5 Connexions is the main source of specialist in-depth support and guidance for young people. Schools have an essential role in:
- i. Identifying and referring to Connexions young people at risk of disengagement;
 - ii. Providing information regarding young people's personal circumstances which may impact upon their development and wellbeing.

The Panel was informed that Connexions rely heavily on referrals and information from schools, in order to ensure young people receive an appropriate package of support.

- 8.4.6 The Panel found that procedures for referring pupils to Connexions for support varied between schools:
- Some schools employ “Placement Officers” who have specific responsibility for liaising with learning mentors or pastoral managers, in order to identify pupils requiring additional support and make the necessary arrangements for referral to Connexions.
 - However other schools use less formal procedures. For example it was reported that in some schools classroom teachers contact Connexions staff directly regarding pupils they feel would benefit from the service.

- 8.4.7 During the course of the review the Panel found that there was a need to develop stronger links between the Tameside branch of Connexions and many of the borough's schools.
- 8.4.8 Firstly the Panel was informed, by representatives from Connexions, that Personal Advisors (PAs) often experience difficulty in obtaining up-to-date information from schools regarding the personal circumstances of pupils receiving in-depth support. For example, it was reported that though Connexions receive information from the Council about looked after children and young carers, PAs are often not made aware of specific issues which may impact upon a pupil's development and wellbeing, such as being a teenage parent or family upheavals. PAs rely on schools for this information.
- 8.4.9 Secondly a recent study carried out by Connexions highlights the need for improved early identification and referral systems in Tameside schools. The Panel received an overview of a study undertaken by Connexions in 2006, which revealed that a significant number of school leavers who became NEET after completing Year 11 had not been identified by schools as requiring additional support; and had consequently not been referred to Connexions for in-depth support or guidance.
- 8.4.10 Connexions' study found that the majority of these young people were not identified by schools as requiring additional support as they did not display obvious social or emotional difficulties. However the study found that many of these young people fell into a "vocationally immature" category – they were unsure of what career or learning pathway to pursue, had made no plans for the future and as a result drifted out of education, employment or training. It was felt that these young people required additional support in order to help them prepare for life after school.
- 8.4.11 The Panel was informed that during 2006/7 Connexions piloted a "NEET Prevention Project" in collaboration with 11 local secondary schools. It was reported that the aim of the project was to increase early identification of "vocationally immature" pupils by raising schools awareness of the issue; and to devise a specially tailored package of support for this group. It was hoped that this project would result in a significant reduction in the number of school leavers not progressing to post 16 education, employment or training in 2007. (Figures still to be confirmed.)

Conclusions

- 11. A recent study revealed that a significant proportion of NEET young people had not been referred by schools to Connexions as "priority" cases for support. In particular "vocationally immature" young people were often not identified by schools as requiring additional support. Connexions is currently working with schools, however, to improve early identification and referral of such young people.**

Recommendations

- 7. That a further report be presented to this Panel at its meeting on 17th February 2009, on the outcomes of the NEET Prevention Project.**

8.5 Information and support provided by Connexions

8.5.1 The statutory role of Connexions

8.5.2 Connexions is a statutory service introduced by the Learning and Skills Act (2000). Its key purpose is to provide integrated and impartial information and support that meets the personal, social and educational needs of young people in a holistic way.

8.5.3 There are two key aspects to Connexions' role:

- i. **Connexions has a statutory responsibility to provide a universal advice and guidance service for all 13-19 year olds** – this includes offering young people basic information and guidance in choosing appropriate learning / career pathways and practical support in making applications.
- ii. **Connexions also has a statutory responsibility for providing a targeted personal support service for young people with complex needs** – this includes the provision of more substantial personal support for young people who are NEET and those identified at risk of becoming NEET.

8.5.4 The Connexions Service is delivered in each local authority area through a partnership which comprises of:

- The local Careers Service;
- Youth Service;
- Education Welfare Service;
- Some aspects of the Health Service

The Connexions partnership is intended to bring together the work of these services in order to facilitate the delivery of integrated information and support. Personal Assistants (PAs) are employed by the local Connexions Partnership to form a critical link in bringing together the work of the partnership agencies.

8.5.5 Connexions has a statutory duty to ensure that all 13-19 year olds have access to a named PA. The level and type of support a young person receives from their PA is determined by the young person's individual needs. However the Government states that Connexions must make provision for all young people to be able to approach their PA for information or support "when and wherever they need it, irrespective of circumstance."

8.5.6 Information and support provided by Connexions in Tameside

8.5.7 During the course of the Scrutiny Review the Panel met the Head of the Tameside Connexions Partnership and PAs employed by the local partnership, to discuss the information and support provided by Connexions in Tameside. In addition the Panel consulted Year 10 pupils from local secondary schools and young people attending the "On Your Marks Group" run by Connexions, in order to find out about their views and experiences of the Service.

- 8.5.8 The Panel found that in recent years Connexions has experienced a shift in emphasis from developing a “universal” service for all 13-19 year olds, towards developing its targeted support services for young people identified as “vulnerable” or “at risk.” This priority shift is part of a national policy change.
- 8.5.9 During the course of the Scrutiny Review the Panel identified examples of very effective targeted work carried out by Connexions. For example young people attending the “On Your Marks Group” run by Connexions felt that the group had given them invaluable practical support in obtaining qualifications and preparing for employment, in addition to boosting their self esteem and confidence.
- 8.5.10 However the Panel found that the national emphasis on developing targeted support services for young people identified as “vulnerable” or “at risk” has led to some pupils, who are not considered to be “priority” cases, not receiving an appropriate level of guidance from Connexions.
- 8.5.11 Anecdotal evidence suggests that higher ability pupils are particularly at risk of slipping through the net. Higher ability pupils are not usually identified as “priority” cases and are therefore not automatically seen by a PA. However PSHE Co-ordinators from 3 local secondary schools reported that some higher ability pupils select inappropriate courses and subsequently drop out of post 16 education during their first term, without receiving any input from Connexions.
- 8.5.12 Furthermore the Head of Connexions acknowledged that there is a layer of young people above those identified at risk of becoming NEET, who are not receiving support appropriate to their needs. The Panel was informed that the “NEET Prevention” pilot project, which targets “vocationally immature” young people, hopes to pick up this group.⁶
- 8.5.13 In addition the Panel found that limited resources have further inhibited the universal service provided by Connexions. The Tameside Connexions Partnership currently employs 13 PAs to provide targeted support to young people identified “at risk.” Meanwhile the services of only 17 PAs are stretched across the remaining 90% of young people who attend the borough’s secondary schools and colleges.
- 8.5.14 Connexions’ limited resources mean its “universal services” have been largely restricted to pupils in Year 11. During 2007 PAs were withdrawn from the borough’s secondary schools for a short period of time in order to focus on pupils who had completed their Key Stage 4 exams. As a result PAs were not available in school to support and advise Year 9 pupils whilst they were making their option choices for Key Stage 4. The limited capacity of Connexions to provide advice and guidance for Year 9 pupils is a particular concern in the light of the introduction of the new 14-19 diplomas.
- 8.5.15 The Head of Connexions informed the Panel that Connexions would ideally offer the same level of service to pupils in Years 9 to 11. However current resources prevent the service from being extended further.

⁶ See paragraph 8.4.11 for further information regarding the NEET Prevention Project

8.5.16 The Panel's consultation with Year 10 pupils revealed that very few respondents had received information or support from Connexions. Less than 10% of respondents reported that they had visited a Connexions Centre; and only 23.6% of respondents indicated that they had received information or advice from a PA.⁷

8.5.17 Furthermore the Panel's consultation revealed that respondents' awareness about the services provided by Connexions and procedures for accessing such services was generally very low. Of the 368 Year 10 pupils who responded to the Panel's consultation:

- 60.3% felt they knew "nothing" or "not a lot" about the services provided by Connexions;
- 63.5% indicated that they knew "nothing" or "not a lot" about how to access the services provided by Connexions;
- 67.2% reported that they knew "nothing" or "not a lot" about how to access their PA.

8.5.18 The Panel found that little emphasis was placed on marketing the Connexions brand. Connexions does produce various publications and leaflets designed to promote its services and PAs hold group sessions with Year 10 pupils during the Summer Term, in order to make young people aware of the support available in Year 11 and beyond. However PAs deployed in schools are encouraged to proactively present themselves as part of the school's individual support structure, rather than as representatives of an external agency.

8.5.19 The Panel felt that lack of awareness regarding the services offered by Connexions and procedures for accessing these services may result in young people becoming NEET because they are unaware of the ways in which Connexions is able to help. It was felt that further marketing of the Connexions brand may help to reduce the number of young people who drift out of education, employment or training without accessing support.

Conclusions

12. The Panel identified examples of good targeted support provided by Connexions. For example the Panel received positive feedback from young people attending the "On Your Marks" Group run by Connexions. Furthermore consultation with Year 10 pupils revealed that the majority of young people who had received support from their PA were satisfied with the service they received.

13. However the Panel found that Connexions' universal support service has not developed at the same rate as its targeted services. Resources have primarily been used to develop targeted support. Consequently pupils who are not considered "priority" cases often fail to receive an appropriate level of guidance from Connexions. Anecdotal evidence suggests higher ability pupils are particularly at risk of falling through the net.

⁷ See appendix 1 for full consultation report

14. Connexions' universal service is largely restricted to Year 11 pupils. The limited capacity of Connexions to provide advice for Year 9 pupils is a particular concern in the light of the introduction of the new 14-19 diplomas.
15. The Panel found that young people's awareness of the services provided by Connexions, and procedures for accessing these services is generally very low. Little emphasis is placed on marketing the Connexions' brand; and PAs are encouraged to proactively present themselves as part of schools' individual support structure. The Panel is concerned that lack of awareness regarding services provided by Connexions may result in young people becoming NEET without receiving additional support because they are unaware of the services available.

Recommendations

8. That greater consideration be given to the "marketing" of the Connexions' brand and procedures for accessing the services available, at school and college events, open evenings and in appropriate publications; to ensure that young people are aware that Connexions provides an independent source of information and advice both in school and post 16.

9. MEASURES TO IMPROVE RETENTION RATES IN POST 16 EDUCATION

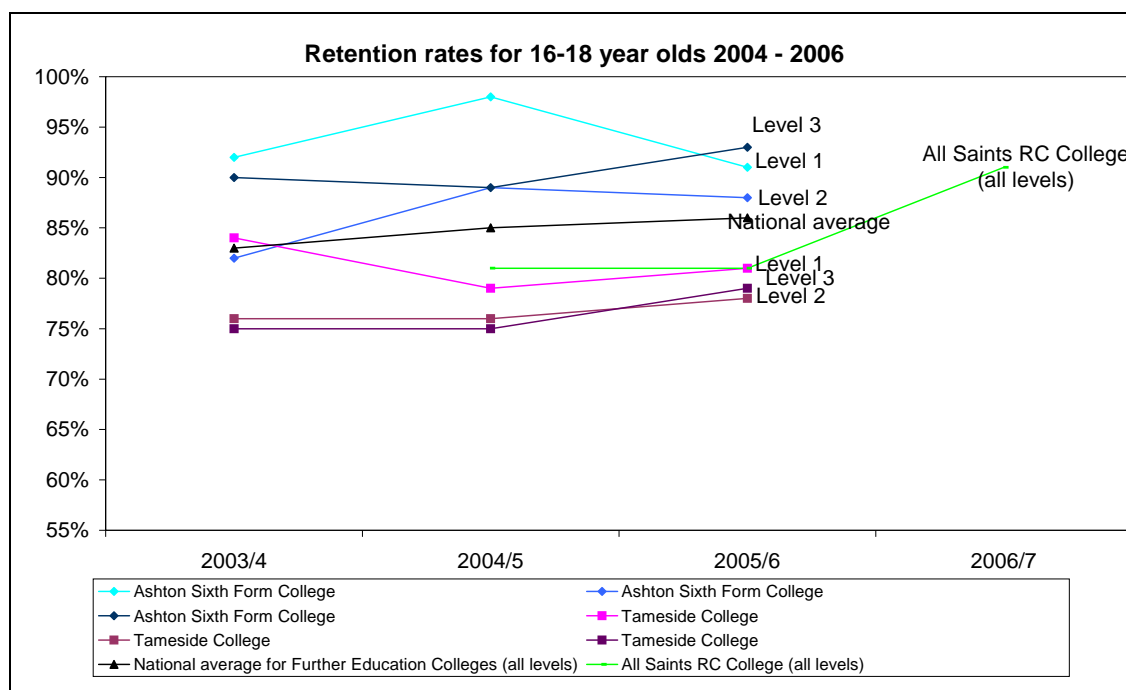
9.1 Background information

- 9.1.1 There are currently 4 providers of post 16 education in Tameside. The table below provides a profile of each provider.

