



# **Promoting Diplomas to Key Stakeholders**

**Christine Megson & Julie Fitzgerald**

**May 2008**

# INDEX

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>Executive Summary</b> .....                                   | 3  |
| <b>Section One: Scope</b> .....                                  | 5  |
| <b>Section Two: Methodology</b> .....                            | 6  |
| <b>Section Three: National Picture &amp; Local Context</b> ..... | 9  |
| The Sheffield Context .....                                      | 11 |
| The Sussex Context .....   | 13 |
| <b>Section Four: Stakeholders</b> .....                          | 13 |
| 1. Parents .....   | 13 |
| 2. Young People .....  | 20 |
| 3. Schools .....   | 23 |
| 4. Employers.....  | 26 |
| 5. Universities .....  | 31 |
| 6. The Champion .....  | 34 |
| 7. Stakeholder Partnership Event .....                           | 37 |
| <b>Section Five: Messages for Local Partnerships</b> .....       | 23 |
| <b>Section Six: Messages for DCSF</b> .....                      | 48 |
| <b>Section Seven: Scaling Up</b> .....                           | 52 |
| <b>Section Eight: Appendices</b> .....                           | 55 |
| Appendix One : People Interviewed .....                          | 55 |
| Appendix Two: Timetable of Key Meetings and Events.....          | 57 |
| Appendix Three: Questions from Parents and Young People .....    | 60 |
| Appendix Four: Employer Best Practice: .....                     | 66 |
| Appendix Five: Bibliography .....                                | 71 |

# **Executive Summary**

## **Promoting Diplomas to Key Stakeholders**

The Innovation Unit was commissioned by the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) to develop ways of promoting Diplomas and engaging key stakeholders.

In line with the DCSF recommendation, the work focussed on the September 2008 introduction of Construction and the Built Environment Diploma in Sheffield and the 2009 introduction of Environmental and Land-based Studies Diploma in mid and East Sussex. The brief also included proposals for scaling up local models and key messages for local partnerships and DCSF.

A range of methodologies were used, including desk top research; scanning of publications and articles; face to face and telephone interviews; meetings with stakeholders and knowledge capture interviews to incorporate learning.

Parents had many detailed questions on how Diplomas would work: they wanted to receive information in a range of formats and were keen to participate in discussions and creative options evenings which would help them support their children's choices.

Young people are receiving information from school. They were happy to work with parents to draw up questions for universities and colleges and the predominant question they want answered is 'will Diplomas be regarded as an equivalent qualification?'

Schools were increasingly enthusiastic both about Diplomas and starting to work with parents in different ways. Progress towards collaboration with other schools was being made and strong curriculum developers' networks were tackling emerging issues.

Significant differences were encountered in respect of employers in the two locations, reflecting different industry structures and context. Few employers had received detailed information from any source and their preferred option for the future was national templates adapted to contain local detail.

Recruitment and admissions staff in Higher Education (HE) were well informed about Diplomas and received regular updates through their networks. While institutions seek reassurance that the qualification is academically rigorous, academic staff were welcoming of playing an active role in delivery.

The role of the Champion in both locations was critical to successful introduction of Diplomas. Those fulfilling this position require strong relationship and wider management skills. The extent of the role and demands on it should not be underestimated and sufficient resourcing is key in the early stages.

Experience in Sheffield demonstrated the value to all parties of holding a stakeholder partnership event, to enable parents and young people to discuss their questions with universities and employers. The event also raised the level of engagement of all parties and strengthened links at partnership level. A partnership event held in Sussex which brought together representatives of employers, further and higher education, the careers service and the local authority, played a significant role in developing local networks in advance of the introduction of the Environmental and Land-Based Studies Diploma.

The report suggests a number of messages for partnerships as they seek to take Diploma delivery forward. Here we posit suggestions for thinking about the structure and resourcing of the work and key activities which could be considered for each of the stakeholder groups.

The penultimate section of the report outlines the messages gained from stakeholders during the course of this work which are of wider application to the DCSF.

Proposals as to how the models in Sheffield and Sussex might be scaled up and the key ingredients for success as evidenced by this work are described for consideration.

## Section One: Scope

The DCSF commissioned The Innovation Unit to develop ways of promoting Diplomas which would engage key stakeholders: parents, young people, schools, further and higher education and employers. The scope of the work excluded working with teachers as this was considered to be a separate piece of work. The role of Further Education featured more strongly in Sussex with Plumpton College as a specialist provider of Environmental and Land-based Studies.

The work was commissioned in early November 2007. Prior to submitting this report in early April 2008, the key findings were presented to a wide range of DCSF officials and representatives from Ofqual and UKCES. With support from local champions, we developed a localised model in two contrasting Gateway areas to engage key stakeholders and work with them on finding effective approaches to promoting Diplomas. In line with DCSF recommendation, we focussed on the September 2008 introduction of Construction and the Built Environment (C&BE) in Sheffield and the 2009 introduction of Environmental and Land-based Studies (E&LB) in Sussex. The focus was mainly on Level 2 Diplomas though there are some overlaps with promotion at both Level 1 and Advanced Diplomas.

The time frame was a critical factor. Work in North West Sheffield began rapidly in November 2007 in the context of the consortia partnership confidence of a successful bid and the fact that this work needed to be done within a very limited time scale from the schools' and Local Authority (LA) perspective as well as ours. The localised model in this location was therefore part of real time planning: moving from discussion and agenda setting to actual recruitment of young people onto the Diploma. Initial work in Sussex was delayed whilst their consortia bid was being submitted. Working on the model in this area was therefore largely aspirational and became reality only in mid-March 2008 when the bid was successful. Given the timeframe and exceptional holiday arrangements during the spring term this year, the final element of work in this location took place in mid May with an updated report submitted at that stage.

After developing the model we analysed the key learning from the two field trials particularly reflecting our brief to comment on:

- The difference between Gateway 1 & 2
- The difference between urban and rural
- Transport issues
- The needs of smaller and larger employers

Over the period of the project, we provided updates to DCSF on a monthly basis reflecting a changing landscape and the real challenges of this work. In line with our brief in this report we have proposed ways of scaling up the local model and synthesised messages for other consortia and DCSF.

## Section Two: Methodology

To ensure we had a full understanding of the complexities of the national picture in respect of Diploma development and to assist us with benchmarking local work, we undertook a range of research activities.

We attended a variety of meetings including those with Local Authorities, Education Business Partnerships, staff working in further education, Regional 14-19 coordinators and employers and teachers. These were supplemented by telephone discussions with national employers, Education Business Partnerships, Local Authorities, further and higher education, Learning and Skills Councils and Sector Skills leads. Following this initial round of meetings and discussions a number of information requests were logged with these organisations to further support information gathering and analysis.

We attended events relevant to the C&BE and E&LB Diplomas, for example Local Authority, school and further education assessor training days, the London Construction Fair and the UCAS conference on C&BE. Regular scanning of local and national press provided us with current information as it was released into the public domain.

Desk top research provided comprehensive information on the following:

- Effective communication strategies, including a trawl of recent campaigns
- Analysis of communications and marketing literature for other national programmes and projects

In order for us to have a complete understanding of the two local contexts within which we were working, we undertook research into the following factors:

- Examination of the local economies; demographics; education routes to Further Education (FE) and HE; population statistics; characteristics of hard-to-reach groups

Discussions were held with the local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) on regional trends, employment distribution and triggers to successful engagement with small businesses and Higher Education institutions (HEIs).

Relationship building and identification of champions in Sheffield and Sussex was an important aspect of our early work. In Sheffield we linked with the 14-19 Partnership Manager as the LA lead. He provided us with introductions to two schools, two employers, the specialist provider and a named HE contact.

Our initial contact in Sussex was the 14-19 Partnership Manager at East Sussex County Council. She introduced us to two schools and the School Vocational Course Manager at Plumpton College, the local specialist provider, who subsequently acted as our main contact and champion for the work. He and his colleagues introduced us to employers, other specialist providers, HEIs and other schools in the Sussex area.

At Myers Grove High School in Sheffield, the process of working together was easily agreed, but at Hinde House School in Meadowhall, there were some initial doubts as to whether the school was intending to engage with the C&BE Diploma which resulted in a curtailment of some planned activities.

In all schools we agreed to focus initially on parents as the key influencers of their children's choices. The local schools were asked to select a target group of parents and make personal contact requesting their engagement and explaining the nature of the work. An initial meeting was held with each group of parents, attended by the Head or Deputy from the school, which focused on communication with school on 14-19 choices generally. This initial meeting ensured that parents were relaxed about sharing their views and working with other parents before we progressed to the next stage and considered Diplomas in detail.

The second round of meetings we held involved parents, young people and also new parents who had not attended the original meeting but who had heard about the work and who were interested in participating. At these meetings parents and young people worked together on drawing up questions on Diplomas which they wanted to ask of schools, Universities, employers and careers service staff at stakeholder events. To ensure that all participants had an opportunity to ask their questions, cards were developed for these events, 'DiplomaC', such that all participants could ask questions without being identified as the originator of the question. This worked well as a means of including all attendees.

Together with Sheffield City Council we organised a stakeholder partnership event which brought together parents, young people, schools the specialist provider, employers, the careers service, Sheffield College and Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) pre-admissions and Built Environment Divisions. This was very well attended and a full description of the event is provided in Section Four (7) of this report.

In Sussex, due to the particular logistics of the spring term, it was decided to hold the stakeholder event in the first half of the summer term and a report on this is also provided in the same Section.

Interviews were carried out with careers service staff in both localities and in Sheffield we attended the annual Options Evening at Myers Grove School, which had been designed to a new parents' specification.

As our work progressed in Sheffield, a number of additional opportunities arose to engage with wider groups of stakeholders in the City. We joined a Sheffield Heads' Planning day in the North East Area Improvement Partnership Area which contained seven schools. A personal report was also prepared for the Sheffield Learning for Life Partnership, which includes the LSC, the College and Sheffield Futures, assessing how the work could be scaled up across the City.

A meeting with local employers was facilitated by Plumpton College and in Sheffield employer contacts provided introductions to a number of employer meetings. We attended two meetings with 40 small and large, local and regional employers. A follow up meeting was then convened at their request. A meeting was also held with the company which is building a local school in Sheffield as part of the Building Schools for the Future Programme.

As part of our discussions with the Higher Education sector, meetings were held with Admissions and Faculty staff at Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam, Brighton and Sussex Universities.

As our work concluded in the two localities, interviews were held with a range of key people to ensure we captured local learning and views from a range of perspectives.

## **Section Three: National Picture and Local Context**

The national pack produced by the DCSF was launched at the national Education Business Partnership (EBP) meeting prior to Christmas 2007. The pack includes a DVD, pamphlets and links to websites. The pack is a good one for an initial introduction to Diplomas but because of the publication date, preceded any detail on individual Diploma lines and did not give any indication of what might work well in specific areas.

The dissemination of documents and packs from the DCSF met with mixed reactions. EBPs are not homogenous and have different priorities and management structures, some are wholly independent companies and some are closely allied to the LA. How proactive EBPs have been in disseminating the information supplied to them varies from area to area.

This picture is paralleled when considering what information has been passed on by other key partners – LAs; Sector Skills lead bodies, LSCs and schools/FE/HE. The quality of the support given by these bodies reflects their own commitment to the Diploma and the effectiveness of their dissemination lines. Generally speaking, the amount of information getting through is 'patchy' and where there has been an enthusiastic committed 'champion', knowledge about the Diploma is better.

Materials specifically for parents and employers were still relatively 'thin on the ground' or lacking in detail. Parents phoning a number of FE/HE institutions about the acceptability of the Diploma may meet a lack of knowledge about it. Often the institution is committed to the qualification route at the most senior leadership level but the front line staff have no knowledge of current developments. Parents want a clear answer to the questions 'will your university accept the Diploma?' now. A 'wait and see' approach is not acceptable when parents are supporting their child in making choices today.

Employers reported that although the lead bodies and big organisations in their occupational area have been involved in the development of the Diplomas, the majority of the delivery will be done by Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) who look to the LSCs for their guidance. A number of LSCs have detailed Strategy Plans which indicate their support and commitment to vocational experiences for young people. If the primary role of the LSCs is only to administer contracts, then it is marginalising a very useful function – that of keeping local employers up to date and being involved. The links between LSCs, EBPs and employers may need a boost to ensure the success of the Diploma.

Some employers reported their view that the Sector Skills organisations did not have enough staff to manage their role in distribution. Reliance on information via the web was not always perceived as the best solution and although the sites for the Diploma, including Sector Skills, DCSF, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority) QCA, were thought to be 'all very slick' and link into the various DVD published pack videos, employers said that information needs to be more localised and customised.

Many employers said they could not understand the examination equivalents and the plethora of qualifications and they wanted to be able to understand the 'worth' of the Diploma. Some were concerned that the demands on them to provide work experience will increase. Employers knew their own staff were not au fait with the Diploma but also believed that not all teachers know about Diplomas yet and regarded this with importance given the influence they have on student career paths.

In some areas, where there was a particular interested and proactive party, local customised materials and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are beginning to emerge. A bank of these would support future gateway applicants in developing their own materials.

It was clear that the websites and pamphlets that have been published raise awareness and interest in the Diploma, but did not answer specific questions for employers. It is also apparent that where some external force or local lead group had organised more interactive sessions the confidence of partners, especially employers and parents, increased. The distribution of materials alone is not enough, groups wanted to be genuinely part of the development and to have conversations with each other to ensure the effectiveness and success of the Diploma. As one employer said:

*"We have waited long enough for something like this – we really want to get it right."*

## **The Sheffield Context**

While Sheffield has seen considerable growth in jobs in the City in recent years, including in construction, this has not made up for the very significant job losses in the early 1980's, when a quarter of all jobs were lost.

There has been improvement in attainment levels within the City but from a low base and a high number of young people leave school at 16 with no qualifications and not in education, employment of training (NEETS) levels are at 11%.

Sheffield has one of the highest rates of asylum seekers and economic migrant populations in the country. An indication of the very diverse workforce we witnessed was that notices on some construction sites were in Polish.

Relationships between Sheffield College and the local schools and Local Authority have been somewhat volatile and this may be reflected in the numbers of students recruited to study Diplomas.

