

YORKSHIRE & HUMBER 14-19 CHALLENGE

ACCELERATE



Welcome to **Accelerate** – the monthly newsletter to inform and engage partners in the 'Yorkshire and Humber 14-19 Challenge' programme.

Take a closer look

With so much happening in the world of 14-19, we have decided to focus this edition on a more detailed explanation of the Challenge programme, its aims and how it differs from other programmes.

So what is the 'Yorkshire and Humber 14-19 Challenge'?

The four themes of the Yorkshire and Humber 14-19 Challenge are:

- **Attainment:** we want more young people to achieve good results at 16 and upwards
- **Progression:** we want more young people to stay in education and training, for longer
- **Employer engagement:** we want more employers to get involved in education, more often and more effectively
- **NEETs:** we want to reduce the number of young people not in employment, education and training

Attainment

There is a strong statistical relationship between social and economic deprivation and the educational achievements of young people. Broadly speaking, children in affluent areas out-perform children in deprived neighbourhoods. This is true even in Key Stages 1 and 2, and remains true through Key Stages 3 and 4 and into post-16 education and training.

The London Challenge started with a simple idea: to bring schools together to share ideas and experience. Schools were grouped according to (a) pupils' prior attainment and (b) relative deprivation in each school's catchment area. Schools were brought together from across the capital, not just from a single borough.

And it worked. Performance at age 16 has gone up, as has the number of 16-19 year olds in education or training.

It worked in London, and it can work in Yorkshire and Humber. We have therefore used the same method – even the same statisticians! – to group the region's secondary schools into 19 statistical "families". The key difference is that we don't have the money or the resources that were available to the London Challenge, so we are concentrating on co-ordinating existing resources and sharing good ideas.

Initially, we will focus on just two of the 19 families. We have made a conscious decision to avoid families which include a significant number of National Challenge schools, for fear of initiative overload. Instead, we have selected families in what might be called the "middle ground", both in terms of prior attainment and relative deprivation. We have also made sure that the families include schools from several different local authority areas.

As a first step, schools in the two families will be invited to send representatives to a one-day workshop. They will hear at first hand from people involved in the London Challenge, and discuss ways of sharing ideas and experience amongst themselves. We will also ask how the Challenge can help them to help themselves.

Obviously, it takes time to share and then embed good ideas. However, the London Challenge has proved that word of mouth really does make a difference to attainment levels.

Progression

There is a well-established link between levels of attainment and progression into further learning and work. Young people who do well at 16 are generally motivated to continue in learning at 17 and beyond. If the Challenge helps drive up attainment, therefore, progression is likely to improve as well.

However, that is not the whole story. For example, young people also need good information about trends in the labour market so they can make sound choices about careers and further learning. Teachers and parents need this information too, so they can help young people think about their options.

However, there are some widely-held misconceptions about the regional economy. For example, a lot of people think engineering largely died out in the 80s and 90s. In reality, engineering is alive and well, and actively recruiting talented young people.

We know good information is already available, if you know where to look. For example, Sector Skills Councils – which represent employers in all key sectors of the economy – have prepared forecasts of trends in job numbers and skills needs, taking account of factors such as retirement rates and the expansion and contraction of different industries.

Against this background, we will be asking –

- What information do schools and colleges feel they need, and in what format?
And –
- Who can provide it?

Again, we will avoid re-inventing the wheel. There is a good, well-established regional network of careers providers. Sector Skills Councils have a regional forum. There are regional and local groups working on labour market information. There is a wide choice of materials about careers and further learning both in print and in electronic formats. We just want to link the people who produce information with the people who need it, and to share examples of things that work really well.

Taking this one step further, we hope to add "experience" to "information".

Our thinking draws on the success of Aim Higher, which sets out to challenge the belief held by some young people (and their parents) that higher education is for "other people". It is now standard practice for universities to host open days for young people in Key Stage 4. By seeing for themselves and by meeting students only a few years older than they are, young people get a better understanding of the opportunities offered by HE – and that it's not just for other people.

We think there is room to extend this idea into other fields – and possibly to students in Key Stage 3 – building on the work that is already being done by local authorities and universities. Visits to employers, colleges and apprenticeship providers could help expand horizons for many young people. We aim to work with schools in our two pilot families to test this out.

Employer engagement

All young people aged 14-16 are entitled to work-related learning as part of the Key Stage 4 curriculum. Employers play a central part in providing elements such as work experience and interview practice. They have also been vital to initiatives such as Young Apprenticeships and the design of the new Diplomas. However, employers can add context and variety to other subjects and qualifications too; and they can support the professional development of teachers and senior managers.

The challenge is to make sure enough employers are willing to engage, matched to the growing needs of schools and colleges in the region.

Yet again, we are not starting with a blank canvas – far from it. Many schools have relished the chance to expand links with local employers; colleges have an excellent track record in this field; and the region has a network of innovative and experienced education business partnership organisations.

We aim to support employer engagement by sharing ideas and promoting the benefits. One element will be the 'Business in Schools' campaign launched by the education foundation, Edge. This includes a web portal which lists the things which employers can do to help, and helps them contact local schools either directly or via an education business partnership organisation.

NEETs

If the Challenge succeeds, we will gradually stem the flow of young people into the NEET group: more young people will do well at 16 and above, and more will stay in education or training, for longer.

But that's the future. Here and now, too many young people are not in employment, education or training.

The Learning and Skills Council has already awarded ESF contracts worth over £18 million to identify and fill gaps in local provision. With so much excellent work already taking place, our aim is to help people to share ideas and experience, not to interfere.

The Challenge has brought together NEET Co-ordinated Response Managers from across the region to enable what works well in one locality to be shared and implemented elsewhere.

Summary

In short, the Yorkshire and Humber 14-19 Challenge isn't a big, radical, all-singing, all-dancing strategy. It isn't an Initiative with a capital 'I'. And it hasn't been imposed from outside.

It's simply our way of enabling people to talk to one another and share good ideas.

It's about *cohesion, coordination* and *continuity* –

- bringing partners together to work more effectively,
- building on best practice,
- linking initiatives and agendas,
- establishing a better way of doing things, and
- creating a sustainable framework to support further improvements in the years to come.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of the programme in more detail, please contact either David Harbourne on 07738 167106 or email dharbourne@tiscali.co.uk, or Janette Gudgeon on 0113 383 0205 or email janette.gudgeon@ypef.org.uk. Alternatively, visit the website – www.yh14-19challenge.co.uk.

Please also pass on this newsletter to anyone else that may be interested in the activities mentioned above and encourage them to subscribe by emailing 'Accelerate subscribe' to: kate.woodcock@ypef.org.uk.

Alternatively, if you would like to unsubscribe to this newsletter, please email 'Accelerate unsubscribe' to kate.woodcock@ypef.org.uk.

YPEF Services Ltd holds the contract with the LSC to roll-out the 'Challenge' programme on behalf of partners and has assigned David Harbourne as the Strategic Lead. YPEF is also leading on the roll-out of the 'Enterprising Yorkshire – Inspiring Young Minds' campaign across the region.