Provider	Further details
Tameside College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tameside College merged with Hyde Clarendon Sixth Form College in 1999. • The College is the largest provider of post 16 education in Tameside, with 2417 16-18 year olds enrolled on courses at the beginning of the 2005/6 academic year. • The College offers a diverse range of courses, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Full time college based courses – such as GCSEs, A levels and Applied A levels (Applied A levels are college based vocational courses in subjects such as Travel and Tourism and Health and Social Care.) ❖ Shorter college based courses – such as technical awards and specialised vocational courses ranging from secretarial skills to certificates for cabin crew and resort staff etc. ❖ Work based courses – such as foundation and advanced level apprenticeships, based in the workplace with one day per week in college.

Ashton Sixth Form College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ashton Sixth Form College is the principal provider of A level and Applied A level courses for 16-18 year olds in Tameside. The College offers A level and Applied A level courses in 41 subjects. In 2005/6, 1649 16-18 year olds were enrolled at the College. Over 70% of these students were studying for A level or Applied A level qualifications.
Audenshaw High School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audenshaw High Schools offers A levels in 20 subjects. In 2005/6 214 students were enrolled in the sixth form. The sixth form is co-educational; however the vast majority of students progress to the sixth form after completing their secondary education at the school.
All Saints RC College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Saints RC College offers A levels in 17 subjects. In 2005/6, 114 students were enrolled in the sixth form.

9.1.2 The graph below shows retention rates for 16-18 years olds at Ashton Sixth Form College, Tameside College and the Sixth Form at All Saints RC College, compared to the national average for all colleges of further education. In addition the graph provides a broad breakdown of retention rates at Ashton Sixth Form College and Tameside College by level of course.⁸ (At the time of the Scrutiny review data was not available regarding retention rates at Audenshaw High School.)



⁸ Level 1 courses include GCSEs grades D-G, BTEC Introductory courses and NVQ level 1; Level 2 courses include GCSEs grades A*-C, City and Guilds Progression Awards and NVQ level 2; Level 3 courses include AS Levels and A Levels and NVQ level 3

9.1.3 The graph shows:

- Retention rates amongst 16-18 year olds at Ashton Sixth Form College are consistently above the national average for all levels of courses; and improvements in 2007 resulted in retention rates at All Saints RC College also overtaking the national average.
- However retention rates amongst 16-18 year olds at Tameside College are lower than the national average for all levels of courses.
 - In 2006 the overall retention rate for 16-18 year olds at Tameside College was 79%. This means that more than 1/5 of the 16-18 year olds at the college 'dropped out' before completing their course.

9.1.4 Improving learner retention rates in post 16 education is a national priority and one of the key measures used by Ofsted to monitor the performance of colleges of further education. In addition the Tameside 14-19 Partnership has identified increasing retention rates in post 16 education as a local priority for improvement.

9.1.5 Increasing retention rates in post 16 education requires a co-ordinated partnership approach, which involves schools, colleges and other training providers, Connexions, the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Local Authority. The following sections of this chapter consider the ways in which Tameside Council and the borough's colleges and sixth forms are contributing to a partnership approach to tackling this issue at local level.

9.2 The 14-19 Partnership "Retention Rates Research Project"

9.2.1 The Tameside 14-19 Partnership, led by the Council, is carrying out a research project which aims to explore the reasons for falling retention at the age of 17 in post 16 education. The purpose of this project is to determine the key reasons why young people drop out of post 16 education, in order to develop an action plan to improve retention rates.

9.2.2 The research project represents a partnership approach to improving retention rates at local level. The project is co-ordinated by the Council, funded by the LSC, and all four providers of post 16 education in Tameside are actively engaged in collecting data.

9.2.3 The project involves each provider of post 16 education collecting data on the cohort of 16 year olds enrolled on any programme at the provider's institution on 1st October 2005. This cohort of pupils was selected for data collection as most of the cohort would have completed, or nearly completed, their course by spring 2007. Consequently the cohort provides a full data set, making it possible to identify trends relating to retention throughout the various stages of further education.

9.2.4 The data collected for each pupil includes:

- Programme(s) enrolled on;
- Achievements;

- Gender;
- Ethnicity;
- Educational Maintenance Award (EMA) status;
- Whether or not the pupil had completed, or was due to complete the course;
- Date of leaving the institution (if applicable);
- Previous High School;
- Progression whilst in post 16 education and afterwards (if applicable);
- Recorded information about reasons for leaving (if applicable).

In addition providers also conducted telephone interviews with some of the pupils who had left courses before completion, in order to ascertain their reasons for leaving.

9.2.5 At the time of the Scrutiny review, the research project was at an early stage of implementation and the four providers of post 16 education were at different stages of the data collection process.

9.2.6 However a number of preliminary trends had been identified across all four institutions. The key trends reported to the Panel include:

- Retention rates in post 16 education vary between courses. For example young people enrolled on entry level courses are more likely to complete their programme of study. By contrast level one courses have a lower retention rate.
- Students who narrowly meet course criteria and / or late entrants to courses are more likely to drop out of post 16 education before completing their programme of study. In addition females are more likely to drop out of courses than male students.
- By contrast, students with clear and realistic career plans, a history of successful attainment and those who make good progress early on in college are less likely to drop out.
- In addition young people with learning difficulties, young people from BME communities and students who receive Educational Maintenance Allowance also have a higher retention rate.
- The data also reveals significant differences in the completion rates of students from different secondary schools.

9.2.7 At the time of the Scrutiny Review, however, the data did not indicate the reasons underlying the broad statistical trends. In particular the data had not yet been analysed to reveal the specific reasons why some groups of young people may be more vulnerable to leaving their courses before completion.

9.2.8 Furthermore the telephone interviews conducted with young people who had left post 16 education before completing their course had produced very limited information regarding their reasons for leaving. Only a small proportion of former

students had proved contactable and many of these were reluctant to disclose detailed information.

9.2.9 In addition the data collected by the 14-19 Partnership does not indicate what proportion of those young people who left their course subsequently became NEET. Anecdotal evidence suggests not all young people leave their course for negative reasons. For example some young people leave post 16 education in order to enter employment or an alternative form of training which they find more satisfying.

9.2.10 The Panel felt that further consultation is required in order to explore the factors underlying the broad statistical trends; and thus provide a starting point for devising strategies to tackle the issue of learner retention in post 16 education. In addition the Panel felt that further analysis of the statistical data already collected would help to explore possible correlations between specific factors and retention rates; for example:

- the CEG delivered in secondary schools and retention rates in post 16 education;
- specific college courses and retention rates.

Conclusions

16. The Retention Rates research project provides an important starting point for devising strategies to tackle the issue of learner retention in post 16 education.

Recommendations

9. The 14-19 Partnership explore some of the factors underlying the broad statistical trends already identified. For example possible correlations relations between college courses and retention rates and what proportion of young people who leave their course subsequently become NEET.

9.3 Colleges and Sixth Forms' measures to improve retention rates

9.3.1 QCA Guidance states that providers of post 16 education have four key roles in helping to increase learner retention rates:

- To provide information, advice and guidance to help school leavers select appropriate courses for their ability and aspirations;
- To provide an induction and pastoral support to help new students make an effective transition from Year 11 to post 16 education;
- To ensure procedures are in place to support students in changing their career plans and transferring to alternative courses or institutions if appropriate;
- To identify at an early stage, and refer to Connexions, students at risk of dropping out of post 16 education.

9.3.2 During the course of the Scrutiny Review the Panel met representatives from Ashton Sixth Form College, Tameside College and the Sixth Form at Audenshaw

High School, to discuss the ways in which local colleges and sixth forms are helping to increase retention rates in post 16 education.

9.3.3 Provision of information and guidance for school leavers

9.3.4 The Panel found that the three providers of post 16 education provide information and guidance to help school leavers make appropriate decisions regarding their course of study in post 16 education. For example:

- All institutions offer open evenings and taster events designed to provide prospective students with an insight into daily life at college / sixth form;
- In addition all of the level three courses offered by the borough's colleges and sixth forms specify entry requirements which are designed to ensure students are enrolled on courses appropriate to their ability and aspirations.
- Ashton Sixth Form College and Tameside College also conduct basic skills assessments at enrolment. These assessments measure the specific skills required for success in post 16 education. They provide an accurate tool for predicting students' capacity for achievement in their chosen courses and can be used to guide students in making effective decisions.

9.3.5 Measures to help young people make an effective transition from Year 11 to post 16 education

9.3.6 All three providers of post 16 education provide inductions and pastoral support in order to help new students make an effective transition from Year 11 to post 16 education.

9.3.7 In particular the Panel received information about an "enhanced" induction programme for Sixth Form students which has recently been introduced at Audenshaw High School. The Panel was informed that the programme aims to establish the foundations for students' success in post 16 education by:

- i. providing opportunities for the development of social cohesion amongst Sixth Form students in order to create a supportive environment;
- ii. helping students to develop their study skills in preparation for the academic demands of Sixth Form.

At the time of the Scrutiny Review statistical data was not available to show the impact of the programme, however the Head of Sixth Form at Audenshaw High School informed the Panel that early anecdotal indicators suggest retention rates have improved since the induction programme was introduced.

9.3.8 Furthermore the Panel found that all three providers of post 16 education are proactively exploring ways to retain student engagement throughout the academic year. The Panel was informed that all three providers encourage students to develop long term plans for their future career, in order to give pupils a greater purpose for attending college and increase their engagement with their studies. It was reported that activities such as "Progression Week" at Ashton Sixth Form

College, where local employers and universities visit the college to talk about career and training opportunities, were particularly popular with students.

- 9.3.9 In addition the Panel was informed that the borough's colleges and Audenshaw High School proactively encourage students to view A Level courses as a two year programme of study. Reforms to the A Level curriculum, introduced in 2000, enable young people to obtain an AS Level qualification at the end of the first year of a two year A Level course. The Panel was informed that this change to the structure of the A Level curriculum encourages young people to view A Levels as a two part course; and can unwittingly endorse their decision to leave post 16 education after obtaining their AS Level, before completing the entire qualification.
- 9.3.10 The Panel found that information and guidance produced for prospective students by the colleges and Audenshaw High School, and the teaching and support delivered in these institutions, consistently present A Levels as two year courses.
- 9.3.11 However the Panel was informed that there is a significant jump between the standard of work required at Key Stage Four and the standard of work expected at level three in post 16 education. Consequently some young people who reach a high level of educational attainment at Key Stage Four struggle to make an effective transition to college or sixth form.
- 9.3.12 The Panel felt that closer links between colleges / sixth forms and secondary schools may further help such school leavers make an effective transition to post 16 education.
- 9.3.13 In particular the Panel felt that "link mentoring" schemes, which would involve college representatives working with Year 10 and Year 11 pupils from local secondary schools, may be effective in giving school leavers an insight into college life and its academic expectations, in addition to familiarising prospective students with the college environment. The Panel felt that this experience would help young people make informed decisions about their future education and ease their transition from secondary school to post 16 education.
- 9.3.14 The Panel was informed that plans are in place to establish greater links between the Sixth Form at Audenshaw High School and its main feeder school Fairfield High School for Girls.
- 9.3.15 In addition the Panel found that there is a lack of continuity in the support offered to young people by Connexions during the transition from school to post 16 education. For example young people are supported by Connexions PAs in school until the end of Year 11; however support in post 16 education is provided by Connexions community PAs.
- 9.3.16 The Panel felt that the initiative planned at Alder Community High School, which involves the PSHE Co-ordinator and Connexions PA from Alder High School visiting colleges in the Autumn term to ensure school leavers are settling in to college, would help to bridge this transition.