Three years ago the 14-19 Partnership Manager in the LA worked with a group of construction employers engaged in the area and they invested significant sums in a Construction Design Centre on the site of Kier Sheffield, which has offered a range of Level 1 provision for 600 young people. After some earlier scepticism, all 27 secondary schools are now involved in developing Diplomas.

Myers Grove School is an average sized, mixed 11-16 secondary school "at the end of the tram line" with a predominantly white population and with 10% of its intake from a range of minority ethnic groups. It has above average numbers of students identified as having Special Educational Needs. Parents are described by the school as having artisan occupations. The school has been recruiting to four Diplomas for a September 2008 start.

Hinde House School is an all-through 3 to 16 school on an estate in one of the most socially and economically disadvantaged North East suburbs of the City, with high levels of unemployment. 75% of students are white, a high proportion of students have been assessed as having behavioural difficulties and nearly 100 pupils are from refugee or asylum seeking families. The school is hosting the Engineering Diploma and the Deputy Head of the school has been very proactive in organising the delivery of Diplomas across the seven Area Improvement Partnerships.

The 14-19 Partnership manager for the LA has been working closely with the curriculum deputies on the development of four diplomas for 2008 and their bid for a further five for 2009 has been successful. Four schools are offering the Construction & Built Environment Diploma in 2008.

## The Sussex Context

Most employers relevant to the E&LB Diploma in the region are micro or small employers. Given this, they will require support in providing work based learning as they do not have the same infrastructure, human and general resource levels available to them as larger organisations. In 2006 there were an estimated 2,412 NEET young people in Sussex representing 6.1% of 16-18 year olds.

The schools where we worked with parents and young people were Ringmer Community College and Oathall Community College. Oathall is a large mixed 11-16 secondary school, which has its own farm that is used both for college and community learning. There is an increasing and above average proportion of students who have been assessed as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities, alongside an above average proportion of students who are high attaining. Ringmer Community College is an average sized, mixed 11-16 secondary school that has specialist technology school status. Around 60% of students travel to college by bus from a dispersed rural area and from towns up to 20 miles away.

Many parents with children at the college themselves work in industries which have relevance to the E&LB Diploma and this generates additional interest in the qualification. The Mid & East Sussex Environmental Land-based Diploma Bid was approved in March 2008 and will be offered to students from September 2009.

The local context did have specific bearing on the attitudes of particular stakeholders which needs to be borne in mind when communications strategies are being devised. In Sheffield most parents considered construction in terms of trades. Construction is currently booming evidenced by the number of cranes on the skyline.

Creating the case that construction offers sustainable employment with professional and managerial positions is still a challenge. There are divides between the areas particularly North and South and these are socio economic divisions, as well as geographic and their secondary education provision is organised differently. The careers service says they adapt their language according to where they are in the City. In Sussex, many parents of children in local schools are themselves employed in industries relevant to the E&LB Diploma and this generates additional interest in and support for this line of learning. Parents and schools alike have raised their concerns about how to manage travel between schools and colleges, particularly where you have young people from different villages and schools traveling together.

We were informed that behaviour management becomes a particular issue, when mixed groups of students travel together and resurrect old family disputes. The other significant contextual issue raised over the E&LB Diploma, was that of cost. Due to the nature of study, students require protective clothing and equipment when engaged in work based activity. Parents and schools both voiced concerns that funding might present a barrier to taking up this particular Diploma.

## Section Four: Stakeholders

### 1. Parents

Recent DCSF research has clearly demonstrated the key role played by parents and carers in young people's career choices at the age of 14. Given that recent Innovation Unit work on 'Communicating with Parents on Choices at 14', produced rapid positive results, we recognised that we should focus on working with parents from the outset in Sheffield and Sussex to understand how best to promote Diplomas.

The default position built up as custom and practice over many years that we have found working with schools around the country is: "We'll bring the parents in and tell them" rather than inviting them in, working with them and seeking their views on the ideal approach.

*"You know you're right. In all my years as head teacher I've never thought to ask them what time would suit them best to come in."* (Head of Myers Grove School).

The most common approach to providing information has been to send out a newsletter or a letter even though most schools would accept that many letters just don't get through to home and that using just one method of communication has limitations.

The schools we worked with were open to new approaches as they recognised that engaging more than the "usual core group" of parents was one of their main challenges. We asked the schools to invite a group of parents to work with us, approaching them face-to-face, by phone, personal letter or email. As well as those parents who were already well engaged with the school, we recommended the group ideally included parents who were support staff as they are likely to live locally, know many of the parents and young people understand the local community and tend to act as bridge between school and community.

We suggested they should try to include a "demanding" or "challenging" parent as we know from experience, many of these parents want to help, although they sometimes become frustrated by the process or the jargon used leading to a language barrier – and where possible a range of parents from different backgrounds. It was a school cleaner and the receptionist together who gave the new Head teacher from Hinde House ideas on reaching less engaged parents.

Having parents with children from different year groups and some from the last year in the feeder primary school brought in different perspectives. Parent governors also acted as a bridge with the governing body. In this context parent governors welcomed a specific representational role.

*“It’s been just what we wanted and we’ve really welcomed having something particularly useful to do here”* (Parent governor shaping the new style Options evening)

Before launching into the great unknown of Diplomas, and before bringing in their students we found holding an initial session with parents on their views of how communication with the school might work better was invaluable. The particular topic we focussed on was how and when they would like information on choices at 14.

The meetings promoted parents’ confidence in putting forward their views and voicing particular concerns about what didn’t work as well as what did. They were delighted that the school actually wanted to hear their views. Having a facilitator who was in no way defensive and totally objective made the sessions work better. The challenging parents were initially very challenging but soon recognised that this was a positive way of getting their views heard.

We suggested the school had only one member of staff, either the deputy or the head came, which was a marked difference from the usual experience. Parents particularly enjoyed working with other parents and learning from each other’s experience and expertise and were reluctant to leave at the end as they had become so engaged.

The sessions provided a good amount of general information on how and when to communicate with parents as well as a core group prepared to work longer term with the school.

*“I’m amazed just how much information I got in an hour and they just talked so honestly about some of their problems and experiences almost as if I wasn’t there.”*  
(Head of Hinde House School)

Parents required a wide range of methods of communication to meet their varying needs.

They wanted information earlier and more gradually, and in easily accessible bite sized chunks.

*“It mustn’t be a Big Bang at year 9. It should be a slow and gradual build up. It’s a marathon not a sprint, and it’s a very important one to try to win”.*

Year 7 parent: *“It needs to be about starting the dialogue with teachers early on”.*

They wanted to learn about Diplomas in an open setting with their children so they could discuss the benefits and downsides with them, and give sound and informed advice.

*“Small group meetings would work best – I wouldn’t want pamphlets. I’d want someone to sit down to speak to.”*

Parents wanted information in an engaging format such as interactive websites, DVDs and live demonstrations. They wanted DVDs that showed a flavour of the career options as well as what it would be like to study them.

The need for early information for parents was echoed at schools in Sussex:

*“The school has a termly bulletin which is potentially a good channel. [We received] a booklet [from the school] that explains all the options – very good for parents but [we need it] earlier, towards the end of Year 8, to have time to think and reflect before decision-making”.*

Some parents were of the view that Diplomas have had limited exposure to date and strengthens their need for reassurance on the value of the qualification:

*“You don’t hear anything about Diplomas. There’s much more about Academies”.*

They liked the idea of watching DVDs with other parents or at home and discussing elements together. They would like the teachers to be well informed, and they would like to be able to use other parents to spread the word.

The current approach in many schools in relation to communicating with parents can lead to what parents described as “a great fog”.

*“I came into the hall and heard a long talk and then we talked to his teacher or whoever they’d decided was free to talk to us and then I realised that was it. They’d really decided what he was going to do and I hadn’t realised it was the options evening.” Parent Year 11*

*“He’s always been dyslexic and I’ve had to struggle to get him help. We were all in the hall together and were told about all the things they could do next year and then everyone’s names went up on the screen and which colour group they were and he was in the purple group and when we got there they said he could just do the building course and I felt really sorry for him.” Parent Year 11*

*“If we were given notice of a week or two then we could rearrange our shifts and take time off to come into school to talk to teachers but it’s not usually possible for me to get in to school just like that.” Parent Year 8*

We asked the parents to ask other parents their views and ideas and then to come back for a further session and bring others if they wanted. The dynamics of the second session were even more productive and interactive.

By reminding them by email or phone, with a text reminder, the school showed it had listened to parents' views. When they appreciated that their feedback had been acted upon, any traces of scepticism disappeared.

Parents arrived with their children or alone far more confident, ready to work together in groups and incorporated newcomers easily. They knew in advance of the planned format of a presentation on Diplomas followed by preparation of questions for a stakeholder event. In Myers Grove they used the opportunity to gain ideas and involvement on a new format for Options evening. The school recognized:

*"It's such a massive change that you've got to have them comfortable before they can react and give you proper feedback".*

The presentation given by schools would have worked better for professionals in education but it was over full of jargon with words like "curriculum" and "Level 2" and "Diploma lines" and needed brokerage for most parents not to resort to default passive mode or the frustration of not understanding.

Faced with the literature there was initial silence as they tried to understand the new offer. When we moved into preparing questions for them to ask schools, employers and FE/HE in the planned stakeholder event, the parents and young people were forthcoming with a wide range of ideas and long lists of questions which gave ample material for the forthcoming events.

Questions in Sheffield and Sussex (see Appendix 3) were generally similar but the language register used was more complex in Sussex and there were some specific differences.

Their questions and concerns were wide ranging but included:

- Equivalence and equal value with GCSEs and A levels  
*"If he's no good at one GCSE he can drop it but are you stuck with a Diploma?" "Do you have to do A levels after a Diploma?"*
- Concern about whether their children were cutting off their options at 14 or if they could change at 16.  
*"Can you start say with construction and then move to engineering or A levels?"*
- Who would deliver the Diplomas and if the teachers were qualified to teach the courses and who would train them
- Entrance requirements and course details: what level would be required for a student to get on the course at school, college and University and how long it would take them to complete it

- A focus on progression: they wanted reassurance that it would have the same merit as other qualifications, that employers were backing the qualification and that Universities would accept it.

*“Do employers know about it?”*

- They wanted to know what it would lead to.

*“We would like an overview of the industry and the type of jobs that would be available at the different levels of qualifications.”*

- The proposed organisation of the delivery of Diplomas: the complete change over existing arrangements was challenging to take in.
- The concept of different schools hosting different Diplomas starting at different stages raised a number of questions over competition, oversubscription and fairness of choice. They were less concerned about travel across Sheffield to a central training location than going to some of the other schools. Young people agreed.

*“I wonder how it is going to work for the pupils to go to another school to study a subject. There’s another problem there. Kids don’t want to do the subject if they don’t want to go to an offsite school”*

- In Sussex parents’ specific concerns included: the logistics of timetabling; travel arrangements and cost; cost of equipment and protective clothing.
- As the first group there was fear of the unknown and that their children would suffer from being the first to take the qualifications.
- The roll out was creating some confusion. What is local and what is national was not clear.

*“Are there Diplomas outside Sheffield?” I thought it was standard across the country but it’s not, is it? Will it be recognised? They spend all the time getting it and then what if it’s not recognised anywhere else? It would be interesting to see if the further away universities would recognise the new qualification even though they are not available yet in all parts of the country.”*

When given the choice of the style of discussion and type of company they would like to speak to, young people wanted larger companies because they are better known on a wider scale and can offer more options and opportunities. Parents also thought that it was important to speak to both large and smaller local companies to see what options were available. Parents agreed that a mixture of both would be the best way to know all the information needed to make the right decision.

Even though parents felt that one to one meetings are a good way to access the employer and ask all the questions they wanted and get an immediate answer, this could seem more like an interview situation and can feel intimidating. They felt in a small group discussion ideas are bounced off each other, and could give parents and young people more inspiration.

Parents wanted face to face discussions with teachers and employers rather than thick glossy generic leaflets and brochures but with information on choices given before the event.

*“I went to an options evening before for my daughter and went there without knowing anything about what the options were. We didn’t have a discussion before hand and I think if we knew information beforehand then that evening would actually mean something.” - Parent Year 9*

The overall format of giving information and allowing parents and young people time to consider together what questions they would want to ask, worked well particularly with parents having had their initial icebreaker.

Parents were at ease in the school with their children and generally young people were happy to work with their parents and other adults. Asking questions in a school environment was relaxed and served as a good preparation for asking the questions of employers and higher education in an open session with other schools.

By asking the parents how Options Evening should work and following through with their ideas, there was an increase of 12% in attendance from last year to this year in Myers Grove. This meant that parents were invited in to the school by letter. Then they were sent some information on the choices. They had a reminder by text. On the evening they were divided into small groups and had presentations and a chance to ask questions on all the choices rather than just going to the ones they knew more about or more gender stereotypical choices. In another school with similar parent driven work there was an increase of 20% attendance.

The parents were really pleased to be involved in the process and appreciated being asked their viewpoints. They were effusive in their thanks throughout even sending in ideas between sessions.

*“It’s just what we wanted. Thanks. We are a bit afraid about these new Diplomas but we’re certainly clear now on what’s on offer” Parent Governor*

The schools recognised the huge change coming in with the new 14-19 framework and that they needed to work with parents –in fact that at this stage it was almost more important to work with parents:

*“We acknowledged that we needed their assistance and that most parents knew very little about Diplomas so we needed their help as to how to go about it and get the message across. We knew parental approval was the right thing but what was special was the way we did it rather than the usual “We’re the professional and you come in and you ask the questions and we’ll give the answers”. This time we asked them the question “Tell us what questions you want to ask and tell us how you’d like the answers”. If we’d gone straight into Diplomas, we’d have gone into too much detail and they’d have been overwhelmed and we’d all have fallen back into the usual mode.*

*This introduction of the Diploma is such a massive change that parents have got to be comfortable to take it all in. What I’ve learned is that with the 14-19 offer we can’t do it in isolation. We have to ask parents how to do it and then follow through with it”*  
Assistant Head Myers Grove.