- 9.3.17 Furthermore the Panel felt that “frontloading” the curriculum may help to maintain young people’s engagement in post 16 education. “Frontloading” the curriculum involves setting a piece of coursework or end of module test early in the academic year; thus presenting students with an opportunity to secure an early achievement. College representatives informed the Panel that achieving a tangible success at an early stage in the academic year boosts students’ confidence and increases their engagement with their course.
- 9.3.18 The Panel was informed that “frontloading” had been used extensively in the past, particularly in relation to vocational courses; however less emphasis is currently placed on the concept.
- 9.3.19 Identification and support for students at risk of dropping out of post 16 education
- 9.3.20 The Panel found that protocols are in place at Ashton Sixth Form College, Tameside College and Audenshaw High School to monitor student attendance and progress. If student attendance or lack of engagement causes concern, the individual is contacted to discuss their needs and ensure strategies are implemented in order to provide appropriate support. Tameside College has established an “Achievement and Retention Team” with specific responsibility for overseeing this process.
- 9.3.21 However the Panel was informed that is impossible to anticipate all cases of students who drop out of post 16 education. The Panel was informed that some young people leave their course without showing any warning signs; consequently it is very difficult to provide preventative support for such young people.
- 9.3.22 Furthermore it was reported that some students simply stop attending their course without formally leaving. The Panel was concerned that such students are not always referred to Connexions; and may be NEET for almost 12 months by the time they are identified in Connexions’ annual survey.

Conclusions

- 17. There is a lack of continuity in the support offered to young people during the transition from school to post 16 education. For example young people are supported by Connexions PAs in school until the end of Year 11; support in post 16 education is provided by Connexions community PAs.**
- 18. In addition the Panel feels that closer links between schools and colleges may help young people make an effective transition between Year 11 and post 16 education.**
- 19. Some initiatives have been introduced to help ease the transition between Year 11 and post 16 education. An example of what the Panel considers good practice was described by the PSHE Co-ordinator and Connexions PA from Alder Community High School, who plan to visit colleges during the Autumn term to ensure school leavers are settling into college.**

- 20. The Panel is concerned that some young people drop out of post 16 education without being referred to Connexions. In some cases young people may have been NEET for 12 months by the time they are identified via Connexions' annual survey. In particular college representatives explained that some young people may drop out of post 16 education without showing any warning signs, making it difficult to provide preventative support.**
- 21. The Panel feel that the measures relating to the marketing of Connexions, as detailed in Recommendation 5, will help young people who require support to identify and access the appropriate services.**

Recommendations

- 10. That consideration be given to the possibility of introducing peer information sessions in schools for Year 10 and 11 pupils. Such sessions would be delivered by students in post 16 education and trainees, to inform pupils of some of the realities of post 16 education and training.**
- 11. That further report be made to the Panel at its meeting on 7th October 2008, on the outcomes of the scheme of joint college visits undertaken by the Alder Community High School PSHE teacher and Connexions PA; with a view to the Council encouraging other schools to adopt the most successful element of the scheme.**

10. BOROUGH SOLICITOR'S COMMENTS

Staying on after minimum school leaving age has long been a key indicator of the distribution of educational opportunity and life chances. Its growing incidence has been a major component of the expansion of school and post school education in Britain in the closing quarter of the twentieth century. It is now necessary for all agencies to ensure that we work together to provide the right platform for education, learning and employment in the 21st century and the challenges it provides. It is quite clear from this report that improved outcomes for young people needs partnership working.

11. BOROUGH TREASURER'S COMMENTS

A number of the issues raised in the review will require continued financial support. As part of the three year financial settlement announced in December 2007, Area Based Grant was identified as the funding mechanism to support a number of initiatives, some of which are aligned to the review. The table below details the appropriate initiatives together with funding allocations:

	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
	£'000	£'000	£'000
14-19 Diploma's	75	74	73
Connexions Service	2,375	2,492	2,499

The Council's approach to Area Based Grant is to only passport the grant for its identified purpose in 2008/2009, thus allowing the Council the opportunity to redirect Area Based Grant funding in line with Local Area Agreement priorities in future years. Accordingly the Council has approved the 2008/2009 allocations to support the appropriate initiative and the sums are included in the Services for Children and Young People's 2008/2009 base budget. The service awaits confirmation of funding allocations beyond 2008/2009 and is not therefore entering into any longer term commitments until confirmation is received. The outcome of the Council's decision may have financial implications for the recommendations within the review.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Panel carries out on-going monitoring of the implementation and outcomes of the new Diplomas for 14-19 year olds.
2. That the online prospectus includes:
 - i. Information on the full range of work based training opportunities available to 16-19 year olds;
 - ii. Information on the choices available to 14-16 year olds, especially in light of the introduction of the new diplomas.
3. That consideration be given to the introduction of central monitoring of the information contained in the online prospectus, to ensure that all information is accurate and keep up-to-date.
4. That the Council continue to encourage teachers to take up training for delivering Careers Education and Guidance in schools; and for schools to adopt the “kite-mark” standard that is currently being developed.
5. That a further report be presented to this Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 7th October 2008, on the development, take up and outcomes of the “kite-mark” initiative.
6. That the Council encourage representatives from business and industry, in particular (due to the difficulty in identifying work placements) representatives from the construction and engineering industry, to visit schools to inform pupils of the realities of work and training and the qualities they seek from employees.
7. That a further report be presented to this Panel at its meeting on 17th February 2009, on the outcomes of the NEET Prevention Project.
8. That greater consideration be given to the “marketing” of the Connexions’ brand and procedures for accessing the services available, at school and college events, opening evenings and in appropriate publications; to ensure that young people are aware that Connexions provides an independent source of information and advice both in school and post 16.
9. That consideration be given to the possibility of introducing peer information sessions in schools for Year 10 and 11 pupils. Such sessions would be delivered by students in post 16 education and trainees, to inform pupils of some of the realities of post 16 education and training.
10. That a further report be made to the Panel at its meeting on 7th October 2008, on the outcomes of the scheme of joint college visits undertaken by the Alder Community High School PSHE Co-ordinator and Connexions PA; with a view to the Council encouraging other schools to adopt the most successful elements of the scheme.

APPENDIX 1

Scrutiny Review of Staying on Rates Consultation with Year 10 pupils

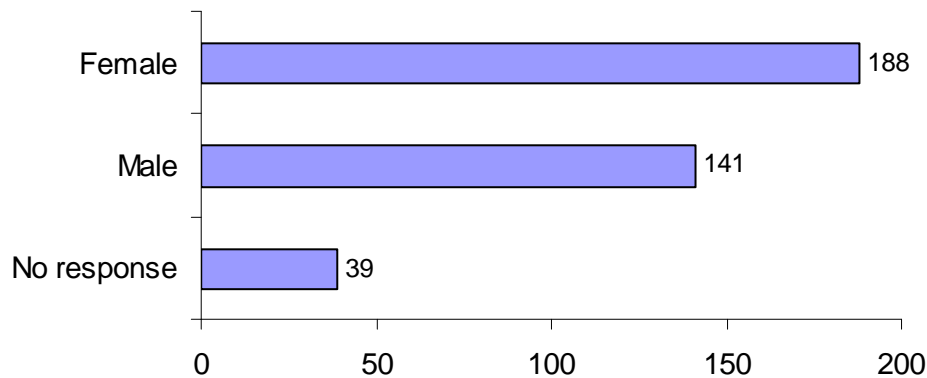
1. **Overview of the aims and methodology of the Scrutiny Panel's consultation with Year 10 pupils**
 - 1.1 The purpose of the Scrutiny Panel's consultation with Year 10 pupils is to gather young people's experiences and opinions regarding the availability and usefulness of the careers education, guidance and support provided to help school leavers make decisions about their future.
 - 1.2 The Scrutiny Panel's consultation was designed to obtain a broad overview of the experiences and opinions of school pupils throughout Tameside. 600 self completion questionnaires were distributed throughout the summer term, to a random sample of Year 10 pupils across the borough's 18 mainstream secondary schools and Hyde Pupil Referral Unit.
 - 1.3 The questionnaire asked for young people's experiences and opinions regarding:
 - Careers education and guidance provided in schools;
 - Services provided by Connexions;
 - Work placements and other careers events;
 - Young people's knowledge and understanding of how to access careers information and the opportunities available to young people after Year 11.
 - 1.4 The questionnaire comprised of tick boxes and open ended questions. This format was designed to provide a broad spectrum of quantitative data, in addition to providing the opportunity for more detailed qualitative information.
 - 1.5 Year 10 pupils were selected for consultation as it was felt that this group would provide a snapshot of the careers education, guidance and support provided for young people to help them prepare for their final year of statutory education, and the decisions they will soon have to make regarding their future.
 - 1.6 This consultation project is an important part of the review as it provides the Scrutiny Panel with an opportunity to consider the effectiveness and availability of careers education, guidance and support from the "on the ground perspective" of the young people such services are designed for. In addition the consultation also provides young people with an important opportunity to inform policy and service development.

2.1 The Questionnaire – response rate and profile of respondents

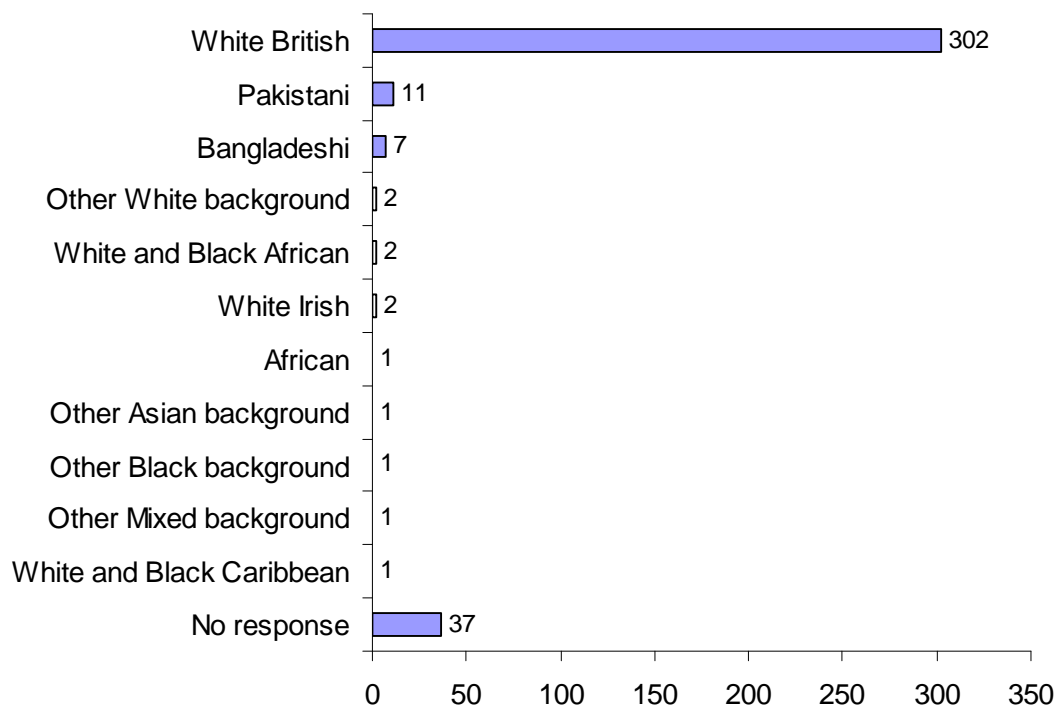
2.1.1 A total of 368 questionnaires were returned, representing the experiences and opinions of pupils from 13 of the 18 mainstream secondary schools in Tameside.

2.1.2 The graphs below show the profile of the young people who responded to the questionnaire.

Gender of respondents



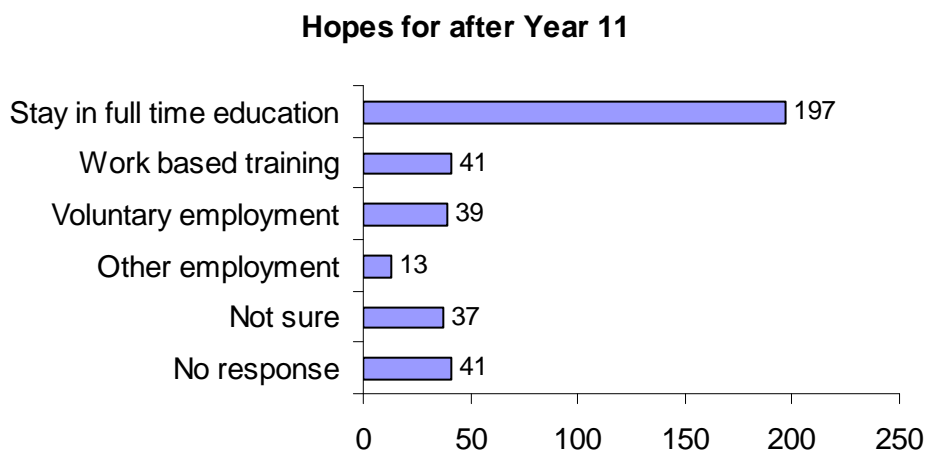
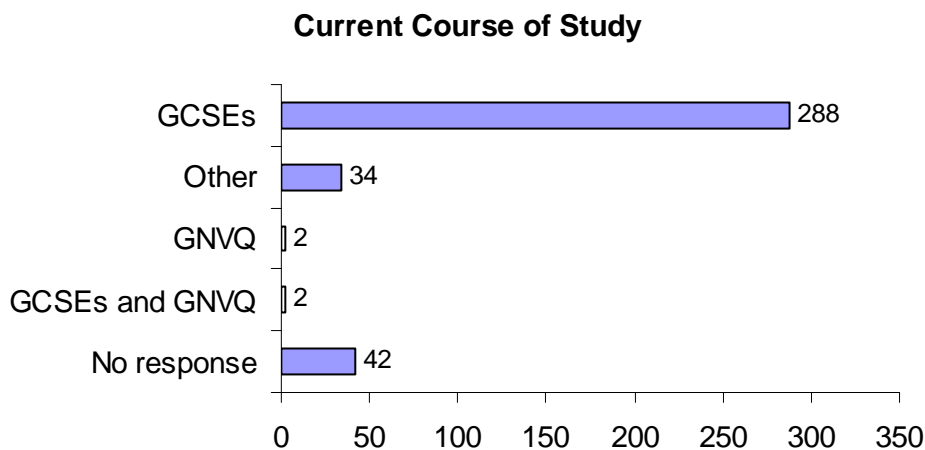
Ethnic origin of respondents



The graphs show:

- A higher proportion of respondents were female (51% were female, compared to 38% male). However 11% of respondents failed to record their gender.
- The vast majority of respondents classified their ethnic origin as “White British” (82%). 3% described themselves as Pakistani and 2% described themselves as Bangladeshi.

2.1.3 The graphs below indicate the current course of study and future career plans of the young people surveyed.



2.1.4 The graphs show:

- The vast majority of respondents indicated that they were currently studying for GCSE qualifications (78.3%). 10.3% of respondents were enrolled on a GNVQ course or an “other” programme of study. 11.4% of respondents failed to record their current course of study.

- The majority of respondents hoped to continue in education or training after completing Year 11. 53.5% hoped to continue in full time education; meanwhile a further 11% of respondents hoped to secure work based training.
- 10.6% of respondents planned to take-up voluntary work following Year 11; and 3.5% of respondents intended to secure an “other” form employment.
- 21% of respondents were “not sure” of their future plans or failed to respond to the question.

2.2 Questionnaire Findings –

2.2.1 The questionnaire is divided into 3 key sections covering:

- Careers education in school;
- The services provided by Connexions;
- College events and work experience

2.2.2 The main findings for each section are outlined below and overleaf

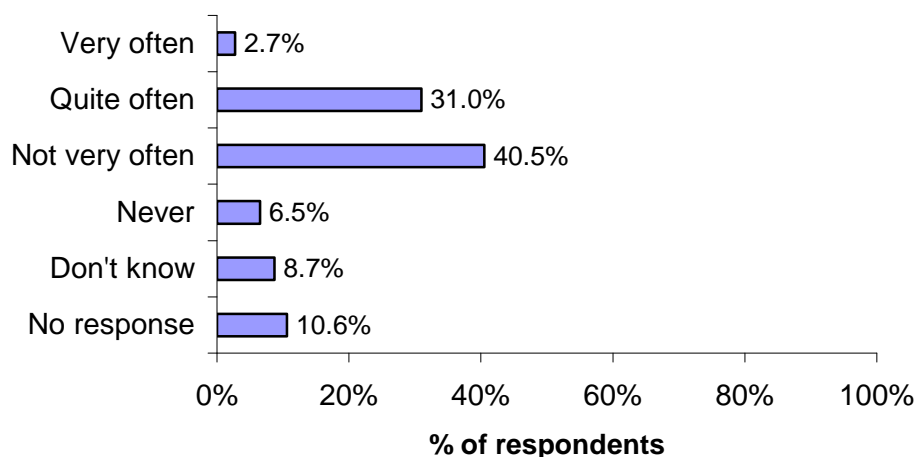
3. Careers Education in Schools

3.1.1 Respondents were asked:

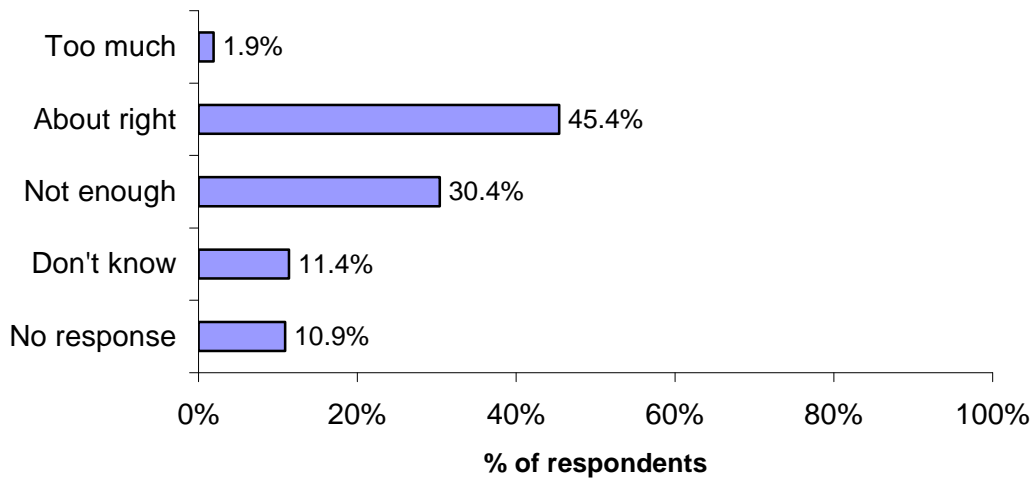
- how often they receive careers education at school;
- whether they feel they receive enough careers education at school.

The results are displayed in the graphs below and overleaf

How often do you receive careers education at school?



Do you think you receive enough careers education at school?

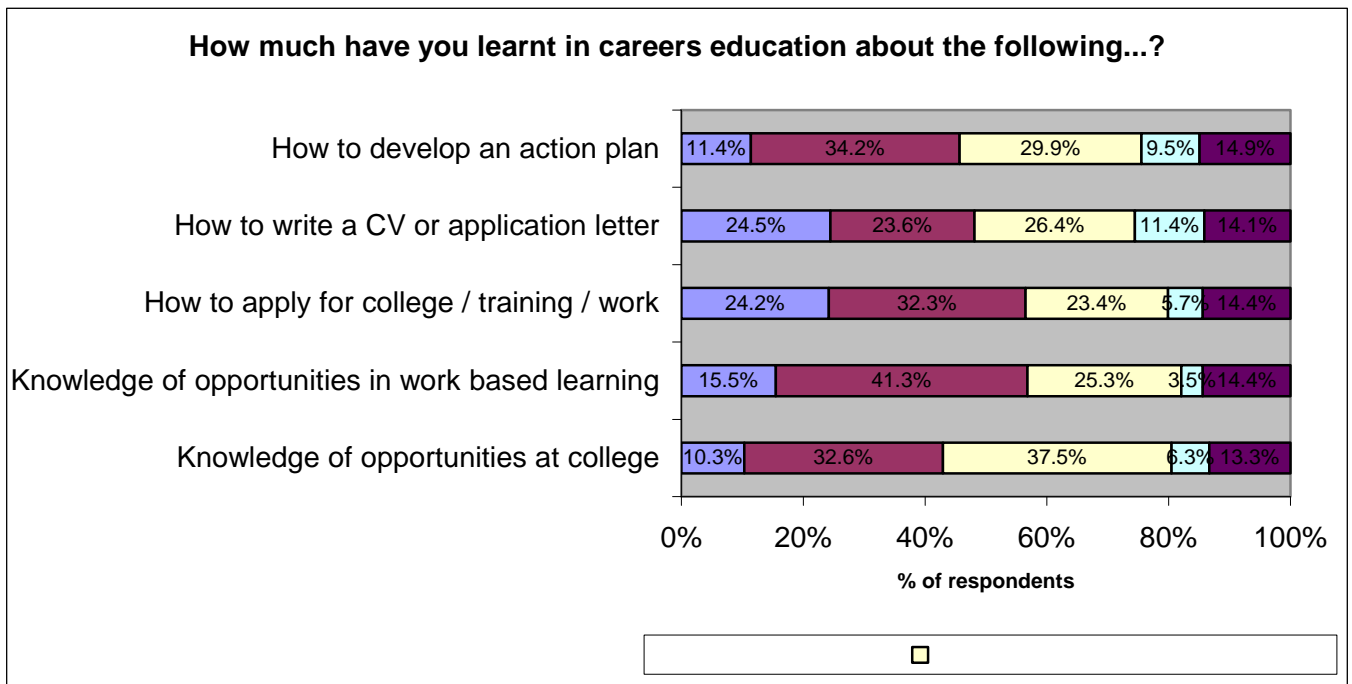


3.1.2 The graphs show that respondents had very mixed experiences and opinions regarding the amount of careers education they receive in school. For example:

- 31% of respondents reported that they received careers education in school “quite often;” and a further 2.7% reported that they received it “very often.” However 40.5% of respondents reported that they received careers education “not very often” and a further 6.5% of respondents stated that they had “never” received any careers education in school. 11% of respondents “didn’t know” how much careers education they had received.
- Meanwhile 45.5% of respondents felt that the amount of careers education delivered in school was “about right.” However 30.4% of respondents felt that they “did not receive enough” careers education.