## 2. Young People

*“We do sometimes have a bit of a haphazard pattern of sending people in to talk to young people” Local Authority*

Young people we spoke to, in February 2008, in Year 8 & 9 were receiving messages about Diplomas mainly from their school and the careers service. A variety of speakers were used across Sheffield by different schools including careers teachers, external careers advisors, or the Year Tutor.

Results were mixed as the quality of delivery was variable and inconsistent. Equally, who the young people in schools related to for option choices was very variable. It could be a careers teacher, it could be the year tutor who moved every year, so the picture was not straightforward and again the quality of briefing was variable.

Providing information to young people in small groups was a common approach followed by a trip to the resource centre for some individual or group research.

Where young people got clear impartial advice about what was available in school and exciting off site options, they were really interested. The careers service in Sheffield felt that the current information on Diplomas was aimed too much at professionals and not sufficiently at young people. More localised information and guidance was needed which they felt they should provide.

Though no role models for Diplomas existed young people had met students attending off-site courses and many of the young people planned to visit an open event for the Construction Design Centre. Young people in Sheffield reassured their parents that cross-city travel was already allowed in the evenings and at weekends.

Though some of them had a picture of the general career they wanted to go in to, they had little idea of which route to follow and some of them were changing their ideas on a weekly basis.

Sheffield had invested in an interactive website U Explore: an innovative multimedia resource that young people could use to gain an insight into the kinds of careers open to them, based on their own preferred learning progression route. It had not been updated to include Diplomas.

Glossy leaflets and a billboard campaign (in Sheffield) raised awareness but blanket coverage, especially in the initial phase, was seen as counter-productive as it raised expectations amongst young people and their parents which the City was not in a position to fulfil. Careers also voiced concerns over promoting some diplomas as there were limited spaces available this year and they wanted to be fair to all students.

Though young people clearly wanted to have their parents' advice, it was widely recognised that a large proportion of messages sent to parents via young people are simply lost particularly when it goes out on a Friday or at the end of term. One session held with parents on a day a newsletter had been sent demonstrated this when only three parents out of 17 had received it. Even though there is a growing use of school websites, the newsletter is still the standard approach for communicating with parents.

In preparing questions for the stakeholder events, most of the young people found it easy to work in groups with their parents and other adults. Some of the Year 8 boys in Sheffield preferred to work with their peers. The questions they prepared to ask were very realistic:

- What the entry requirement for different levels of Diploma would be and what would be the balance between course work, practical work and exams.
- Whether a student could work at their own pace or whether they would need to complete the Diploma within a set timescale.
- How the work placement element would be structured.
- From HEIs, whether courses in the future would be changed, for example would there be a greater emphasis on work placements?
- From employers they included earnings and job opportunities. They were keen to meet people in different jobs.

Most young people said they did not want to ask questions in public as they were afraid of appearing stupid but actually did so on the day of the stakeholder event in Sheffield, using pre-prepared cards. In both areas Year 8 & 9 students varied enormously from highly articulate and confident young people to those who were more at ease with their peer group or who preferred to listen.

We found that in general information being prepared for young people and their parents was covering the broad areas they were interested in.

Given that Diplomas are intended to be inclusive to all students, we found no examples of particular attention being given to planning for students with additional educational or other needs. Our research was not of a sufficiently large scale to demonstrate that this is not happening, but given that we came across no such planning and given the nature of some of the concerns over logistics and transport, we would draw attention to the fact that planning for the needs of all students is realistically likely to involve longer planning timescales.

Young people were keen to use the Internet to find answers to their questions on Diplomas. They also found the DVD which accompanied the DCSF pack *The Diploma, Bringing Your Learning to Life* very useful.

At this early stage of development of Diplomas, young people are also keen to talk to school staff, employers and universities face-to-face to secure answers to their questions and in particular assure themselves that choosing a Diploma now, will not disadvantage them later in their educational career.

One of the schools in Sussex took the following approach to informing young people:

*“...with Year 9s who were coming up for their options, we knew it was confusing for them as they have got different choices to make. So we had an assembly and we went through it all with them and then they fed back that they wanted more of a diagram and visual descriptions about how the options worked and where the [Diplomas] fitted in time-wise inside that...so we went back and did a second assembly and did that and played them the DVD [on the new 6<sup>th</sup> form]... and they really liked that as it answered lots of their questions...and we've given access to that on our website now so parents can access that...”*

*“...The assembly was led by [my] Deputy because they are used to him standing up, because he does the parents' evening...”*

### 3. Schools

The initial challenge of introducing the concept of Diplomas to school leaders was seen by the LA in Sheffield and the Head of the Education Business Partnership in Sussex, as a credibility battle. Staff at all levels were juggling many priorities and Diplomas were low on the agenda in many schools.

For some months in Sheffield a few schools were opting in and out of participation in the programme as concerns over ability to deliver were voiced. By building relationships and holding regular meetings with curriculum deputies, the knowledge base of Diplomas increased, and the LA had allies when engaging with the head teachers. In a city with 27 secondary schools, many 11-16, which work through four Area Improvement Partnerships, AIPs, engaging with curriculum deputies made collaboration more manageable.

Heads discussing Diploma delivery recognised the potential impact and challenge of collaboration with other schools and colleges and of movement of students across Sheffield.

Explorations of the implications of “common delivery” led to creative ideas emerging on reconfiguring the school experience. Elsewhere collaboration may be more of a challenge.

In many instances, schools started out with very little knowledge of the related employment sectors and the structure of industry. So in planning for Diplomas some of them have had a steep learning curve to ensure that local delivery matched local circumstances.

Myers Grove viewed Diplomas as offering the best possible option for years for revamping the curriculum and ensuring the engagement of the group of young people who have been leaving with no qualifications. *“I know I’ve been very brave with the Diplomas agenda. I’ve driven it as a way of transforming what we do and I’m largely prepared to wear the criticism. I’ve decided it’s going to happen and since too many youngsters don’t even have Level 2 qualifications this is our best opportunity. I want to be in a position to see what 2013 looks like. That’s much more helpful for me. Staff in other schools were less proactive in preparing for 2013.”*

Some schools recognised that the old “Options Model” didn’t work in the context of the new 14-19 offer

*“You can’t just stick a February Options event in the calendar and assume the whole thing is going to work.” Sheffield school.*

They understood that they had to develop new ways of supporting choice. This was particularly in the context of reversing prejudice and reducing gender stereotypes. These new approaches were challenging for some staff in school and the careers services in the early stages.

The LA in Sheffield recognised the challenges here but also their role in helping scaling up. *“So I suppose there’s something about learning the lessons of what we have done with an individual school, saying how that might roll out if we’re talking about sort of four or five schools. As I say, there’s some schools that have done all their options now and some of the schools haven’t even started them yet, although I suppose if we were talking to them in say October time and saying we want some coordinated action across these schools there might be a chance to influence the cycle of activity.”* LA Partnership Manager.

Schools recognised that the quality of information, advice and guidance given to young people was variable and that consistency of message and the quality of delivery of that message needed addressing.

Additionally, schools were beginning to appreciate that they could not work with young people in isolation around choices and that the role of parents was crucial.

Their historical practice in respect of relating to parents was less challenging to them as professionals but less productive for parents and they recognised that both their approach and language had to be modified to meet parental aspirations.

However, once schools were engaged with parents and responding to their feedback and developing their ideas, the local partnership model took on a life of its own. Interest in the model being developed in two Sheffield schools grew and was then shared through the Area Improvement Partnerships (AIPs). By March 2008, all secondary schools in Sheffield had signed up to offer Diplomas.

At the revamped Myers Grove School Options Evening, attendance increased by 12% over last year. 30 parents and young people from the school attended the stakeholder partnership event and one-third of its September 2008 Year 9 pupils have signed up for Diplomas.

There was a lack of clarity voiced around who was responsible for leading the liaison with employers and HEI’s and in particular whether this was the responsibility of individual schools or whether it fell to local partnerships.

In Sussex, there was enthusiasm and commitment in schools to delivering Diplomas. The long standing success in delivering NVQs at Oathall Community College, added to the schools’ credibility in delivering Diplomas at Foundation Level, and the well established collaborative arrangements between schools and Plumpton college, the local specialist provider, are strong.

*“What has worked has been the collaboration between schools and colleges. I could see the advantage of getting lots of schools [in the Sussex region] involved and set out to market Diplomas”. School Vocational Manager – Plumpton College*

A history of strongly competitive culture between schools in rural areas was described and it was acknowledged that the introduction of Diplomas will require cultural change to introduce a collaborative way of working between schools.

Geography and transport were perceived as major issues to be resolved in rural areas. Parents had concerns about children travelling to different locations and staff were concerned about behaviour management in circumstances where children from different schools were travelling together.

Concerns were also expressed about the cost of equipment and protective clothing for young people choosing the E&LB Diploma and the fact that this might prove to be a barrier for some schools.

Schools in Sussex highlighted the need to address securing employer engagement; this was closely related to the nature of the industries working in E&LB:

*‘If employer engagement happens it could be phenomenally powerful, exposure to ‘real’ employment at key stage 4 is invaluable, but there are no large employers in the area, all SMEs’*

In both locations a good curriculum developers’ network was seen as being of great value in disseminating consistent messages, supporting collaboration and addressing the logistical issues which were being identified.

Schools in Gateway 2 emphasised the importance of communicating early with stakeholders and making sure that the message is tailored to the target audience.

*“It was very important to involve everyone from the outset and make sure they were all involved “Sussex Head*

In Sheffield, the Local Authority was proving to be a strong initial driving force in bringing the curriculum deputies network together and heads were then developing local collaboration models:

*“There’s another problem with schools in that Diplomas actually are quite threatening for school staff and even the autonomy for the school, because you’re involved in serious collaboration here. So at the very worst case scenario we may be undermining the traditional jobs of the teachers in school who we’re asking to sell the diplomas. So I think that’s really quite a challenging issue.” Local Authority*

#### 4. Employers

In our view, this stakeholder group was the most significantly different between the two localities but also the area where we feel there is the most work to be undertaken to promote a real understanding of the potential of Diplomas and the ways in which employers can be actively engaged.

All of the 40 local and regional construction employers we spoke to had heard of the Diplomas but none of them had seen any of the printed material. One person had read articles in teenage magazines and another in newspapers.

Most of them had picked up general information locally, through colleges or the Local Authority. Two were working with Diploma Development Groups and were therefore more knowledgeable. Both “champions” had been highly proactive with their employer contacts.

*“I don’t think we can underestimate the notion of actually saying ...without employers, the Diplomas are dead basically” Sheffield.*

With large national companies where we knew senior staff had been involved with designing the Diploma we had expected information to have travelled throughout the company. However by mid-February no one we spoke to had picked up information from within their company or professional association or the EBP, the LSC or the Sector Skills Agency. This included Regional staff from CSkills.

There was a significant gap between having heard about the Diploma and appreciating some of the aspects of their delivery. When we questioned some national MDs they said they found LA contacts more helpful in explaining how the local arrangements were working than the national literature. Most employers were broadly keen to engage further but needed better understanding of Diplomas and the local delivery before they could fully explore their commitment. Without sufficient understanding some employers reverted to outdated attitudes and criticisms of education.

They reported that local seminars in employer forums were their preferred medium for engagement in the detail. They liked the idea of discussing the information with other employers and said it made good sense to learn together and to work out some joint solutions to the issues they faced.

When exposed to all the national printed information we had collected, they found it answered some of their questions but there was an agreement that localised information produced by the local partnership would be ideal with a local person to link Diplomas to the industry.

As with other stakeholders, they wanted to see how the Diploma route related to existing qualifications. They wanted to see a map of the equivalence across the 14-19 framework but in a jargon free language.

*“Can you tell me more about how young people will be able to move between different learning choices for example from the Diploma to an Apprenticeship or A levels and then onto Higher Education?”* Construction employer

Their general questions covered concerns over the training given to teachers and their understanding of the industry and whether brighter students would be encouraged to apply. Similarly they questioned whether those in schools and colleges or careers giving advice and guidance to young people would themselves have an up to date understanding of the range of job opportunities on offer in the sector.

In both localities, when given the description of the specialist areas to be covered and examples of functional skills they were gripped and their interest was compelling. They appreciated the relevance

*“I never did find out why I spent all that time on logarithms but I can really see the benefit of calculating seed ratios for planting”* Staff member –  
*Reigate & Banstead Council*

*“I can see how that would be so relevant to construction in Sheffield”*  
*Kier Construction*

Employers saw the opportunity in Diplomas of:

- Shaping a course to make it more relevant to industry.
- Reversing a limited “trades” view of construction.
- A route for young professionals.
- An ability to carry out succession planning.
- Working more closely with schools & developing longer relationships with young people.
- Promoting a better gender balance in the industry.
- Promoting better recruitment and retention.
- Raising the profile of the business with the Local Authority.
- Developing a robust profile with the local community.

Given that some companies are going to be asked for significant regular engagement, large companies stressed the importance of a strong internal business case and needed information to present to their MDs & commercial managers. From reading the literature available they felt there was insufficient on the business case for employer involvement.

The other main barriers to engagement were time and willingness, particularly for small organisations. Where employers were meeting several LAs, comparisons of arrangements and funding produced a negative reaction. This could have related also to a lack of real understanding. This might be avoided if some consortia across a region met to share expertise and approaches.

Companies reported that they are inundated with requests for support.

*“We’re in danger of having more young people on site than staff” Lovells.*

Large companies such as Connaught sometimes had individuals dedicated to education links. They recommended a one-stop-shop for work experience to avoid schools contacting them directly. Local Employer Partnership appointments were being made which were very welcome. It was reported to us that EBPs will need to be strengthened if they are to play a key role in Diploma delivery. They asked that in both the published literature and requests for support they could have clarity of what was expected of them and of young people and good forward planning. This is backed up by the Case Study of good practice shown in Appendix 1V.

Once they were engaged and appreciated the relevance of Diplomas, employers were creative in their ideas for offering support. With senior backing they were keen to participate in partnership stakeholder events and after the Sheffield Hallam event they were even keener to help. They recognised that parents played a key role in decision making and that an employer endorsement would be critical. Many of them were parents.

The Building Schools for the Future (BSF) contractor in Sheffield was fully engaged demonstrating the potential opportunity for other authorities and contractors.