3.1.3 Respondents were asked how much they felt they had learnt in careers education. They were asked to rate their learning in relation to a list of learning objectives contained in the “National Framework for Careers Education and Guidance” produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).

The results for each learning objective are displayed in the graph overleaf:

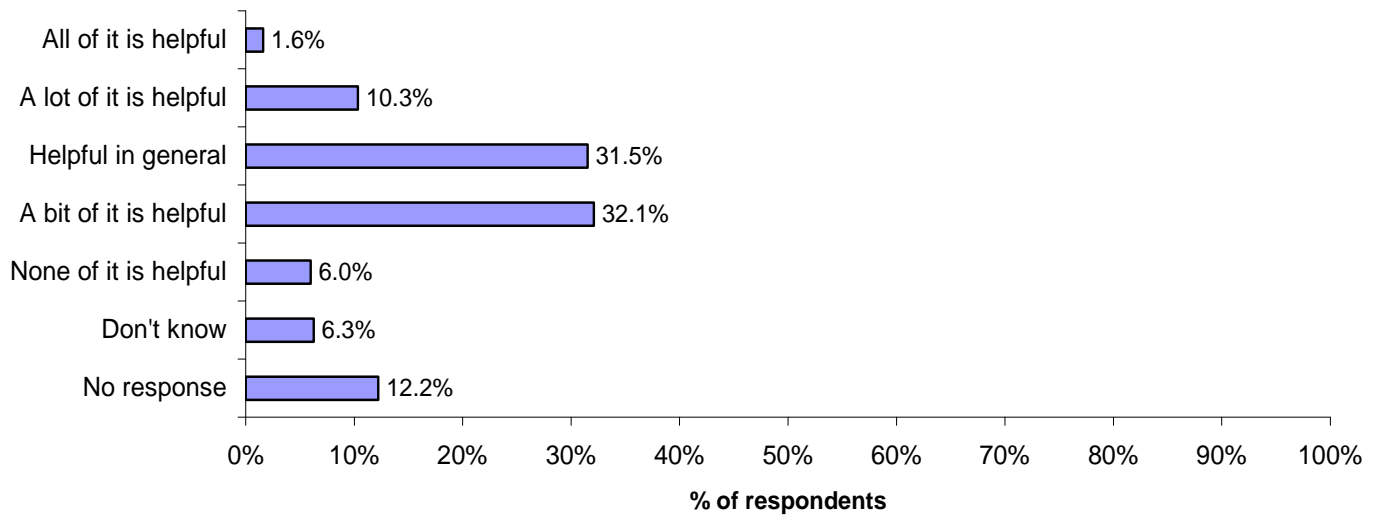


3.1.4 The graph shows that respondents had very mixed views about the amount of learning they had acquired in careers education in relation to each objective.

- The greatest variation in learning was evident in relation to the learning objectives for “developing a career / learning action plan” and “learning about the opportunities available at college.” For example:
 - 45.6% of respondents felt that they had learned “nothing” or “not a lot” about how to set goals and develop an action plan for their future; by contrast 39.4% felt that they had learned “quite a lot” or “a lot” about this learning objective.
 - Meanwhile 42.9% of respondents felt that they had learned “nothing” or “not a lot” about the opportunities available at college; whilst 43.8% felt that they had learned “quite a lot” or “a lot.”
- Learning was particularly low in relation to “knowledge about the opportunities available in work based training”. 56.8% of respondents felt that they had learned “nothing” or “not a lot” about the opportunities available in work based training. By contrast only 28.8% of respondents felt that they had learned “quite a lot” or “a lot” about work based opportunities.
- Similarly, a high proportion of respondents (56.5%) felt that they had learned “nothing” or “not a lot” about “how to apply for a college course or work based training”. However it may be the case that application procedures are not addressed in careers education until Year 11, closer to the time that young people are required to submit applications.

3.1.5 Respondents were asked to rate the overall helpfulness of the careers education they have received in school. The results are displayed in the graph overleaf:

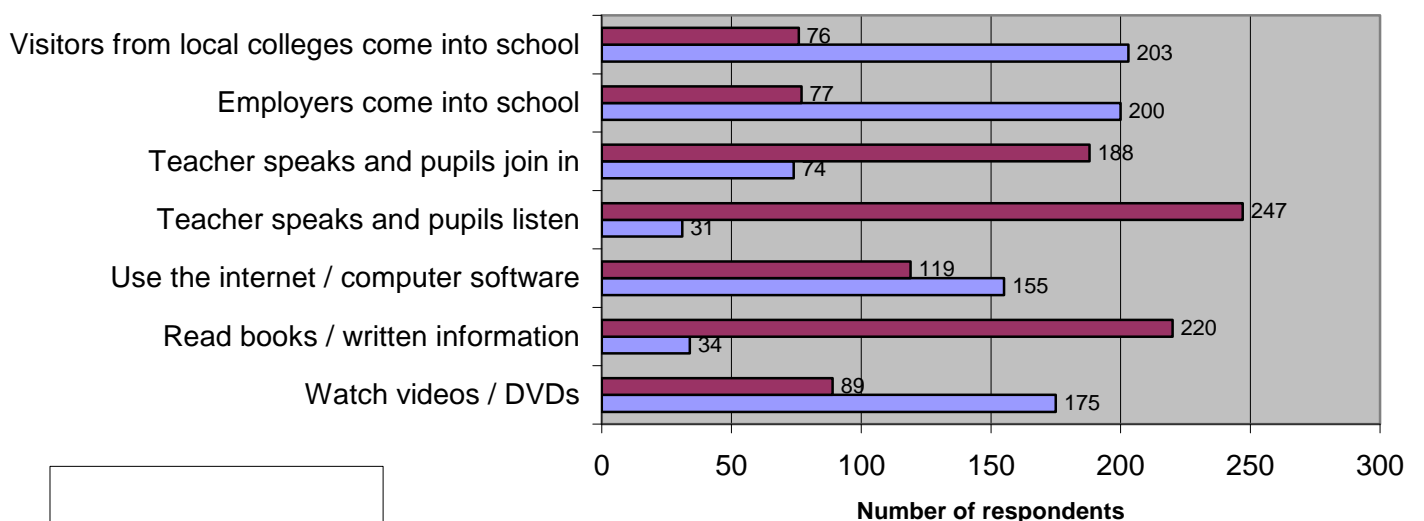
How helpful is the careers education you have received?



3.1.6 The graph shows that the majority of respondents (63.6%) felt that overall the careers education they receive at school is “helpful in general” or “a bit of it is helpful.” Only 6% of respondents felt that “none of it is helpful” and 6.3% were unsure.

3.1.7 Finally, respondents were asked what methods are currently used for delivering careers education in their school; and what their preferred methods of teaching and learning are. The graph below compares the current teaching methods and preferred teaching methods indicated by those who responded to this question.

How is careers education taught and how should it be taught?



3.1.8 The graph indicates that there is a discrepancy between the current methods used for delivering careers education in schools and the teaching methods favoured by pupils. For example:

- Respondents reported that the most common methods currently used for delivering careers education in schools include:
 - i. Teacher speaks and pupils listen;
 - ii. Reading books and other written information;However these methods of teaching were favoured least by respondents.
- By contrast the questionnaire indicated that respondents favoured methods of teaching and learning which provide a firsthand insight into the reality of college / working life. In particular, respondents felt that representatives from local colleges and businesses should be invited into school to talk to pupils. This, however, was felt to be the least common method of teaching currently used.

3.2 Respondents' comments regarding Careers Education in Schools

3.2.1 The questionnaire provided respondents with an opportunity to make additional comments regarding their experiences of Careers Education in school. 227 respondents provided additional comments.

3.2.2 The nature and content of respondents' comments were mixed. 88 respondents made positive comments regarding the value they felt they had received from Careers Education. Typical remarks include:

"It highlighted what options we have to consider after we leave school;"
"It has helped me to think about what I want to do when I leave school and where I want to end up in life;"
"I think it is helpful because it tells you how to become what you want to be;"
"I have learnt how to write a CV properly and how to apply for a job;"
"I have benefited from knowledge of how to handle interviews;"
"The bits that have told us about what it's like in the world outside school are helpful."

3.2.3 By contrast, however, 104 comments indicated less positive experiences. Key criticisms are summarised below:

- 59 comments referred to the insufficient amount of Careers Education provided in schools. Typical comments include:

"We hardly ever have careers education;"
"I don't remember doing it;"
"We haven't received enough;"
"we don't get enough, we don't know any of our options and what we need to do"
"I think it would be very helpful if we had more lessons on careers;"

“Most topics have been covered but they have been brief and not very informative.”

- A further 37 respondents indicated that the curriculum content of Careers Education had not met their needs. Examples of the comments provided include:

“It has not been very helpful as it told us about the things I already know;”
“We have only really learnt about CVs and not anything else much;”
“It did not tell us about the things we wanted to know, I have had to look on the internet and ask my sister;”
“You only learn the same things over again so its only helpful in some ways;”
“It hasn’t been that detailed we just go over the same things;”

- Respondents also made critical comments regarding the methods used to deliver Careers Education in their schools, for example:

“It is taught by unqualified people who don’t know about the things we need to learn about;”
“It is not interesting enough and the information doesn’t seem relevant to me;”
“It is often boring, we need more varied teaching methods to make it more interesting”

3.2.4 Respondents made a number of suggestions regarding the issues which they felt should be, but are not currently, addressed in Careers Education. Recurring suggestions are outlined below:

- 33 respondents wished to receive further information and guidance relating to job / college application procedures; typical comments include:

“We need to learn about how to write a CV and application letter;”
“It would be useful to learn how to apply for a college course or work based training;”
“I would like to learn what we have to do to get a place at college;”

- 11 respondents reported that they needed further information and advice to help them make appropriate decisions about their learning at the end of Year 9 and in Year 11. Typical comments include:

“We need help in learning what certain GCSEs you need to choose in Year 9 for certain jobs;”
“I would like to learn which college course are best suited to my ability;”
“We need to know what we need to do to achieve the jobs we want when we’re older;”

- 7 respondents wished to receive further information regarding apprenticeships and other work based training opportunities;

“We need information on apprenticeships and what opportunities there are;”
“I need to know how to apply for a job and fill in a CV for work based learning;”

- 5 respondents stated that opportunities to gain an insight into the realities of college and working life should be incorporated into the Careers Education curriculum. For example respondents commented:

“I would like to learn about typical college life in Careers Education;”
 “Background on college and uni and what its like there;”

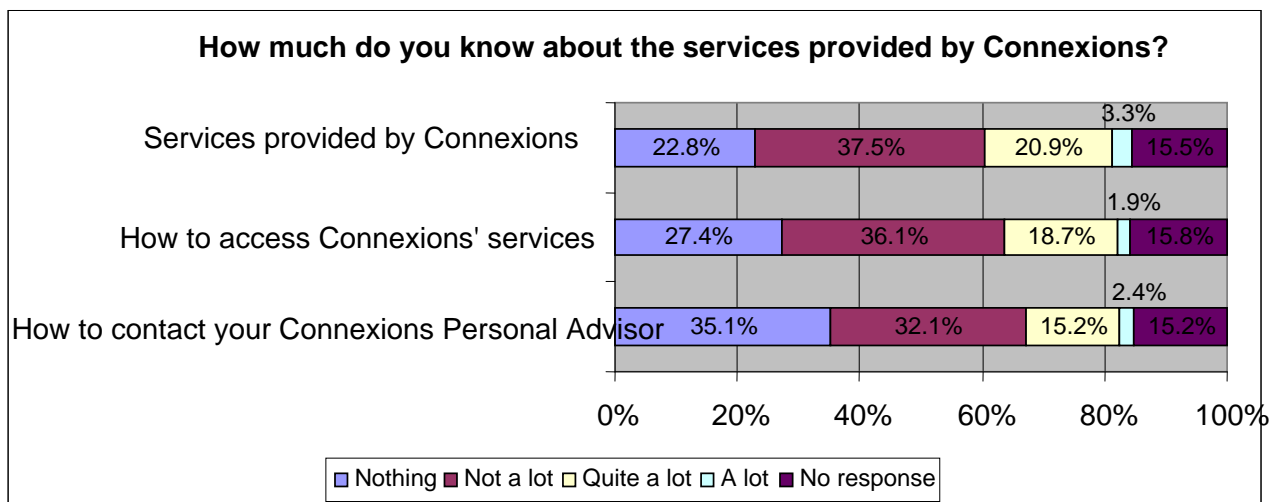
- A further 7 respondents wished to learn more about specific careers. Careers referred to by respondents include sports coaching, accountancy, the army and military careers, childcare and media.

3.2.5 Finally, respondents provided a number of general suggestions regarding the ways in which they felt Careers Education could be improved in their school. The most recurring suggestions include:

- Representatives from local businesses and parents’ attending school to talk about their jobs; (31 respondents)
- Practical experiences and taster sessions in college and the work place; (24 respondents)
- Regular timetabled lessons; (23 respondents)
- More varied teaching methods including increased use of the internet, DVD, interactive class discussions and practical activities such as practice interviews; (22 respondents)
- More information provided in Careers Eduaction about the services provided by Connexions. (7 respondents);
- More regular meetings with Connexions advisors and increased involvement of Connexions in delivering Careers Education; (4 respondents)
- Permanent careers advisors in school; (2 respondents)

4. Connexions

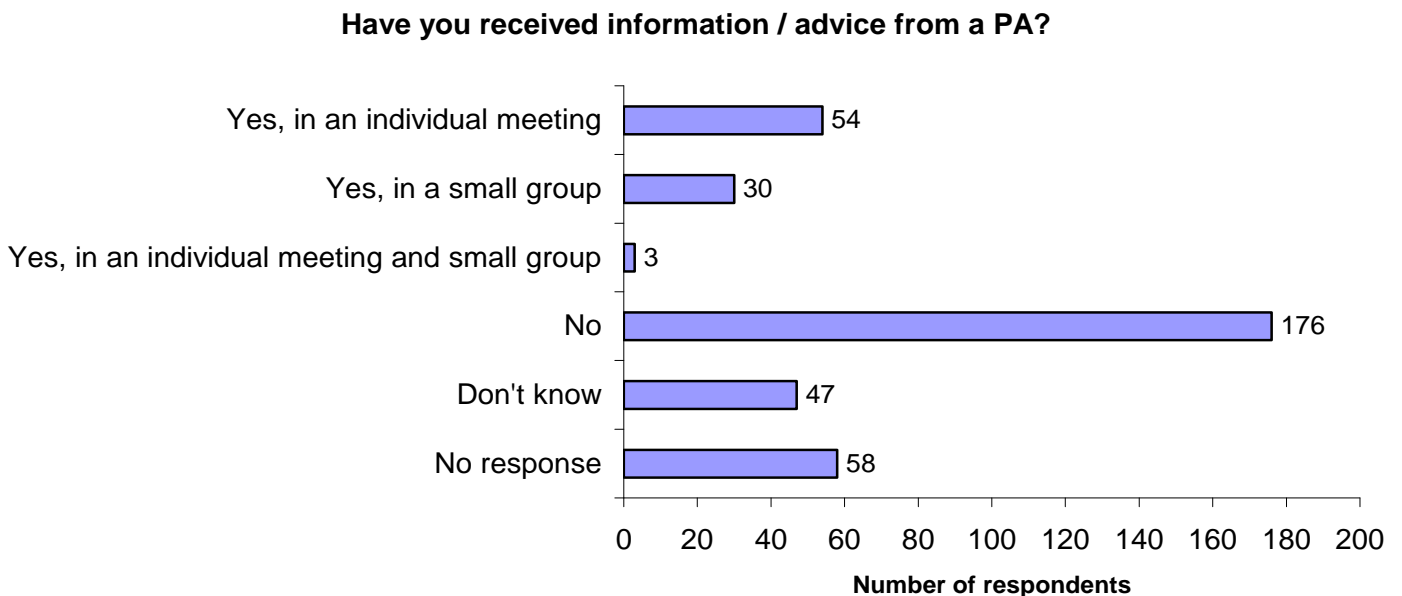
4.1.1 Respondents were asked how much they feel they know about the services provided by Connexions and procedures for accessing these services. The results are displayed in percentage form in the graph below.



4.1.2 The graph shows that respondents' knowledge about the services provided by Connexions and the procedures for accessing such services was very low.

- 60.3% of respondents reported that they knew “nothing” or “not a lot” about the services provided by Connexions; 22.8% of these respondents felt that they knew “nothing” at all. By contrast only 20.9% felt that they knew “quite a lot” about the services provided by Connexions, and only 3.3% felt that they knew “a lot.”
- Meanwhile, 63.5% of respondents indicated that they knew “nothing” or “not a lot” about how to access the services provided by Connexions; 27.4% of these respondents felt that they knew “nothing”. By contrast only 18.7% felt that they knew “quite a lot” about how to access Connexions services, and only 1.9% felt that they knew “a lot.”
- Respondents' knowledge regarding procedures for contacting their Personal Advisor (PA) was particularly low. 67.2% of respondents reported that they knew “nothing” or “not a lot” about how to access their PA; 35.1% felt that they knew “nothing” at all. By contrast only 15.2% of respondents felt that they knew “quite a lot” and 2.4% felt that they knew “a lot.”

4.1.3 Respondents were asked whether they had ever received information or advice from a Connexions PA; and if so, in what setting. The results are displayed in the graph overleaf.

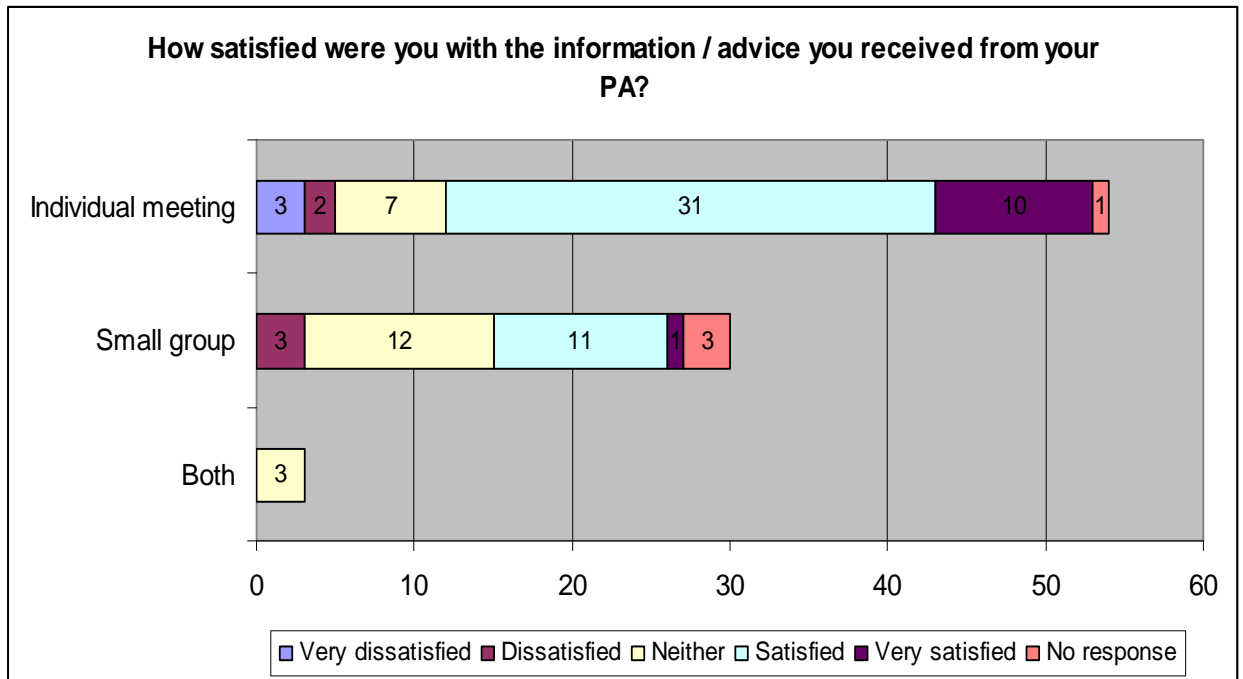


4.1.4 The graph shows that:

- Only a minority of respondents (23.6%) indicated that they had received information or advice from a PA. These respondents indicated that contact with their PA took place in an individual meeting or a small group meeting.

- 28.6% of the young people surveyed were unsure whether they had received information or advice from a PA, or failed to respond to the question. These respondents' uncertainty regarding their contact with Connexions may further indicate a general lack of awareness regarding the services provided by Connexions.

4.1.5 Respondents who reported that they had received information or advice from a PA were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the service they had received. The results are shown in the graph overleaf:

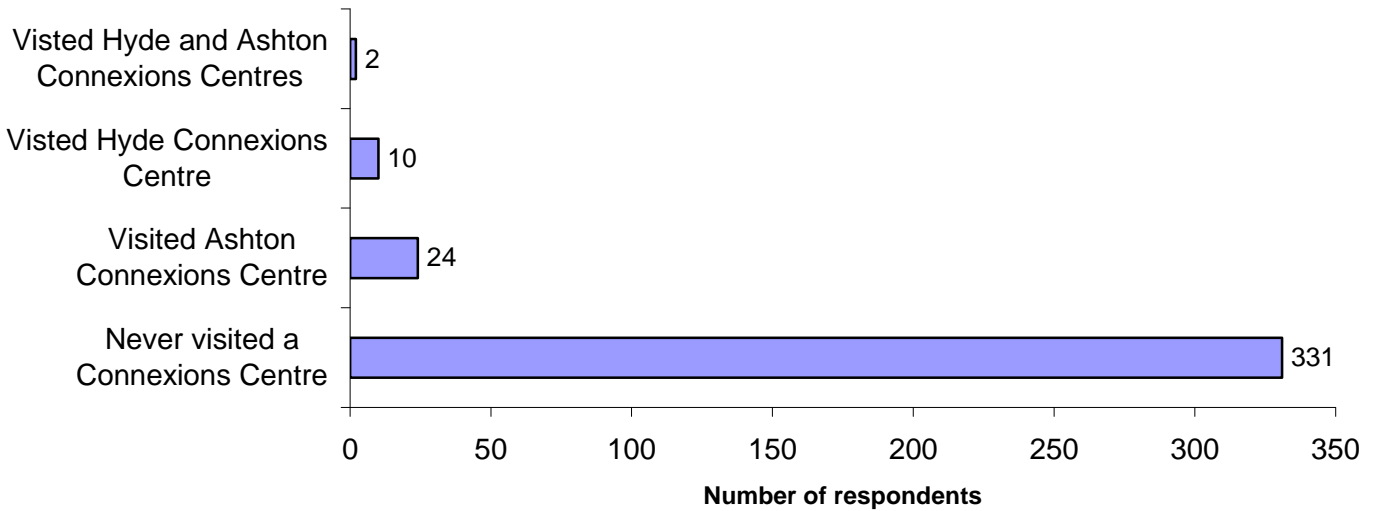


4.1.6 The graph shows that the majority of respondents who had received information or advice from their PA were satisfied with the service they received:

- Respondents who had met their PA in a one-to-one meeting were most likely to be satisfied with the service they received. 75.9% of respondents who had received information or advice in an individual meeting with their PA reported that they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied.” Only 9% of respondents felt “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied.”
- The overall satisfaction level of respondents who had met their PA as part of a small group of pupils was slightly lower than those who had attended one-to-one meetings (37% of respondents were “satisfied” and 40% of respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied”). However the proportion of respondents who felt dissatisfied with the service they received was low (10%) and no respondents felt “very dissatisfied.”