*“It’s not just a job -we want to make a difference in Sheffield, for the next 5 plus years we’re setting up for the long term. We’re here to encourage training in construction. It’s the future. It’s putting something back - because we are involved in schools.” Taylor Woodrow*

Local authorities through their Outline Business Case (OBC) and subsequent Strategic Business Case (SBC) for their BSF submissions are explicit in their expectation of contractors. The requirement is that contractors will work to support both curriculum and school based activities as well as wider community based programmes. The bidding process to select the initial contractors and then the preferred bidder is explicit.

The contractor has to describe in great detail their plans for working with the LA and the Strategic Partnering Board (SPB). They have to build relationships with and work closely with local stakeholders including schools and understand how secondary education and schools can contribute to delivering regeneration in an area. In particular they need to be aware of and understand the different collaborative arrangements between schools in the LA and how they impact on school organisation and school design. They need to be familiar with national and local policy initiatives as they impact on the curriculum, including the 14-19 Agenda.

In one researched Local Authority, the OBC & SBC specify that they want to use BSF investment to enable the delivery of the following over-arching targets for Every Child Matters alongside the teaching & learning and curriculum:

- Further develop plans for 14-19 collaborations in order to widen opportunities for all 14-19 learners.
- Develop a broader 14-19 curriculum, covering academic and vocational courses, to equip our students with the skills they need for further learning and employment.
- Achieve post-16 participation rates of 90%.

Their vision also outlines a number of strategic development areas to ensure the most vulnerable pupils also receive transformation through an inclusive vision:

- Expanding inclusion in mainstream secondary schools.
- Developing the role of special schools to create a continuum of provision which enables the sharing of effective practice and the movement of pupils between mainstream and specialist schools.

Employers understand this case very clearly.

The Employers' group we convened in Sussex had heard of Diplomas through local schools, from Plumpton College and from business colleagues however national information on Diplomas had not filtered down to local level. They reported very limited contact with and knowledge of Lantra (the Sector Skills Council for the environmental and land-based sector).

Unsurprisingly given this was Gateway 2, land based employer exposure to Diplomas had been very limited to date. They were interested and keen to obtain future information on DVD and via websites and newsletters from 'trusted' organisations, e.g. the National Farmers' Union.

We tend to use the term employers in this context quite loosely but small and micro employers, particularly those working on small family farms did not always regard themselves as employers. They were therefore not likely to access information from 'employer' organisations but would be in touch with organisations which would for example assist them in arranging their insurances or help them interpret the impact of new regulations.

Farmers did have young people on work experience but there were barriers including health and safety issues, particularly for the under 18s and staff numbers in small businesses made it more difficult. The level of support available to help them provide work experience and placements was regarded as insufficient given the risk assessment they had to undertake together with insurance arrangements, costs and tuition time. All of this led to loss of earnings. Consideration could be given to provide incentives for these employers to take a more active role.

*"Will the industries have staff to teach students skills and what are the trade costs?"*

Employers recognised that the provision of Diplomas would help address the reduction of skill levels in the horticulture industry, which have arisen as a result of reduction in training

Working directly with employers promoted the most dramatic change in relation to the promotion of Diplomas: the greater their understanding of Diplomas the more creative they became in their involvement. When informed of successful recruitment of a cohort of young people a general discussion moved rapidly into actual planning. The credibility rating soared.

## 5. Universities

This work brought us into contact with a range of staff in universities: front line staff responding to public enquiries; recruitment and admissions staff and those based in faculties.

Admissions and recruitment staff were well informed about Diplomas and received updates from their networks. These included UCAS and the Academic Registrars Council. These staff had also kept abreast of 14-19 circulars, the 14-19 pack and the wider discussion on 14-19 reform, through both internal and external fora.

There was some variation in the view taken by HEIs in respect of individual diplomas in the two localities, Sheffield University were not yet endorsing the Construction and Built Environment and they had reservations about recommending Diplomas rather than 'A' levels to young people.

Sheffield Hallam University on the other hand had been involved in the production of the DCSF DVD; they were backing the Construction and Built Environment Diploma and were in the process of preparing their online statement for Diplomas and their 2010 printed prospectus.

This positive response from SHU was not simply a recruitment drive, the University's Corporate Plan promotes its role in regional regeneration and a significant amount of work has been planned for the Sheffield area.

The Head of the Built Environment Department's knowledge of the Diploma, the Sheffield partnership and local construction employers was limited, but the staff were ready to become engaged and maximise the opportunities which current circumstances offer.

*"There's a lot of taster activities we could do. We've held architecture design days and built bridges. We'd need to think of capacity as there's only a small number of staff. But I do see we could play a role. I'd be interested in a dialogue. If we were teaching we'd need to think about the different costs and rate of pay."*

*"We regularly hold events and courses for CIOB (Chartered Institute of Building) and other employers. We could encourage them to talk to young people about their jobs and what's open to young people". Head of Built Environment*

The education departments of universities in both areas have played a major role in training and updating local teachers and they actively partner local schools. This is a key role at a time when the issue of training of new and existing teachers to deliver Diploma courses is of active interest.

Aim Higher and the outreach programme were perceived as having playing a key local role in attracting local students to universities in Sheffield. In Sussex, students who had attended courses at Plumpton College and who then went on to local universities were much more likely to be local than other students admitted to the universities.

HE could be encouraged to ensure their endorsement is clear at initial enquiry stage. Parents phoning a number of FE/HE institutions about the acceptability of the Diploma might meet a lack of knowledge about the qualification. Often the institution might be committed to the qualification route at the most senior leadership level or at head of division but the front line office staff have no knowledge of the developments or say they are waiting for instruction from the head of department. Parents want to know 'will your university accept the Diploma?' now – a 'wait and see' approach is not acceptable when planning a pathway for their child today.

SHU and universities in Sussex would welcome playing an active part in developing and delivering Diplomas. They did however also mention that they are seeking reassurance that academic integrity and rigour has been built in to the new courses. They also mentioned that it is important that Diplomas are accepted as a qualification of equal standing to 'A' levels and that national leadership on this point would be welcomed.

No difficulties were foreseen in the introduction and acceptance of Diplomas and Sussex University will include a statement welcoming them in the Prospectus for 2009. More details will be posted on faculty websites as the information on individual Diploma lines is developed and the relevance to individual university courses is clarified.

In Sussex, an annual plenary is held with local Heads of Sixth Form and career advisers, and this was considered to be an important forum for discussion as Diplomas are rolled out. One question raised was the extent to which courses in HEIs with a very academic focus, will attract students who have chosen a Diploma route? In discussions in Sussex it was mentioned that local Learning Networks had been a key source of information on Diplomas for some HEI staff.

Staff would welcome some nationally provided tailored information for HE.

*An information pack about Diplomas would be essential for Admissions Tutors. The quality of this information is vital covering assessment, quality of delivery, role of industry and for the C&BE the details on the Maths modules*

Sheffield University Recruitment for Department of Computer Science and Construction

In developing their communication strategy, Sector Skills Councils could ensure that the support of influential professional associations such as the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors is relayed both to employers and sector specific university departments which would maximise their efforts at a stroke.

Staff in universities did have some unresolved questions and concerns, these were articulated as follows:

- The need to ensure the right level of engagement from the academic community is achieved.
- Concern that the qualification might be perceived as a 'diluted' A level, that the subject matter is fully covered and that functional skills are at least as rigorous as 'A' level. It was felt that a national steer here would be very useful.
- Is there a particular target group of learners for Diplomas and if so can this be articulated?
- If Diplomas rely for their success on employer engagement 'it will not work'. There is always a problem with finding good quality placements for students.
- Current funding regimes support competition between 'partner' colleges in HE and FE. Therefore we need significant change to achieve the level of collaboration required.

Representatives from HE in both localities were well informed and actively engaged with the development of Diplomas, although one university was also sufficiently concerned about the rigour of content not to want to endorse Diplomas at this stage.

HE endorsement is critical at this stage:

*"That we managed to get Hallam engaged is really important as a model for all our Diplomas. Having Hallam hosting an event and saying they'll take students with Diplomas and give them a world class education raised parents' aspirations just like that"* Assistant Head Sheffield.

HE will play a key role in answering the questions and concerns of young people, parents and employers and could play an active role in local partnerships as Diplomas develop.

## 6. The Champion

Our experiences of working in two very different regions and contexts demonstrated that the role of the Champion at local level was critical to the successful introduction of Diplomas.

In Sheffield the 14-19 Partnership Manager was the overall Champion and though he had appointed consultants to work on the introduction of two Diploma areas he had retained the role for Engineering and C&BE.

In Sussex the Champion was the School Vocational Course Manager for Plumpton College who had also been central to the production of the E&LB bid.

In both localities it was key that the Champion had an in depth understanding of the industries relevant to the bid and a trusted and respected role in delivery of learning in this field. The Champions also had strong links with a range of organisations locally, not least the schools who will be delivering Diplomas and local colleges.

In Sussex, the Champion's links with employers were also longstanding and were built upon the successful placement of students who were 'work ready' and therefore able to make a contribution to the employers' businesses. This is an important consideration in an area consisting of high levels of micro and small employers where business margins are tight and any down time constitutes a loss to the business.

The Mid & East Sussex bid has now been approved and there will be a requirement for the local Champion to fulfil an expanded range of tasks as has been the case in Sheffield. These tasks are identified below. This will require a re-assessment of roles to ensure that the delivery of the Diplomas is assigned sufficient resources to ensure that delivery can be successful given the complexities of a rural context.

Apart from having a thorough understanding of Diplomas at all levels and the structure of the particular industry with an understanding of local needs and concerns matched by a good appreciation of educational and employment trends, the Champion needed to be skilled in relationship and other management skills to:

- Act as a change agent and introduce Diplomas to a diverse stakeholder group while learning about them at the same time.
- Handle scepticism from some head teachers and develop other school champions.
- Deal with several employers and sector specialists from the same industry with sensitivity.
- Report to senior managers in the LA or partnership.

- Contribute to overall strategic planning on the delivery of Diplomas which could mean decisions on which institutions were best suited to initial delivery.
- Interpret national policy locally.
- Serve as the local contact point for national promotional materials.
- Respond to enquiries from neighbouring authorities or other partnerships.
- Take responsibility for quality assurance.
- Deliver presentations on Diplomas in a way which drives the messages forward and engages with all stakeholders at events, recognising particular local challenges.
- Get the right message across at the right time as options exercises in schools are not synchronised.
- Manage the expectations of young people and their parents raised by both local and national promotional material when not all options are locally available.
- Achieve local credibility with key stakeholders particularly schools and employers.

*“And essentially it’s about a modest investment in every sector to create that champion who is probably outward-facing. They don’t necessarily need to be an educational professional, although I suppose it does help, you know, someone like me has come from working across schools, universities and colleges, and in the last five years I’ve had some experience of working across industry. But equally it could be somebody who’s very comfortable working across industry who can acquire those skills of working across those educational sectors.”*

Champions were enormously overstretched particularly in this first phase while they were submitting bids and planning local delivery and they themselves needed support.

*“ I think in an ideal role they (DCSF) need to basically fund the whole partnership, and within that partnership there are going to be two or three significant people who will be driving the range of the diplomas and interpreting national policy locally. “*

*“[I’d say to others...] make sure you have a strong liaison with schools and you are flexible or you won’t achieve a high rate of success. Give them lots of ways/avenues that they can connect with you, relating to the way they work. Just lots of liaison”.*

However, they required support from those with a local understanding and a shared agenda, not simply a checklist approach of someone “parachuted in”.

*“Each EBP provided financial support to put the bid together – [this funded] a consultant for 2 days per week. She knows the area and provides rigour. She also made contact with all the organisations we were partnering with. Without that support, it would have been hard.”*

*“It’s quite time consuming and it requires a certain sort of level of skill and a certain person to be able to talk to employers and engage them, although I think the encouraging thing is once you can start in that engagement it does look in some Diploma lines that you’re pushing on an open door.. There’s a challenge about how many employers you can talk to at any one point in time.”*

Partnerships need to consider how many champions are needed to design and deliver Diplomas and the level of resources which this will require:

*“I think the magic wand to accelerate what we’re doing would be to have the resource to employ two or three people that we’d know we’d have for two or three years that would be working sectors. From the Council all we get is £x, so that every year that funding is at risk. So in terms of continuity of employment of the expertise that we’ve got it’s a bit of a challenge.”*

It is important to recognise that the Champion, particularly at Local Authority level, can play a key role in scaling up from lessons learned across a number of schools and Gateways. They are also the people planning for the next five years.

*“Well hopefully by next year instead of – well, not only will we be having to do four diplomas well, so they’ve got to be really first class on the ground, and I know there’s still things that we need to do to make that happen, but also then there’s another six diplomas that we will actually be promoting out into the system. And I think in a way once you’re promoting ten I suspect actually you’re promoting a lot there. So it is, I think it’s hard for us to estimate actually the expansion of activity that we’re going to face by actually having to do more diplomas, and we are starting to see a bit of a shift. There’s one head teacher in the city that was totally against Diplomas and all of a sudden he’s cracked. He’s more or less said they’re not going to go away, they are going to happen and I want to work with you. So if we’ve got more employers, more schools who are wanting to work with us that’s going to make increasing demands which we can’t quite anticipate but obviously incrementally we want to try and accommodate them. “14-19 Partnership Manager, Sheffield.*

## 7. Stakeholder Partnership Events

*Sheffield Hallam University February 28 2008*

*“It was a great evening and certainly an important event for us bringing so many local parents and young people into the University , many for the first time and I was really impressed by the number of people who came. I learned a lot more about the Diplomas and recognised some of the opportunities we could give to young people on the course. ” SHU Head of Built Environment*

*“What really changed was that parents suddenly had a new understanding and awareness of what construction meant. They moved from thinking plumbers to architects so we raised aspirations and awareness and at that stage it’s almost more important to get the parents to understand that than the young people.”Assistant Head, Myers Grove School*

This event formed the culmination of the work with stakeholders, bringing parents young people, schools, employers, careers, further and Higher Education together publically to work in partnership so each of the stakeholder groups could articulate questions and listen to responses in real time in the same location.