4.1.7 Respondents were asked whether they had ever visited a Connexions Centre, and if so, which centres. The number of respondents who had visited a Connexions Centre is shown in the graph overleaf:

Have you visited a Connexions Centre?



4.1.8 The graph shows that the vast majority of respondents (331 respondents) had never visited a Connexions Centre.

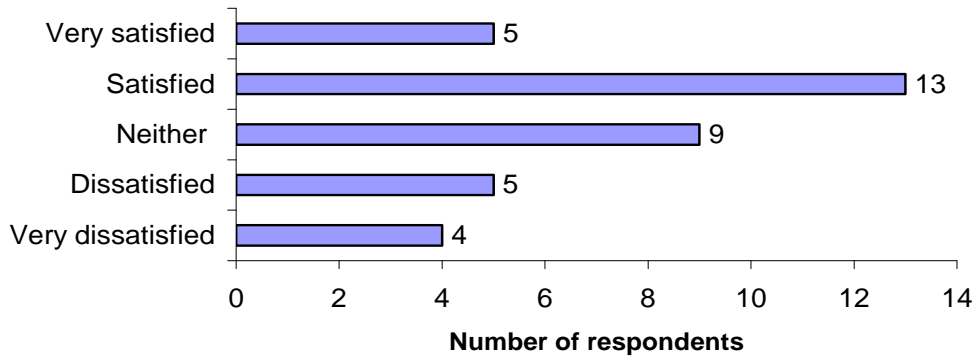
- 4.1.9 Respondents who reported that they had visited a Connexions Centre were asked:
- to state the main purpose for their visit;
 - to rate their level of satisfaction with the service they received at the centre.

The results are displayed in the graphs below and overleaf.

What was the main purpose of your visit?



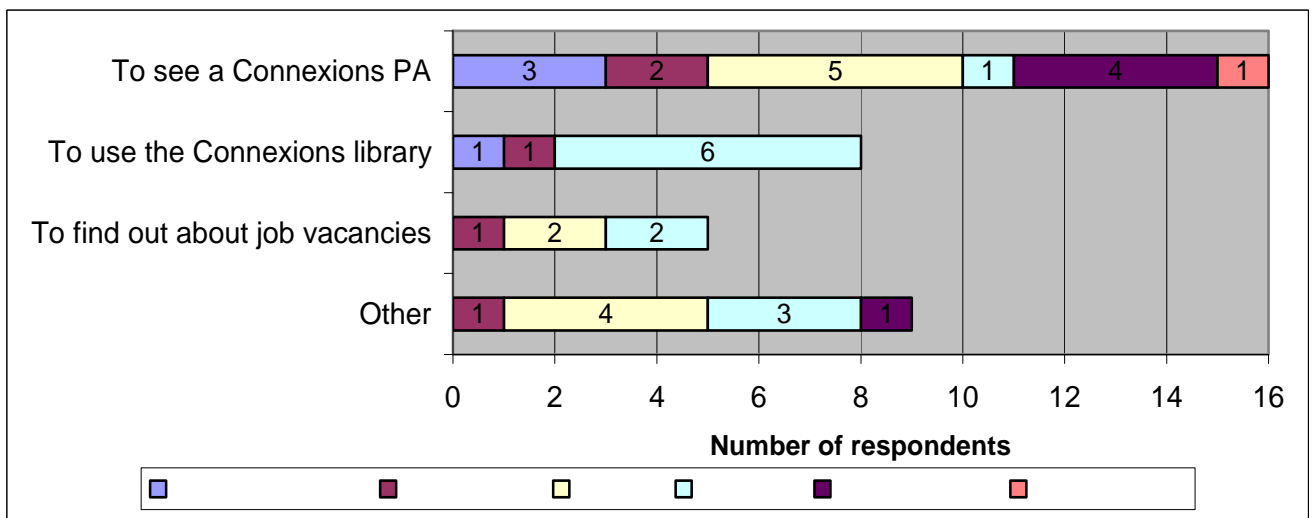
How satisfied were you with the service you received at the Connexions Centre?



4.1.10 The graphs show:

- The most common single reason why respondents visited a Connexions Centre was to see a PA.
- Respondents' satisfaction with the service they received was mixed. Almost half of the respondents who had visited a Connexions Centre were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the service they received. However 25% reported feeling "neither satisfied not dissatisfied" and a further 25% felt "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied" with the service they received.

4.1.11 The graph below breakdowns respondents' level of satisfaction by the service they used at the Connexions Centre.



4.1.12 The graph shows that:

- The Connexions library received the highest rate of satisfaction; 6 of the 8 respondents who visited the library were "satisfied" with the service they received.

- The satisfaction levels of those respondents who visited a Connexions Centre to see a PA were most mixed. 31% were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the service they received; 31% were “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied” and a further 31% were “very dissatisfied” or “dissatisfied.”

However the small number of respondents who had accessed this service makes it impossible to identify generalised conclusions.

4.2 Respondents’ comments regarding Connexions

4.2.1 The questionnaire provided respondents with an opportunity to make additional comments regarding their opinions and experiences of Connexions. 119 respondents provided additional comments; 58 of these respondents stated that they had accessed the services provided by Connexions.

4.2.2 The comments made by the vast majority of those respondents who had accessed the services provided by Connexions were very positive.

- 27 respondents praised the detailed and clear nature of the information and guidance they had received from their Personal Assistant and / or any written information they had received from Connexions. Typical comments include:

“The personal advisor explained thoroughly to me about careers and applying for college;”
 “They gave me a lot of advice and sent more information through the post;”
 “They answered all my questions about my career plans in great detail;”
 “The information she gave me was very easy to understand.”

- Respondents also praised the personalised service provided by Connexions:

“They ask us about our ideas and what we wanted to do when we leave and then focussed on that;”
 “She was very helpful and went over all of my ideas as well as giving me other options;”
 “She listened to me talk about the career I wish to pursue and told me things I didn’t already know;”
 “I was very satisfied because they were very easy to talk to and helped me decide what career suits me best.”

- In addition 11 respondents reported that the information and / or advice they received from Connexions had helped clarify their future career / learning plans:

“They helped me to see how different options would affect my future;”
 “She cleared everything and helped me decide what career best suits me;”
 “It was clear and easy to understand and really helped me with my future plans.”

4.2.3 A smaller number of respondents made critical comments regarding their experiences of Connexions. Respondents’ criticisms focused around the following key issues:

- Seven respondents indicated that the information and / or advice they received failed to meet their specific needs. The key reasons cited for this include:
 - The information was too general and not tailored to the respondent’s particular requirements;

“She just told me to go to a web-site, but this didn’t tell me what I wanted to know;”
 “It was interesting, but not helpful for what I wanted to know;”

- It replicated their existing knowledge;

“The meeting with a personal advisor just told me what I already know;”
 “I didn’t learn anything new;”

- They did not have sufficient time with their PA to discuss issues of concern;

“The information was helpful but there wasn’t time to get as much detail as I would have liked;”
 “It was very hard to ask questions and 20 minutes wasn’t long enough”

- Three respondents who received information and support as part of a group commented that they had not had the opportunity to discuss personal careers issues:

“The meeting wasn’t personal. It was a group so there were some things you didn’t want to say;”
 “Not much can be discussed in a big group because there are too many disruptions. It would be much better on a one-to-one basis.”

4.2.4 A significant proportion of comments regarding Connexions, however, indicated respondents’ lack of contact with Connexions and their low awareness regarding the services available. For example:

- 39 respondents commented that they were unaware of the services provided by Connexions. Typical comments include:

“I don’t know what Connexions is;”
 “I haven’t had experiences of Connexions so I know nothing about it;”
 “I don’t remember anything about Connexions;”
 “I don’t even know my personal advisor, I would like more advice about Connexions;”
 “I have not been told anything about Connexions and how they can help me;”

- A further 6 respondents commented on the difficulties they had experienced in gaining access to their PA for information and advice:

“We don’t have meetings. I have asked for one, but it is always the same people that get them;”

“It is extremely hard to get a meeting; and when you do they are not long enough;
 “They ask people for interviews but its always the same people;”
 “I would like to see a Connexions advisor, but I don’t know how to;”

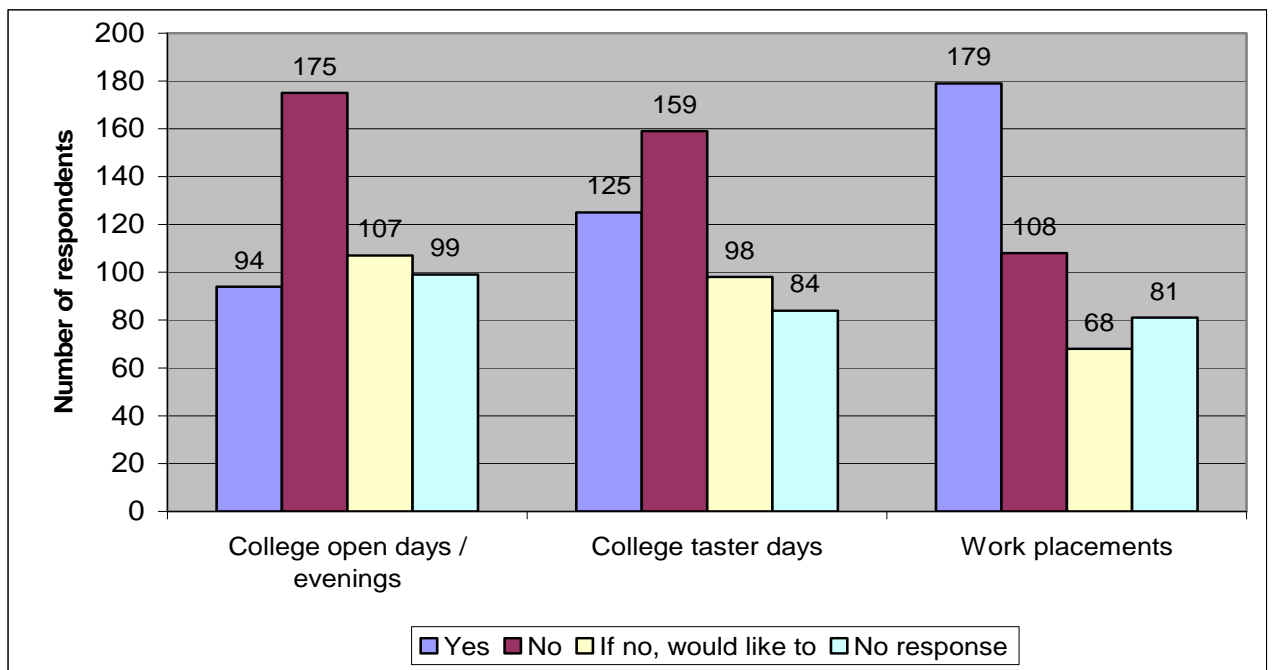
- Respondents expressed the need for further information regarding the services provided by Connexions and procedures for accessing these services.

5. Careers events / work experience

5.1 Respondents were asked whether they had participated in any of the following events designed to provide an insight into college or working life; and if not, whether they would like to:

- College open days / evenings;
- College taster days;
- Work placements;

The results are displayed in the graph below.