The concept arose as part of discussions between The Innovation Unit’s consultant and Sheffield Council as we shared at the outset what we were both trying to achieve, but was stimulated by earlier work done by The Innovation Unit on Communicating with Parents on choices at 14. Parents asked for the opportunity of face to face dialogue on the range of opportunities open to young people in various industries.

The choice of holding the event in the local University was critical:

- Their endorsement was made explicit.
- Parents and young people at 14 could visit the University.
- Aspirations could be raised immediately.
- As a central city location it is highly accessible.
- It made the most positive statement about the future of Diplomas in Sheffield.

The timing was chosen to fit in between options evenings and academic review. Young people and their parents were initially made aware of the full choice range in their schools and this event was planned to give an in depth undiluted appreciation

of one of the Diplomas prior to their making a choice at the academic review session.

Purpose (as stated):

- To make sure everyone works in partnership to explore the potential opportunities of the new Construction and Built Environment Diplomas so young people make the right career choices at 14 and beyond.
- With support from Sheffield City Council and The Innovation Unit, working on behalf of DCSF, Construction Employers, Higher Education, schools, Sheffield Futures, Sheffield College, parents and young people, to work together to resolve questions raised by the launch of the Construction and Built Environment Diploma
- To develop a local partnership model that can be used across Sheffield and further afield to promote the potential offered by all the new Diplomas.

Intended Outcomes (as stated):

- Parents and young people have a fuller understanding of the different levels of Diplomas and the routes into employment and higher education.
- The role of employers, Higher Education, schools and college in the delivery of Diplomas is clearer for all partners.
- All partners are clearer on the range of jobs open to young people who have completed Diplomas at different levels.
- Parents and young people have had an opportunity of asking the questions about the Diplomas and have gained enough information to make informed choices.
- The value of the local partnership model is demonstrated and partners are clear on where improvements need to be made.

## **Invitations**

The 14-19 Partnership Manager asked SHU to provide a room for the event, invited employers, Sheffield Construction Design Centre and Sheffield Futures (careers). Parents and young people were invited through the school directly, their Options Evenings or through attending the parents' and young people's sessions at Myers Grove and Hinde House. After our briefing session, SHU organised attendance from a number of their staff, both admissions and Faculty. Sheffield College initially declined but turned up on the day. One employer who planned to bring two members of staff from different parts of the company as "role models" had to drop out on the day from work commitments.

On the actual day all the schools expected a low turnout. We optimistically prepared for 50 but with an expectation of between 20 and 30.

## **Prior to the event**

Given the speed with which this event had to be organised, preparation was not always face to face. Without The Innovation Unit consultant at this stage resources would have been highly stretched. Briefings were prepared for the University and employers and schools which included the questions parents wanted to ask. Some of the employers meet regularly and had met The Innovation Unit consultant in employers' meetings but others didn't know each other. Whilst the schools all knew each other none of them knew the HE representatives. The 14-19 partnership manager knew the majority of people but certainly not all. The parents and young people who had been working with the two schools as part of the parental communication sessions were clearer on what to expect but the groups hadn't met each other. We printed their questions onto cards giving a feel of a "DiplomaC" game. Many of the parents and young people were not coming prepared for the event.

## **The Event**

The Head of Built Environment at SHU welcomed 117 participants to an "International University and a major Built Environment Department", outlined the purpose of the event and introduced the groups who were there and the programme. The 14-19 Partnership Manager from Sheffield LA gave an overview of Diplomas in the Sheffield context. The group split into two breakout sessions with two schools' Curriculum Deputies per group plus their parents and young people, four employers, two HEI representatives, Sheffield Careers, Sheffield College, and Sheffield Construction Design Centre.

One group was facilitated by the LA and the other by The Innovation Unit consultant. Question cards were passed round so those who wanted, or were prepared to ask them, could do so. Other questions and discussions followed naturally. Parents and young people who had questions to ask but didn't want to ask them in public used post-its and gave their school or address so responses could be sent on later.

There was insufficient time to address all the questions. Individuals remained behind for some unplanned one-to-one discussions with employers. A list of the questions is attached at Appendix 3.

## **Outcomes**

Having all the stakeholders together was one of the main reasons for the success. Everyone could listen to and learn from each others' questions and answers and the dialogue was enriched by answers from different stakeholders.

Printing the pre-prepared questions on cards made the session run smoothly without the usual inhibitions and allowed the employers and HE a little time for preparation.

The event attracted considerable numbers of parents and young people, mainly Year 8, from different social classes and ethnic backgrounds. In visiting SHU for the first time, parents recognised that their children might be able to attend a University with an international reputation. They had direct contact with a range of employers and learned of the breadth of opportunities open to young people progressing from Diplomas including professional or managerial roles. They could compare the relative merits of going to employment directly after school or after university.

Even though many of the key stakeholders had not met each other prior to the event, this was not evident to parents and young people. Bringing parents and young people from different schools together made everyone realise that this will be a coordinated cross-city provision. The role of various partners in planning and delivering the Diploma was explicit.

## **Feedback**

*"I think it worked really well. There was a buzz throughout. It is early and it is a new qualification and we are all under a lot of pressure but we all fielded the questions and I certainly think we gave them plenty to think about .Everyone was very engaged and asking appropriate questions. The right people were there and we all pitched in together. This was important as there is no one person with all the answers. It was definitely very positive in raising the profile of Diplomas and this will multiply"* Head of Pre Enrolment Operations Admissions SHU

*"It was a great evening and certainly an important event for us bringing so many local parents and young people into the University , many for the first time and I was really impressed by the number of people who came. I learned a lot more about the Diplomas and recognised some of the opportunities we could give to young people on the course. One can see the potential when you have local employers, school representatives, school pupils and the University networking together in taking the discussions forward. I'd be happy to do the same event again."*

Head of the Built Environment Division

According to one of the schools, some parents were put off attending because the event was held in the University. The numbers attending did not reflect this view however.

We recognised that some visual material on the industry would have been absolutely right and this was reinforced by one parent who found the presentation was “too jargony” *“The lads didn’t know what he was on about. I thought we’d be seeing DVDs on a day in the life of an architect or a surveyor.”*

Parents and young people had not realised that different diplomas were on offer in some schools and not in others in September 2008 and this provoked some resentment from a couple of parents.

Myers Grove School said *“It was a real success and the turnout was significant. The way we managed to get Hallam engaged as a model is important if you’re going to engage Level 2 students. Just going to Hallam and have Hallam hosting it in their building and saying we’ll take Diploma students and give them a world class education raises the aspirations of parents. A number of those parents would never have been in there and it was an inspirational input that set the scene for all the Diplomas. It was a real opportunity for us to all get together. We are all in this together and we’re going to make it work”.*

The careers representative found the format worked really well particularly as it took place just before many Year 9s were booked into some individual interviews with the careers adviser.

*“A couple I observed had attended at the University and found it useful. Individual guidance for both these clients afterwards, supported them to make decisions on which subjects they were prepared to give up to do the Diploma.*

*The content and currency of the qualification wasn’t particularly the issue for them as they liked what they saw. It re-affirmed in my mind that good presentation and information coupled with individual guidance on ‘what it means for them’ helps them choose a curriculum they will enjoy and stick with.”*

The employers were really pleased how well the event worked. They recognised the value of having a number of them there representing different types of company. The training and Development manager from Kier Sheffield said Kier were delighted to be involved with parents and students to introduce the new Construction Diploma.

*“We are looking forward to providing valuable work experience opportunities for learners hoping to embark on a career in construction.”*

*“It was great. Please let me know should you require any further support of the qualification as I would be delighted to help.” Senior HR Adviser Henry Boot*

*“It was very successful and nice to go back to everyone at Lovells and tell them it was a worthwhile exercise. I could see it gave young people and their parents more of an understanding of what we do. It was nice that there were some females there too”*

The Local Authority who has been working on this partnership development from the outset was understandably pleased with the turnout and results.

*“It wasn’t just a good event on the night but it’s been the ripple effect round the City. Suddenly people are talking about Diplomas in a way they hadn’t beforehand and we’ve got some viable groups. It shows it can be done”.*

One parent with a child in Year 8 who had formed part of the core group from the outset said:

*“I can’t thank you enough for organising this event. Just having the University and the employers and the schools together in the same room gave me all the information I need. I now feel really confident about talking it all through with my daughter and getting her sorted for next year. ”*

*“He’d been saying something to us about construction but we weren’t too sure. To be honest we’d been in a bit of a fog beforehand and didn’t really understand what’s what but we’ve got all we need to know tonight and we’re clear now and we’ve spoken to the employers afterwards as well so we’re going to talk it through at home but I think he’ll be doing it. Thank you very much”*

*“I’d not been too keen on him doing it as I thought he shouldn’t close his options off that quickly and should go down a more academic route but when you hear an internationally famous university say they are backing it and you listen to what the employers are saying I’ve changed my mind and said go for it”*

Plumpton College May 20<sup>th</sup> 2008

The stakeholder event held in Sussex was held at Plumpton College shortly after the bid for the Environmental and Land-Based Diploma had been agreed. The session

followed the same format as the Sheffield meeting where following an information session on Diplomas in general and the Environmental and Land-Based Diploma in detail, participants worked in groups to consider questions which had been formulated by parents and young people. The groups provided answers where possible and discussed and identified the further information they required.

Participants at the event included representatives from the careers service; employers; further and higher education and the local authority.

Given the timescale for the implementation of this Diploma, September 2009, the knowledge levels of exactly how the qualification will work in practice were not as advanced as in Sheffield and this opportunity to develop understanding and discuss relationships across different institutions proved very valuable.

Participants were able to expand their networks and meet the people with whom they will be collaborating as planning for this Diploma develops. The links between opportunities for work experience for young people and the progression routes from school to further and higher education through to employment were explored in some detail. The critical importance of the provision of consistent information, advice and guidance to students as they approach choices at 14 and beyond were also highlighted.

Employers gained an understanding of the role they could play in supporting the Diploma and the long term benefits the qualification will bring in respect of the close alignment between courses of study and employment opportunities.

At the conclusion of the event it was clear that sessions which can clarify questions from careers, employers, FE and HE in a way which also develops relationships and establishes strong networks, will be critical to the successful introduction of Diplomas as we move forward.

## Section Five: Messages for local Partnerships

It is clearly challenging to produce messages for all local consortia when it would be more preferable to tailor messages to groups at particular stages of their development into real partnerships working in clear collaboration. We have however been able to analyse some of the critical factors which support or hinder progress.

1. Be clear on who is acting as the local champion(s) (as described in Stakeholders Section 6) and make sure that person is well resourced and supported. We saw that champions were crucial and so well respected that they were being drawn in too many directions and in danger of being overstretched. Most of them already had substantive roles before the advent of Diplomas. They were making great progress, but with appropriate resourcing and support there would be accelerated progress and without it unrealistic expectations could be placed on one person.

*“I don’t have a Department at the college so I have to work with the Departmental Heads. [From these] I have created a small team of 2-3 people”.*  
*Sussex Champion*

2. Consider how many champions you need to support the design and delivery of Diplomas. If the champion is someone with in depth knowledge of a sector with good industry contacts and you are going to be delivering 17 Diplomas then some forward planning to identify these people is necessary.
3. For many schools Diplomas might have been a low priority that needs now to be accelerated up the agenda. How schools work together may need some serious consideration. The move towards collaboration can be threatening for the very people who need to be giving out clear consistent messages. It can also be creative. Consortia arrangements on student travel from one site to another can demonstrate forward thinking or confusion. Similarly messages on progression from Diplomas can reinforce stereotypes or promote forward thinking. For parents and young people in these first cohorts this is a key time for the reputation of Diplomas in your area.

*“What has worked has been the collaboration between schools and colleges. I could see the advantage of getting lots of schools [in the Sussex region] involved and set out to market diplomas.”*

4. Be clear about who is leading employer and HE liaison and make sure all partners know how this is happening. As partners become more aware of the importance of employer engagement there is a danger of a lack of coordination and some employers being inundated with requests for support.

*“We’ve not used national publicity – Diplomas have been built on the back of previous work on Increased Flexibility. Plumpton was the co-coordinator for the whole region over the last 5-6 years. We produced local brochures common across all colleges together.”*

5. In considering your available resources, think about how you are using your regional coordinator. This is someone with the latest information and with a dynamic fast developing policy like Diplomas you really need your information to be current and you need to be able to benchmark where you are in relation to other consortia.
6. Since students travel across borough boundaries and many employers work across Local Authorities is there merit in meeting others in the region designing the delivery of the same Diploma, particularly where you have employers in common who may already be meeting together? The efforts in collaboration outweigh the tensions and the regional coordinator can play a role here. Creating a culture of collaboration across the area is an essential enabler in rural areas.
7. Do not assume anyone has heard of Diplomas. Even if key stakeholders have heard of them do not assume they understand the detail. Apart from parents and young people we found many people had heard of them but their actual knowledge was very superficial and that made them somewhat defensive when questioned.
8. Start communicating early.
9. It is worth investing the time in a jargon free core localised presentation for non educational professionals which can be tailored for particular groups and used and regularly updated by all partners. There are a number of excellent examples emerging. This will mean that everyone in the area is getting a consistency of message about what is available in their area and how the national picture is being translated locally. We found parents, employers and HE willing to spend time commenting on literature to ensure it met their particular needs.

10. Employers are interested in the detail of diplomas particularly the specialised units and functional skills. We found that once presentations had gone beyond the overall structure and employers been introduced to how functional skills related to their sector their attitudes changed. As they appreciated the relevance of Diplomas to their individual work they became far more committed and engaged and creative in how they wanted to be involved.
11. Holding sessions with employer groups allows them to develop FAQs for use within their own organisation and produces a central bank for each sector. It also allows you to keep your own information current. Encouraging employers to use their own professional networks and employer forums means they might introduce creative thinking into what they provide for local young people.
12. Fostering some additional interaction between employers and HE can be very beneficial. Most HE departments will generally have a number of industrial contacts as employers engage in their own continuous professional development. This can enlarge the number of contacts available to speak to young people.
13. Working out a strategy with schools to reach parents not only this year but over the next few years will be a good investment. Encourage schools to drip feed information on the whole 14-19 range to parents from the time their children move into secondary school. More concentrated work on Diplomas can be done later.
14. Sessions with parents are beneficial with children from Year 7 and 8, asking them how and when they would like information on choices at 14. Parents with young people from different year groups and backgrounds enjoy working together and exchanging ideas.
15. After parents have been given details of the national picture and what is happening locally, holding a session to prepare questions allows parents and young people time to consider what is important to them. Hold a central bank of questions which can be used and updated.
16. Recognise that local employers or HE staff may also be parents or governors in local schools and that will make them far more willing to give up their time.
17. Different employers have different ways of interpreting their corporate social responsibility role as well as succession planning. The local HE Corporate plan may also have sections on the role the University wants to play in your area.

18. Asking the local University or College to host a stakeholder event bringing parents and young people from a number of schools to ask questions directly to employers and HE can be hugely successful if well prepared. Timing is key. A stakeholder event which brings together employers, the career service and further and higher education can provide impetus to developing local networks and gaining a common understanding of Diplomas and how they will be implemented.
19. Check front line staff in each of the partner organisations have sufficient information and are well briefed, to enable them to respond to enquiries from parents and young people.
20. Make sure the LA is connecting Diplomas with BSF, economic and business development and regeneration plans. This will ensure good integration with local plans and send positive messages to local industry and encourage better investment and better returns.

*“This thing about collaboration and partnerships, you have to work at it, it doesn’t come instantly. And you can’t magic that from people who don’t know the patch, who don’t know the landscape, who don’t know the territory”.* Sheffield champion

## Section Six: Messages for DCSF

1. From our work it was quite clear that national information, whether printed or web based, had been useful in raising awareness but since all the key stakeholders wanted to ask more detailed questions, face-to-face contact at this stage worked better. Having the opportunity of exploring the details was important particularly in developing early champions around the country. As stakeholders learned more about Diplomas they became more confident and positive.
2. Once they had picked up the national general information, all stakeholders wanted localised information particularly in these early stages. National templates for local adaptation would be helpful for general consistency and branding as well as for efficient use of resources.
3. The local context has a key bearing on the perception of particular Diplomas. Where a significant number of parents are locally employed in a sector such as land based industries they are inevitably more positive about the development of a Diploma in that area. The job opportunities in construction can be perceived more as limited to trades positions if that is where the focus of a city-wide training project has been to date and that is what many parents are familiar with from their own experience.
4. Local champions are key, particularly in coordinating submissions and driving the changes through. At local level they are stretched and feel resourcing is less than for other such policy changes. Their enthusiasm and commitment is having a positive effect in getting information through to key stakeholders but work on Diplomas could be accelerated if at this stage further resources could be allocated to support local promotion.
5. Trying to get engagement in Diplomas when the concept is aspirational is challenging, particularly before consortia hear the results of their bids. It is much easier to plan with the confidence of a successful bid and confirmed start date.
6. Parents play a key role in supporting their children in choices at 14 and many of them struggle to know how to help. New approaches are needed for informing and engaging them particularly given the extended choice at 14.
7. Schools could be encouraged to rethink their strategy on communicating with parents and work with them to find the best way of equipping parents in their schools with information on choices at 14 including Diplomas. The timing of literature coming out for parents needs to be much earlier to give them an opportunity to consider the different routes.

8. The most regular concerns from parents were over young people reducing career options at 14; whether employers and universities were backing Diplomas as well as equivalence with GCSEs and A levels. The issue of progression can be tackled at local level with local employers and HE backing can be done at every level.
9. Consistency of messages and quality of advice particularly from Connexions and school careers staff needs to be addressed if young people are to be impartially advised. Many school staff are not familiar with the structure of all industrial sectors and will be on a steep learning curve if they are to continue this role.
10. Urban collaboration is easier logistically but some schools will find the concept challenging and threatening of their own ethos and identity and would benefit from some models of creative thinking. This whole process of choice of host institution and collaboration will need sensitive handling at local level and cannot be divorced from BSF and local plans.
11. Diplomas are seen by some forward looking schools as a new menu which might be attractive to those who leave with few qualifications, whilst others are watching to see what will emerge.
12. We came across no planning for students with additional educational or other needs and given the nature of some of the concerns over logistics and transport, we would draw attention to the fact that planning for the needs of all students is realistically likely to involve longer planning timescales.
13. Employers can be key in broadening awareness of the potential of a Diploma in terms of progression and the range of jobs within companies. Much more work is needed to get them truly engaged and creative in their support.
14. National employers may have been part of designing Diplomas but information is not systematically flowing through companies. Information on the business case for MDs needs to be addressed. Some employers are relying on their local contacts to explain how Diplomas will operate at local level.
15. There is a significant difference in reaching different types of companies. Small companies such as family run farms do not always view themselves as “employers”. Small employers will not necessarily access information through traditional employer routes They will access organisations that help support their business on a day to day basis such as the National Farmers Union.
16. The links between LSCs, EBPs and employers may need a boost to ensure the success of the Diploma. Professional associations were better respected. Professional bodies can also influence university departmental heads.

17. Once they appreciate the detail of what is to be delivered and how it will operate in their area, employer groups want to be genuinely part of the development and want to have conversations with each other to ensure the effectiveness and success of the Diploma. There are new opportunities beyond the traditional work experience. However, in areas where micro and small employers are in the majority the impact of this on access to work experience and project work will need to be considered.
18. BSF offers a major opportunity for employers to be engaged with a wide range of Diplomas. Local Authorities need to be encouraged to exploit this opportunity and case studies exist already.
19. Partnerships would welcome a cross regional group where consortia developing a particular Diploma could share their expertise particularly where employers work across the area. This could be helpful in the early years whilst the number of Local Authorities in a region delivering particular lines is limited.
20. Local universities can play a key role in raising aspirations and encouraging sign up to Diplomas. Their backing is important now and not just at vice chancellor level. Faculties linked to the first Diploma lines need to be engaged and universities need to be encouraged to get messages through to front line staff: Parents want to know 'will your university accept the Diploma?' now rather than waiting for internal discussions to take place. HEIs would welcome general national information for their admissions tutors which they could locally adapt.
21. Education departments in universities have credibility and can reach significant numbers of teachers both in the teacher training route and in continuous professional development.
22. It is worth considering how Authorities are structuring themselves and allocating resources to plan and deliver 17 Diploma lines. Authorities were questioning if the resourcing was comparable to other major educational reforms.
23. There would be a danger if funding for promotion went to schools rather than consortia. A partnership needs to be funded to plan and deliver consortia events in collaboration.

24. Three stages of promotion worked really well for parents and young people:
  - a. First, an options evening at School introducing the complete range on offer and advertising the stakeholder event
  - b. Second, a stakeholder event at a university or HEI with all other collaborating schools focussing purely on Diplomas and not diluting the message
  - c. Third, an academic review event at school and individual decision time
25. The collaborative stakeholder event worked well for all stakeholders but needs good preparation and planning. Parents and young people will travel if the timing is right. Employers will attend if the business case is made.
26. All stakeholders are key and can't be viewed in isolation from each other. Some faculty staff have professional sector membership and are governors. Employers can be parents.
27. The local approach is of paramount importance.

## Section Seven: Scaling Up

One of the real advantages of the phased introduction of Diplomas is that scaling up can be managed in a phased way. Though national conferences were initially useful to raise awareness, we consider that from everything we have learned that events and resources should be focussed mainly at local level, with a limited amount at regional level. All the stakeholders, even the national and regional players wanted to appreciate the local picture and understand how Diplomas are going to work in their area. Having tested a model approach to promoting Diplomas in two localities and consulted with stakeholders elsewhere we recommend that scaling up consists of a number of stages agreed at consortia level:

1. From the outset the partnership needs to agree on the strategy for collaborative promotion to its stakeholders; who is the local “champion” to work with employers and particular sectors; that is going to lead on HE links and areas where schools will work on their own and areas for collaborative action.
2. The extent to which partnerships scale up across an LA area or region needs to be decided at local level by the consortium. Depending on the distance to be travelled and the number of schools involved initially events might work better at cluster or Area Improvement Partnership level with schools who are going to collaborate rather than across the entire LA. Obviously decisions need to be made in the second year as more schools are involved over what makes logistical sense. Similarly in rural areas if centralised provision is likely to draw from cross boundary there may be merits in looking at a sub regional approach.
3. LA led partnerships might suggest one school who is “hosting” a Diploma acts as the lead for others in a cluster group. Sheffield is considering one lead school for each of its AIPs and they will coordinate the main promotional events across all the Diplomas in their area. Currently this is manageable and achievable but may need reconsideration as the numbers grow. They envisage that by the time there are 14 Diplomas Sheffield wide, they will have 14 larger events.
4. Scaling up can be achieved more easily with consistency of messages across the area relating national to local. An agreed, core, jargon free presentation of “What is a Diploma” and how it will be locally delivered could be produced which can have adaptations for particular stakeholders. A national or regional template for local adaptation would be helpful—particularly with cross LA boundary provision.

5. It is worth the investment of identifying or training a group of facilitators to work with a group of schools for a defined period. It is so important that the initial roll out of Diploma works effectively in a locality so positive messages are created and sustained quickly rather than spending a longer time trying to retrieve a negative or cynical situation.
6. If work starts at school level on a session on how parents would like communication on choices at 14, with a core group from Years 7, 8 and 9, even including some parents with children in Year 6 from feeder schools, then there will be potentially a core of engaged parents for some years who can act as “advisors” for the communication strategy.
7. From information gained from parents schools can reconsider:
  - The flow of information both in electronic form and hard copy.
  - How and when they run information sessions on the whole 14-19 framework.
  - Options evenings for choices at Year 9 and Year 11.
8. Sessions are then needed specifically on Diplomas (so as not to dilute the messages and information) with parents and young people to develop questions they may have on Diplomas for schools, employers and HE. Even though we might know the questions parents and young people are asking generally, holding local sessions will tease out local concerns and allow local parents to pass on messages and collect views “at the school gate” or from local networks. The questions are stored in a central bank with briefings for stakeholders.
9. A similar parallel process needs to be carried out with employers. The champion will understand how they are grouped locally and where they meet. After an initial introduction many employer or sector groups or professional associations will welcome the opportunity of a presentation and time to develop FAQs for their own use or use in their Company. It is the same situation that even though we know their general questions, a group of employers who will be relating to a particular group of schools offering a specific Diploma will most likely want to invest initial time working together to produce a more co-ordinated approach.

10. Inviting the local HE institution or Specialist FHE provider to host an event for parents, young people, schools and employers will accelerate the promotion of Diplomas across an area. This would be a stakeholder event rather than a recruitment event. For the first year it could be a launch. Different models could work with one large or a series of smaller events relating to different Diplomas. Although the size of the overall event may vary, parents and young people do prefer working in smaller groups. This event needs to be thought out from the outset in the communications strategy. Summer of Year 8 or autumn term of Year 9 is ideal but parents and young people from both years will benefit.
11. After specific Diploma events, parents and young people still need to come back to schools to work through their choices and this allows time for evaluating the approach used and checking through for consistency of message. Assuming the event has worked well, positive messages will be being passed on and reinforced by all stakeholders.
12. There is some merit in holding some regional events for consortia to share approaches across a region where for example parents, employers and head teacher and HEI representatives would agree to work with consortia on producing materials or where these have already been produced, to validate them. Facilitators could be drawn from a region and practice shared.

Champions, head teachers, consortia leads from Gateway 1 would benefit from coming together for updating sessions and sharing expertise particularly over the next 12 months. Bringing Gateway 1 and Gateway 2 together could save duplicating errors and produce faster results

13. Ask the initial champions how best to share the learning.

Christine Megson & Julie Fitzgerald

With support from Linda Prince, Caroline Whalley, Alex Whalley & Cheryl Cooper

## **Section Eight: Appendices**

### **Appendix One: People Interviewed**

#### **National**

- Delyth Chambers DCSF Adviser HE relations
- Matthew Chiles Sector Skills agency
- Andrew Mabey CSkills
- Gareth Conyard – 14-19 Policy and Local Delivery

#### **Sheffield**

- Nick Duggan - 14-19 Partnership Manager Sheffield City Council
- Tony Tweedy - Learning for Life Manager Sheffield City Council
- John Wilkinson -Myers Grove - Headteacher
- Gary Simmons - 14-19 Coordinator Myers Grove
- Christine Wilson - HR Training & Development Kier Sheffield
- John Bolam- South Yorkshire Construction Group
- Louise Nunn - Sheffield Decent Homes
- Henry Hoy - Sheffield College
- Chris French-Principal Hinde House School
- Bo Robshaw –Careers co-coordinator Hinde House School
- Mark Sinclair – Curriculum Deputy Hinde House School
- Mo Laycock- Headteacher Firth Park School Sheffield
- Peter Westland –Head of Built Environment Sheffield Hallam University
- Paul Dickenson - ITT - Sheffield Hallam University
- Alison Firth - Pre Admissions Sheffield Hallam
- Jeff Peace - Senior Site Manager Taylor Woodrow
- Nicola Didlock - Business Development Manager Sheffield Futures
- Karen Allan- Sheffield Futures IAG team lead for construction
- Nawaz Khan - EBP and Business Education
- Jon Needham - LSC Partnership Manager
- Liz Watson - Y & H Regional adviser

## **Sussex**

- Maurice Shorten – Vice Principal Plumpton College
- Julie Dougill- 14-19 Development Manager West Sussex
- Kathy Stonier – Head Ringmer Community College
- Jill Wilson – Head Oathall Community School
- Helen Gabrielides – Deputy Head Oathall Community College
- Dick Brown – Deputy Head - Robertsbridge Community School
- Jill Thomas – Causeway School Eastbourne
- Simon Bishop – Manager Ivy Farm Netherfield
- Steve Waite– Deputy Head of School PABS University of Brighton
- Rob Evans – Head of Admissions University of Sussex
- Wendy Gorham - E Sussex careers/EBP
- Julie Bolwell – E Sussex careers
- Melisa Lucas - LSC Partnership manager

NB We have not included all the employers (nearly 50), curriculum deputies, parents and young people.