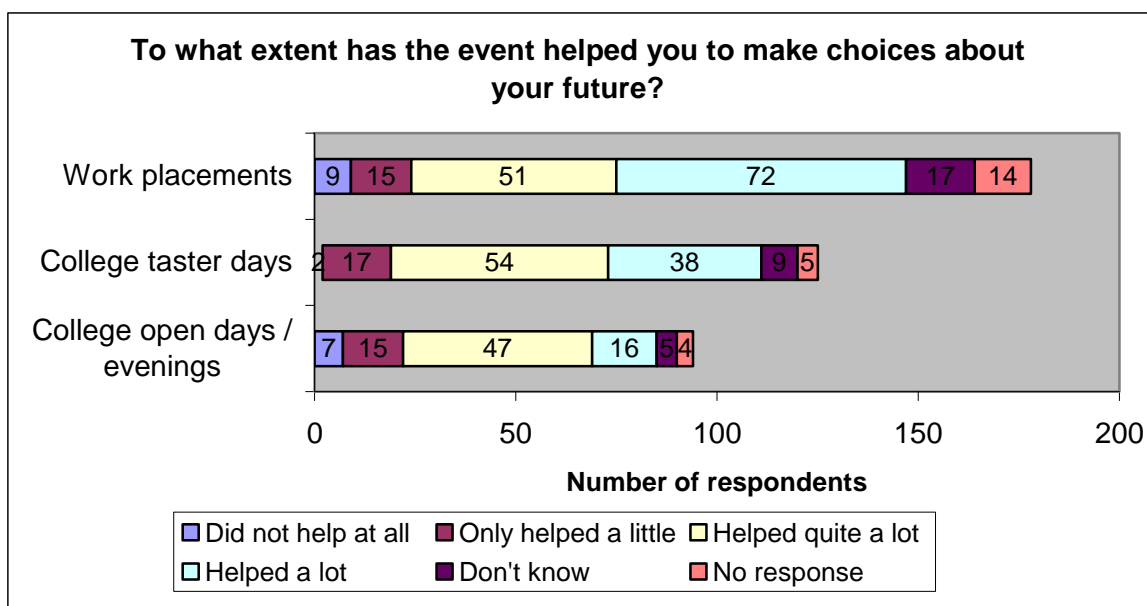


5.2 The graph shows:

- Though a substantial proportion of respondents had attended college open days or college taster events, the majority reported that they had not yet attended such events.
 - 61% of the respondents who had not attended a college open day or taster event indicated that they “would like to attend if they were given the opportunity.”
- Almost 50% of respondents reported that they had undertaken a work placement.
 - 56% of those who had not yet undertaken a work placement indicated that they “would like to.”

It may be the case that young people have more opportunities to participate in college events and work placements during Year 11.

5.3 Respondents who had participated in any of the above events were asked to indicate to what extent the event helped them to make choices about their future learning or career. The results are shown in the graph below



5.4 The graph shows that the vast majority of respondents felt their participation in college events and work placements had helped them to make decisions about their future.

- Work placements received the highest proportion of positive ratings. 69% of respondents who had undertaken work placements felt that the placement helped them to make decisions about their future “quite a lot” or “a lot;” 58.5% of these respondents felt that the placement “helped a lot.”

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF STAYING ON RATES IN POST 16 EDUCATION AND TRAINING

JANUARY 2007

AIM OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW EXERCISE

To review the effectiveness of:

- i. Measures to increase the number of young people in Tameside staying on in post 16 education and work based training;
- ii. Measures to reduce the number of young people dropping out of education and work based training at the age of 17;

and to identify areas for improvement, in order to help ensure further progress is made towards addressing this national and local priority.

OBJECTIVES

- A.** To gather accurate information about the number of young people in Tameside currently staying on in post 16 education and training; and to identify groups of young people most vulnerable to being “not in employment, education or training” (NEET);
- B.** To consider the strategic role of Tameside Council in helping to increase staying on rates in post 16 education and training and reduce the drop out rate at 17;
- C.** To evaluate the availability and effectiveness of information and support for school leavers regarding post 16 education and training;
- D.** To evaluate the ways in which post 16 education and training is promoted in local schools;

- E.** To identify and evaluate specific measures to increase the staying on rates and reduce the drop out rates of groups of young people with low levels of participation in post 16 education and training and other young people vulnerable to becoming NEET;
- F.** To identify and evaluate the role of the Youth Service (and other out school services) in helping to increase staying on rates in post 16 education and training;
- G.** To gather feedback from pupils and teachers relating to:
 - i. The effectiveness of measures to increase staying on rates;
 - ii. Obstacles to progression into post 16 education and training;
- H.** To identify and consider examples of good practice in Tameside and other areas.

VALUE FOR MONEY / USE OF RESOURCES

This review will consider the Council's measures for increasing staying on rates in relation to value for money

EQUALITIES ISSUES

Data shows variances in the staying on rates of young people from different sectors of society, at both national and local level.

Groups of young people with lower staying on rates include:

- Boys;
- Young people of different ethnic origins;
- Young people with learning difficulties and disabilities;
- Looked after Children;
- Young Mothers

Therefore consideration of the ways in which the Council's measures to increase staying on rates impact upon these groups will form an important part of this review.

TIMESCALE

This review will be completed by

DETAILED ACTION PLAN (in broadly chronological order)

Action	Objective met	Timescale	Lead Scrutiny Panel member(s) and/or Scrutiny Support Officer(s)	Monthly update
(1) Briefing paper outlining: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current staying on rates in Tameside, compared to previous years, the national average and Tameside statistical neighbours; • A breakdown of staying on rates by school, gender, ethnic origin, young people with learning difficulties and disabilities, young Mothers and Looked after Children 	A	Briefing paper for Scrutiny Panel meeting 6 th March 2007	Gaynor Alexander	Completed
(2) Briefing paper outlining: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National legislation / guidance about the Council's statutory responsibilities in relation to increasing staying on rates and decreasing dropping out rates (including the "14-19 Strategy," White Paper on "Further Education, Raising Skills and Improving Life Chances;" and the Education and Inspection Bill); • The role of the Learning and Skills Council (Tameside 14-19 review and Tameside 	B & E	Briefing paper for Scrutiny Panel meeting 6 th March 2007	Gaynor Alexander	Completed

Action	Objective met	Timescale	Lead Scrutiny Panel member(s) and/or Scrutiny Support Officer(s)	Monthly update
<p>"14-19 strategy);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key issues for the Scrutiny Panel to consider. • For background information - an update on recent DfES proposals to raise the school leaving age. 				
<p>(3) Meet with representatives from Tameside Council's "14-19 Unit" to discuss;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ways in which Tameside Council is fulfilling it's statutory responsibilities (including the work of the "Aimhigher" partnership, Tameside's "14-19 strategy," and the ways in which BSF will impact on staying on rates); • The role of the LSC in working with the Council to develop strategies to increase staying on rates and reduce dropping out rates. 	B & E	Scrutiny Panel meeting 6 th March 2007	The Scrutiny Panel	Completed
<p>(4) Briefing paper outlining;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources of information and support available to young people regarding post 16 education and training (including Careers Education and Guidance offered in local schools; information and support provided by Connexions; the NEET project; and information and support provided by out of school agencies such as the Youth Service); • Examples of good practice in Tameside and other areas; • Key issues for the Scrutiny Panel to consider. 	C, E, F & H	Briefing paper for Scrutiny Panel meeting 27 th March 2007	Gaynor Alexander	Completed
<p>(5) Meet with representatives from Connexions, the NEET project, and the Youth Service to discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and support available in schools to young people (including support for young people identified at risk of becoming NEET, groups with lower staying 	C, E, F, G & H	Scrutiny Panel meeting 27 th March 2007	The Scrutiny Panel	Completed

Action	Objective met	Timescale	Lead Scrutiny Panel member(s) and/or Scrutiny Support Officer(s)	Monthly update
<p>on rates and school leavers currently identified as NEET);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information and support provided by out of school agencies, such as the Youth Service; Measures to ensure information and support is accessible to all young people (including young people identified at risk of becoming NEET and groups with lower staying on rates) 				
(6) Meet with representatives Hyde Pupil Referral Unit to discuss the information and support they provide in relation to improving staying on rates and reducing dropping out rates	C, E & F	Individual meetings (date to be confirmed) or should we invite them to a Scrutiny Panel meeting? – of so it would be July / August 2007	Gaynor Alexander & Scrutiny Panel Members	Attended Panel meeting 3 rd July 2007
(7) Briefing paper outlining: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information and support provided by schools to help increase staying on rates and reduce dropping out rates, (including careers education provided by Schools, the work of the Tameside Business Enterprise Partnership and relationship with Connexions); Examples of good practice in Tameside and other areas; Key issues for the Scrutiny Panel to consider. Update – including feedback from consultation and meetings with representatives from the YOT and Bridgeway PRU (presentation – unless we decide to meet with these individually) 	C, D, E, & H	Briefing paper for Panel meeting 3 rd July 2007	Gaynor Alexander	Completed
(8) Meet with PSHE Co-ordinators / Head Teachers to discuss in further detail measures for increasing staying on rates and reducing drop out rates in post 16 education and training.	C, D, E, G & H	Scrutiny Panel meeting 3 rd July 2007	The Scrutiny Panel	Completed

Action	Objective met	Timescale	Lead Scrutiny Panel member(s) and/or Scrutiny Support Officer(s)	Monthly update
<p>(9) Briefing paper outlining:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information and support provided by colleges and other training providers to help increase staying on rates and reduce dropping out rates, (including the work of School / College Liaison Officers and Skills Solutions); Examples of good practice in Tameside and other areas; <p>Key issues for the Scrutiny Panel to consider.</p>	C, D, E & H	Briefing paper for Scrutiny Panel meeting 16 th October 2007	Gaynor Alexander	Completed
<p>(10) Meet with School Liaison Officers from local colleges and Sixth Forms to discuss measures for increasing staying on rates and reducing dropping out rates in post 16 education and training.</p>	C, D, E, G,%H	Scrutiny Panel meeting 16 th October 2007	The Scrutiny Panel	Completed
<p>(11) (see consultation plan) Consultation with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recent school leavers in the NEET category – via discussion groups, organised through Connexions; Young people involved in the NEET project (via discussion groups at appropriate schools?) <p>(this consultation should include young people from groups with lower staying on rates – the composition of the NEET groups should be considered)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questionnaire to a representative sample of year 10 pupils; 	C, D, E, F, Gi & Gii	July 2007	Gaynor Alexander & Scrutiny Panel Members	Completed
<p>(12) Produce consultation analysis</p>	C, D, E, F, Gi & Gii	Consultation report for Scrutiny Panel meeting 11 th December 2007	Gaynor Alexander	Completed
<p>(12) Meet with the Director of Education, Tameside MBC 14019 Advisor and the Head of Connexions to discuss the findings of the Scrutiny Panel's consultation.</p>	C, D, E, F, Gi & Gii	Scrutiny Panel meeting 11 th December 2007	The Scrutiny Panel	Completed
<p>(12) Produce draft report</p>	All	By Scrutiny Panel meeting 12 th February 2008	Gaynor Alexander	Completed

Action	Objective met	Timescale	Lead Scrutiny Panel member(s) and/or Scrutiny Support Officer(s)	Monthly update
(13) Identify conclusions and recommendations	All	Scrutiny Panel meeting in 12 th February 2008	The Scrutiny Panel	Completed
(14) Agree final report	All	Scrutiny Panel meeting 1 st April 2008	The Scrutiny Panel	Completed
(15) Send final report to Borough Solicitor and Borough Treasurer for comments	All	May 2008	Gaynor Alexander	Completed