## Appendix Two: Meetings Attended

### Promoting Diplomas: Timetable of Key Meetings and Events

| Date                      | Event  | Place                        | Details   |
|---------------------------|--|------------------------------|---|
| 29 <sup>th</sup> November | Parents' meeting   | Myers Grove                  | Meeting on communication on Choices at 14 CM                    |
| 21 January                | Meeting with Taylor Woodrow                                  | Newfield School Sheffield    | 1:1 interview CM  |
| 21 January                | Parents and young people                                     | Myers Grove School Sheffield | Preparation of Questions for employers and HE CM                |
| 23 January                | Board Meeting of British Council for School Environments     | London Bridge                | Discussion of employers' views CW                               |
| 31 January                | Parents' meeting   | Hinde House School Sheffield | Initial meeting on communication on choices at 14 CM            |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> February  | Appreciating the role of HEIs and the HE engagement strategy |                              | Telephone discussion with Delyth Chambers CM                    |
| 7 February                | Meeting with Sheffield University                            | Sheffield University         | Meeting with Sue Armstrong Recruiter :Faculty of Engineering CM |
| 7 February                | Sheffield Decent Homes Workforce Development                 | Castlemarket Sheffield       | Item on agenda :CM  |
| 7 February                | The role of Education Depts in HEIs                          | Sheffield Hallam University  | Interview with Paul Dickinson CM                                |
| 7 February                | The role of Connexions                                       | Myers Grove School           | Discussion with Team Leader Sheffield Futures CM                |
| 7 February                | Year 9 Options Evening with employers                        | Myers Grove School           | CM attended   |
| 11 February               | Meeting with Head of the Built Environment                   | Sheffield Hallam University  | Interview with Pete Westland CM                                 |

|                           |   |                                       |   |
|---------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| 19 <sup>th</sup> February | Investigating the role of sector skills                         |                                       | Meeting Matthew Chiles  |
| 21 February               | South Yorkshire Construction Group                              | Meadowhall                            | Item on agenda :CM  |
| 21 February               | Parents and young people  | Hinde House School Sheffield          | Preparation of Questions for employers and HE CM                    |
| 27 <sup>th</sup> February | Appreciating the role of the Regional Adviser                   | London                                | Meeting with Liz Walton CM  |
| 28 <sup>th</sup> February | NW AIP Heads and Deputies All day Diploma Planning session      | EEF Sheffield                         | Invitation to join Heads' meeting CM                                |
| 28 <sup>th</sup> February | Event with employers HE Careers Parents and young people 6-8.00 | Sheffield Hallam University           | Stakeholder partnership event CM                                    |
| 29 <sup>th</sup> February | Sheffield Learning for Life Partnership                         | Sheffield Town Hall                   | Includes Council, Careers, FE, Work Based Learning providers CM     |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> March     | Interview with Lisa Firth Sheffield Hallam Admissions Team      | Telephone interview                   | Feedback on event plus general communication on diplomas            |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> March     | Beacon Awards 14-19 team  | Horticulture Exhibition Centre        | Sheffield gained award  |
| 13 <sup>th</sup> March    | Discussion with Andrew Mabey CSkills                            | Telephone interview                   | Gaining appreciation of their PR & Marketing Plans                  |
| 17 <sup>th</sup> March    | Evaluation Meeting with Assistant Head Myers Grove School       | Myers Grove                           | Meeting to evaluate model of working                                |
| 20 <sup>th</sup> March    | Workshop for Sheffield construction Employers                   | St Mary's conference Centre Sheffield | Diploma details. Developing a pack for internal company usage CM CW |
| 6 <sup>th</sup> February  | Parents' meeting  | Ringmer Community College             | Initial meeting on communication on Diplomas. JF                    |

|                           |   |                                      |  |
|---------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| 8 <sup>th</sup> February  | Meeting with D. Brown Deputy Head Robertsbridge Community College                                   | Robertsbridge Community College      | Meeting to discuss logistics/transport from East Sussex perspective. JF                |
| 8 <sup>th</sup> February  | Meeting with Simon Bishop, Head of Centre, Ivyland Farm, Netherfield. Satellite provision Plumpton. | Ivyland Farm, Netherfield            | Providers' perspective of promotion, East Sussex perspective. JF                       |
| 11 <sup>th</sup> February | Parents' meeting  | Oathall Community college, Lindfield | Initial meeting on communication on Diplomas. JF                                       |
| 18 <sup>th</sup> February | Meeting with Gareth Conyard   | DCSF, Caxton House                   | Meeting to discuss 'Delivering in Rural Areas' and synergy with Diplomas promotion. JF |
| 21 <sup>st</sup> February | Meeting with Prof. Waite, University of Brighton  | University of Brighton               | The role of HEIs. JF   |
| 26 <sup>th</sup> February | Meeting with Parents and young people   | Ringmer Community College            | Preparation of questions for HE and employers. JF                                      |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> March     | Meeting with Parents and young people   | Oathall Community College            | Preparation of questions for HE and employers. JF                                      |
| 18 <sup>th</sup> March    | Event with employers  | Plumpton College                     | The requirements and role of employers. JF   |
| 31 <sup>st</sup> March    | Careers service/Connexions  | Telephone                            | The role and requirements of careers service/Connexions. JF                            |
| 20 <sup>th</sup> May      | Event with parents, providers, HE and employers   | Plumpton College                     | Stakeholder Partnership event JF CM  |

Notes:

- CM - Christine Megson
- JF - Julie Fitzgerald
- CW - Caroline Whalley (Chair of BCSE)

NB We have only included key meetings here. Many others took place with our champions, schools and others

## **Appendix Three: Questions from Parents and Young People**

### **Questions for the Diploma Partnership Events Sheffield Hallam February 28<sup>th</sup> 2008 Plumpton College May 20<sup>th</sup> 2008**

#### **General Questions**

- G1. What is a Diploma? What's different about a Diploma from other qualifications?
- G2. Where does this diploma sit? Is it a GCSE? Or an A level?
- G3. What functional skills will our children learn and develop?
- G4. How does it differ from modern apprenticeships?
- G5. Which children would a diploma suit?
- G6. How long will it be in favour? Is it possible that in 10 years time it will be phased out and no longer recognised?

#### **Questions for Schools**

- S1. What is the process at school to gain entry into a diploma programme?
- S2. If a child wants a subject that is not available at their school, will they have the opportunity to access the subject elsewhere?
- S3. How will Diplomas work- will they take over all other subjects, - how much do students have to give up, in terms of other subjects of interest?
- S4. Who will deliver the course and what training do they have?
- S5. How will logistical arrangements work? As there are concerns about travelling during the day eating into time available for classes.
- S6. If your child decides that they're going to follow the Creative and Media diploma at 14, does that close off their options after that? I.e. can they change at 16 and start Construction then?
- S7 Is there an exam or test at the end of the Diploma course? Or will it be coursework driven?

## **Questions for Employers**

E1. Will these Diplomas be accepted by employers? Have you signed up to them?

Why?

E2. What jobs would you be able to offer to a student who has completed a Diploma?

What kind of earnings would someone expect?

E3. How would they compare in your eyes to other qualifications?

E4. What sort of jobs can you do at different ages?

E5. What functional skills which are relevant to work would students develop through study of a diploma?

E6. What's a day in the life like for different people in the industry?

E7 Will young people get provided with equipment? Will they provide their own? What are the costs?

## **Questions for Universities**

U1. Are Diplomas going to be accepted by your university?

U2. What courses can you follow if you get a Construction and Built Environment Diploma?

U3. Will it be clear how many UCAS credit points Diplomas amount to?

U4. What entrance level would you need to get on a course?

U5. Will the courses be just full time or do you go to study while you're at work?

U6. Who's training people to teach Diplomas?

## Questions from Parents and Young People Ringmer and Oathall Community Colleges

### ***Questions you would like to ask schools:***

What is the diploma?

How will the practical aspects of the diploma work, for example travelling to different locations, fit with other subjects timetabling etc.

What will the costs be for parents?

How many other subjects will there be room for? Still need to do core subjects plus diploma?

Will young people be able to study multiple Diploma subjects?

How is the diploma going to be staffed/ resourced?

How will teachers deal with the introduction of Diplomas?

Will there be a specific member of teaching staff at the school responsible for Diplomas?

What points will the diploma have/ be awarded? Do points make prizes?

What other topics are available? Other than Environmental & Land Based Studies?

Are there limits in terms of numbers? How will children be selected?

What are the entrance requirements?

Will the diploma be labelled 'for not very clever' children and dismissed or undervalued. All down to marketing initially.

What is involved in terms of % of time spent, e.g. Coursework, practical, homework, classroom, outside.

Can children change their mind once it has started if it does not suit?

Is the Diploma equivalent to GCSE level, is it an alternative qualification?

How do you achieve the Diploma – coursework, exams, practical work?

What subjects are included under the Diploma?

How will students travel between different sites? Who will pay the cost?

How often will students have to travel to another college/ site?

Could students go on to take 'A' levels?

How does the Diploma differ from an NVQ?

Is the Diploma compulsory for students? Do you need a minimum number of students to take the Diploma to meet funding levels?

Is there an existing GCSE/' A' level in Environmental & Land-based studies?

How is the diploma assessed? What would happen if one were to be failed?

Will the Diploma narrow future choice if young people want to change career direction?

Will the introduction of the diploma affect the number of GCSE's available at present?

How will colleges be funded?

Are teachers being trained now, in advance of the Diplomas commencing? Will additional teachers be employed?

Why is the Diploma being introduced?

How long will Diplomas take to be completed? Can students work at their own pace?

How will the work –placement element be structured?

How easy would it be to change back to mainstream subjects at A-level? Conversely how easy will it be to begin a Diploma at Yr 12?

What % of students are expected to take this up?

After GCSE's can you then do a Diploma at Yr 12, at GCSE level?

Will Diplomas be age or ability based?

How will these specialised Diplomas be made available? For example will Kent be the nearest catering diploma – will it be a Diploma lottery- you can only do the ones in the area you like?

What subjects will be available in West Sussex and where?

What % of students will be eligible and at what level?

Is the Diploma a practical or academic qualification?

How long will Diplomas be trialled for? How long into the future will they be relevant?

Is the Diploma achieved in one subject or a group of subjects together?

Will one language still be compulsory if it is not relevant to a Diploma?

What is the Diploma trying to achieve? What is lacking from the current structure and curriculum?

Where does the Diploma sit – in between NVQ and degree?

What are the end results/grades on the completion of a Diploma?

When do students need to make a decision to join a Diploma program?

How much time will students have to consider options, when choosing Diploma/ GCSE's/ A levels/ NVQ?

Who will choose the level of Diploma a student will take? (Levels 1, 2, 3)

How difficult will a Diploma be?

Is a Diploma one single qualification for a group of subjects or is it identified as separate modules? With separate results for each?

If a student takes a Diploma does that stop them from taking any other subjects at GCSE level (other than core subjects)?

What's the difference between a Diploma in IT and a GCSE in IT?

Questions you would like to ask the career service:

How is the government & career service going to market the Diploma?

How can the Diploma help the children make a career choice? What advice/ information will they receive?

How does taking a Diploma affect future jobs?

Are the Diplomas nationally recognised by employers/ colleges?

Who is driving the Diploma scheme? Government? Employers? Education Service?

What is lacking in the NVQ – need for this qualification?

***Questions you would like to ask employers:***

Why would employers value this qualification?

How will employers value the work experience gained by students?

Will the work experience be organised on a rolling programme?

How do you ensure a pupil gets their chosen work placement?

Will Diplomas be of use to employers?

How involved are employers in this process?

Is there information going to employers about the benefits of their participation in Diplomas?

Is there an incentive for employers to participate in Diplomas?

How much consultation has there been with employers?

How much information have employers been given?

***Questions you would like to ask universities:***

Will universities recognise/ value the Diploma as a quality qualification? As good or better than GCSE's & A levels.

Are universities planning on changing some of their courses to accommodate new Diplomas e.g. More work experience? What's the route/ journey choices for students – concern about the natural flow through the education system?

How will universities understand the advantages of a Diploma?

How will universities view entrance levels with regard to Diploma results/ grades compared with GCSE results?

How many points (UCAS) will a Diploma give you?

How are universities being involved in this process?

## Appendix Four: Employer Best Practice:

### Supporting 14-19 year olds in the Construction & Built Environment Diploma

This case study is taken from a variety of sources and aims to pull together in one place the very best of existing employer practice.

Companies wishing to support new Diplomas through work based learning, will need to weigh up their own needs and requirements in relation to their company policies and approaches. Large employers are likely to have the capacity to undertake most of the activities that are described in the case study, medium and small employers will need to prioritise the activities which will create most impact.

The supporting networks needed to offer up- dates as the diploma matures.

- Sector skills lead for constructors
- local business network of constructors,
- the local learning skills council,
- the business partnership or alliance
- local Construction Diploma Delivery Partnerships
- the local authority & their 14-19 Team
- youth & connexion services

recognizing that the confidence in the employer / school/college relationship should grow over time.

| <b>Activity for the Constructor</b>  | <b>Best Practice needed from the Constructor</b>  |
|--|---|
| <p>Why do we want to offer a work related learning (WRL) programme and support new Diplomas?</p> <p><b>BENEFITS</b><br/>Long term staff recruitment and workforce planning in a declining skills context</p> | <p>Recruitment and retention of new staff and attracting apprentices and long term workforce planning</p> <p>Skill development for existing staff</p> <p>Influencing the world of education and training specifically in relation to numeracy, literacy and work related language</p> <p>Raise profile of the business with the wider education community and local authority</p> <p>Developing a robust profile with the local community</p> |
| <p>Information gathering</p> <p><b>BENEFITS</b><br/>The employer makes decisions on their</p>  | <p>Contact your</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• local business network of constructors,</li> <li>• the local learning skills council,</li> <li>• the business partnership or alliance</li> <li>• the local authority</li> </ul> <p>to gain local management information on</p>   |

| <b>Activity for the Constructor</b>  | <b>Best Practice needed from the Constructor</b>  |
|--|---|
| <p>offer based on full knowledge of the area.<br/>The learner will get the best match between their needs and employer offer</p>   | <p>construction &amp; built environment and partnerships and consortia in the area.</p> <p>Rationale<br/>To relate your offer to the needs of the consortia.<br/>To give a sustainable relationship with a well matched student</p>   |
| <p>Where do we start?</p> <p><b>BENEFITS</b><br/>Every employee will understand what their company is doing and how they can support the Diploma students in their WRL</p> <p>Local council and communities will recognize that the employer is fully engaged in the local community and has a social responsibility approach.</p> | <p>Develop a 14-19 Work Related Learning (WRL) Statement clearly stating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why you want to offer a WRL programme?</li> <li>• Is there a target age group for your company?</li> <li>• What you can offer?</li> <li>• How WRL will be managed?</li> <li>• What training and development will be given to your staff to prepare for WRL?</li> <li>• How will your plans fit into the local consortia and community policies for - social cohesion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- local employment</li> <li>- regeneration</li> <li>- equal opportunity</li> <li>- excluded groups</li> <li>- long term unemployed</li> <li>- NEETs</li> <li>- BAME groups</li> <li>- Environmental concerns</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Commit to whole business “buy - in” of the WRL statement, which should relate to existing company policy e.g.: liP</p> <p>Rationale<br/>The statement will provide a framework through which your business can establish a ‘business led’ relationship between consortia secondary schools and the work related learning element of the new ‘employer led’ Diplomas</p> |
| <p>Join a local planning group which is working on the development and delivery of diplomas</p> <p><b>BENEFITS</b><br/>Not being left out of the fast moving area of WRL which relates</p>   | <p>Keep staff up to date on all diploma WRL activities.<br/>Keep up dated on new developments and engage their company.</p>   |

| <b>Activity for the Constructor</b> | <b>Best Practice needed from the Constructor</b>   |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| to future employment planning       |  |
| What can we realistically offer?    | <p>Analyse your available resource and allocate realistic employee time to develop and support WRL</p> <p>Select from a menu of activities which build relationships between companies and schools</p> <p>For Employers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employer as ambassador/co- producer of the WRL, employer visits schools and shares expertise in Diploma classroom talks &amp; assemblies and supports the leadership team planning for WRL.</li> <li>• Employer as advocate for the industry. Employer is available for career support, option evening, diploma inputs at assemblies etc and occupational fairs</li> </ul> <p>For students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible work placements programme supported by a work place mentor and assessor. This can include a 2 week block work experience or a programme which covers a longer period of time e.g.: 1 day a week for 6 months. Activities will include work shadowing, information gathering &amp; undertaking real work.</li> <li>• Tailored project briefs that map against the curriculum, to fulfil the requirement of the diploma which has to be “rooted in the real world” e.g.: students design a classroom or learning area for Drama. The employer assesses the feasibility of each piece of work.</li> <li>• Master classes, specific knowledge around the particular area of construction or built environment that will enhance student knowledge e.g.: brick lying patterns</li> <li>• Simulated and real interview practice. Preparation for real world interviews in their chosen professional construction field.</li> <li>• Competitions, Business games &amp; Business simulations. Employers input here to set the brief for the business game, and/or give technical information and/or act as mentor to a business group as they play.</li> </ul> |

| <b>Activity for the Constructor</b>                                 | <b>Best Practice needed from the Constructor</b>  |
|---|---|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Real work based problem solving activities. The employer sets a real problem for the students to solve.</li> <li>• Mini enterprise, an opportunity for students to gain skills of business development and produce an output of some description.</li> <li>• Role play exercises, an opportunity to work in a risk free environment whilst still learning construction skills e.g.: project management role</li> </ul> <p>For Teaching/Lecturing staff ( schools, HE, FE)<br/>Provision of up to date company information to support class based work with a real life focus.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning resources – online,</li> <li>• CDs, DVDs, game simulations,</li> <li>• computer models,</li> <li>• case studies, specialist equipment</li> <li>• marketing materials</li> </ul> <p>Global industry conversations and video conferencing to innovate at curriculum level and identify future trends</p> <p>Teacher/Lecturer placements/secondments which can be for a day or longer where the Teacher/Lecturer is immersed in the industry and gains a full and realistic picture of the construction and built environment industry.<br/>Teacher involvement in an employer team to problem solve or develop a project</p> |
| <p>How will the new Diploma be managed in my business?</p>          | <p>Identify a lead person with a clear role, remit and job description who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has full knowledge of diploma requirements and can be a strong interface and negotiator as the diploma evolves</li> <li>• Can ensure that the employers business develops and supports a high quality diploma programme.</li> <li>• provides full continuity between the school and the company</li> </ul>   |
| <p>What training and development will my company staff require?</p> | <p>Have a full knowledge of the place of the diploma what it will do and its dependence on an excellent WRL programme<br/>Health and safety needs in relation to the WRL students<br/>How to manage construction staff expectations of 14-19 year olds and their limitations in a new environment</p>   |

| <b>Activity for the Constructor</b> | <b>Best Practice needed from the Constructor</b>   |
|-------------------------------------|--|
|                                     | <p>How to manage the expectations of enthusiastic young people who will want to fully engage and yet not have the skills and experience.</p> <p>Understand how to motivate, work effectively with young people. Use a variety of strategies and activities linked to the diploma programme to engage them and help them to learn</p> <p>Develop effective mentoring and coaching skills</p> <p>Utilise the expertise of the schools and colleges in effective learning styles for students and adapt activities to reflect these.</p> <p>Assessment skills</p> <p>Work related learning and the law at local, and national level</p> |

## Appendix Five: Bibliography:

Audit Commission (Comptroller and Auditor General). 2007. Report: Partnering for success, preparing to deliver the 14-19 education reforms in England. London. HMSO/Audit Commission)

Cambridge Education Ltd. 2006. Leeds Review of 14-19 Provision. Cambridge. Cambridge Education

Haringey Council. 2008. Student Pathways. Haringey. Haringey Council.

Rand Corporation/Comptroller and Auditor General. 2007. Implementation of new curriculum arrangements for 14-19 year olds. Cambridge. Rand Corporation/Audit Commission)

South East Region LSC. 2006/7. Action for Inclusion The South East Learning and Skills Council's Strategy for Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities, Learning and Labour Market Region Profile. Brighton. South East Region LSC

South East Region LSC. 2006. Kent and Medway Sector Study Series –No. 3: Construction Second Edition. Brighton. Kent and Medway LSC

South East Region LSC. 2006/7. Learning and Labour Market Region Profile. Brighton. South East Region LSC

South East Region LSC. 2007. Regional Commissioning Plan 2008-09. Fareham. South East Region LSC

South East Region LSC. 2007. Regional Statement of Priorities. Fareham. South East Region LSC

South East Region LSC. 2007. Strategic Analysis of the South East: Summary Paper. Fareham. South East Region LSC

South East Region LSC. 2007. Sussex Annual Plan 2007-08. Fareham. South East Region LSC

South East Region LSC. 2007. Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training South East. Fareham. South East Region LSC/ESF

University of Warwick. 2007. Preliminary research into the Withdrawal of Young People from Learning in West Yorkshire. Bradford. CEI/ University of Warwick

Yorkshire and the Humber LSC. 2006. Accelerating Change: Inspiring People to Learn – Capital Investment Priorities 2006-2016). Bradford. Yorkshire and Humber LSC

Yorkshire and the Humber LSC. 2007. Achieving results 2006/07. Bradford. Yorkshire and Humber LSC

Yorkshire and the Humber LSC. 2007. Delivering Learning and Skills 2007. Bradford. Yorkshire and Humber LSC

Yorkshire and the Humber LSC. 2006. Key Facts in Learning 2006/07. Bradford. Yorkshire and Humber LSC

Yorkshire and the Humber LSC/National Bureau for Students with Disabilities. 2006. Provision for Students with learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities 16-25 across West Yorkshire. Bradford. Yorkshire and Humber LSC

Yorkshire and the Humber LSC. 2007. Sector Qualifications. Bradford. Yorkshire and Humber LSC

Yorkshire and the Humber LSC. 2007. Regional Implementation Plan for Learning for Living and Work. Bradford. Yorkshire and Humber LSC

Yorkshire and the Humber LSC. 2006. Regional Strategic Analysis for Yorkshire and the Humber. Bradford. Yorkshire and Humber LSC

Yorkshire and the Humber LSC. 2007. South Yorkshire Annual Plan 2007/08. Bradford. Yorkshire and Humber LSC

Yorkshire and the Humber LSC. 2007. Steps To Success - Your guide to learning options in Yorkshire and the Humber 2007/08. Bradford. Yorkshire and Humber LSC

### **Web based Information:**

BBC. 2004. 14-19 Education reform: and iCAN briefing. BBC Action Network /iCAN. London. [www.bbc.co.uk/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/) - search for diploma

BBC. 2008. Diploma success 'to end A Levels' BBC News Online. London. [www.bbc.co.uk/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/) - search for diploma

BBC. 2008. Diplomas – what will they mean for you? BBC News Online. London. [www.bbc.co.uk/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/) - search for diploma

Business Link. 2008. Practical Advice for Business. London. [www.businesslink.gov.uk/](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/) - search for diploma

Campbell E. 2008. Radical Shift in Education. BBC News Online. Croydon. [bbcnews.co.uk/london](http://bbcnews.co.uk/london)

Connexions Service. 2003. Research Brief No: CNX 01 Tackling NEETs. Connexions National Evaluation and Research Strategy. York. [www.connexions.gov.uk](http://www.connexions.gov.uk)

Directgov. 2008. The Diploma. London. [www.direct.gov.uk/en/index](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/index) - search for Diploma

DCSF.2007. The Diploma Key Messages CD. London. [www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19)

DCSF. 2007. The Diploma in Construction and the Built Environment. London. DCSF-00733-2007. [www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19)

DCSF. 2007. The Diploma in Creative and Media. London. DCSF-00736-2007. [www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19)

DCSF. 2007. The Diploma in Engineering. London. DCSF-00737-2007. [www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19)

DCSF. 2007. The Diploma in Information Technology. London. DCSF-00738-2007. [www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19)

DCSF. 2007. The Diploma in Society, Health and Development. London. DCSF-00740-2007. [www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19)

DCSF. 2007. The Diploma: What Parents Need to Know. London. DCSF-00731-2007. [www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19)

DCSF. 2007. The Diploma: Young Person's guide - Year 9. London. DCSF-00727-2007. [www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19)

DCSF. 2007. The Diploma: Young Person's guide - Year 11. London. DCSF-00729-2007. [www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19)

Edge. 2008. Raising the Status of Vocational training. London. [www.edge.co.uk](http://www.edge.co.uk)

Lantra.2008. Diploma in Environmental and Land-based Studies. Coventry. [www.lantra.co.uk /young-people-and-parents/education/England](http://www.lantra.co.uk/young-people-and-parents/education/England)

LSC. 2008. Parental Knowledge. London. [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)

Myers Grove School. 2007. Myers Grove Newsletter November 2007. Sheffield. [www.myersgrove.sheffield.sch.uk](http://www.myersgrove.sheffield.sch.uk)

National Education Business Partnership. 2008. The Diploma – Top 10 FAQs. London. [www.nebpn.org/](http://www.nebpn.org/)

National Statistics UK Online. 2008. Sheffield: Census 2001. NOMIS Official labour market statistics. Labour Market Profile Sheffield. London. [nomisweb.co.uk/](http://nomisweb.co.uk/)

QCA. 2008. Diploma. London. [www.qca.org.uk/diploma](http://www.qca.org.uk/diploma)

Sector Skills Councils. 2007. Innovative new Diplomas can help global skills race. SSCA. Coventry. [www.ssda.org.uk](http://www.ssda.org.uk) – search for Diploma

Sheffield City Council. 2007. Transfer to Secondary School 2007/2008 Guide and Online Application. Sheffield. [www.sheffield.gov.uk](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk)

#### **Other:**

BBC. 2007. Diploma to replace A level?(video). BBC News Online. London. [www.bbc.co.uk/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/) search for diploma

BBC. 2008. Plans for extended Diplomas (video). BBC News Online. London. [www.bbc.co.uk/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/) search for diploma

BBC. 2008. The Surgery – your world – work and future (interactive site). BBC Surgery. London. [www.bbc.co.uk/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/) - search for diploma

College of North East London (CONEL). 2008. Diploma Development Group Notes/Minutes. Tottenham. Directorate of 14-19 Construction and Built Environment (CBE)

DCSF. 2007. 14-19 Communications Planner (Excel Spreadsheet). London. DCSF

DCSF. 2007. 14-19 Communications Events Milestone Plan (PowerPoint Presentation). London. DCSF

DCSF. 2007. The Diploma (Poster DCSF-00741-2007). London. DCSF

DCSF. 2007. The Diploma Key Messages (Information/CD Toolkit DCSF-00724-2007). London. DCSF

DCSF. 2007. The Diploma Schools and Connexions Pack (Information Leaflets DCSF-00720-2007). London. DCSF

Lantra.2008.Connect (eNewsletter Spring). Coventry. Lantra

LSC. 2007. LSC Unveils New Campaign to Improve Skills (Press Release). Coventry. LSC

Salford Connexions. 2007. Choices at 14 (PowerPoint Presentation). Salford. Salford Connexions.

Sheffield 0-19+ Partnership Board. 2005. Draft Connexions Development Plan 2006 (meeting Notes). Sheffield. Sheffield City Council

Sheffield 14-19 Learning for Life. 2006. Council Minutes (Report to Scrutiny Board). Sheffield. Sheffield City Council

Yorkshire and the Humber LSC.2006. Review of 14-19 Provision in Leeds – A consultation paper from the LSC in West Yorkshire (Consultation Paper). Leeds. Yorkshire and Humber LSC

Yorkshire Forward. 2007. Yorkshire and Humber in Brief November 2007 (6 monthly Briefing for MPs produced for the Yorkshire and Humber MPs by Yorkshire Forward's Chief Economist Unit based on Acxiom Research Opinion Poll). Bradford. Yorkshire Forward

**You can download this publication from The Innovation Unit's website:  
[www.innovation-unit.co.uk](http://www.innovation-unit.co.uk).**

**© The Innovation Unit (2008)**

**Extracts from this document may be reproduced for non-commercial or training purposes on the condition that the source is acknowledged.**