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**Report to:** Employment and Skills Panel

**Date:** 2 March 2018

**Subject:** **T Level Consultation**

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## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update panel members on the West Yorkshire Combined Authority's response to the Government's consultation on the implementation of T levels.

## **2 Information**

### **Consultation Background**

- 2.1 The Department for Education's consultation on the implementation of T levels closed on the 8 February 2018. The Combined Authority has responded, this response was shared with partner councils and with panel members for comment and clearance. The Combined Authority's response focuses on the high level principles behind T levels, whether the policy intention behind them will help to address local labour market needs and skills shortages. Technical questions on the design and practical delivery of the qualifications are best answered by the further education (FE) colleges within the region.
- 2.2 T levels are being developed as a result of commitments made in the Post-16 Skills Plan, which was a response to the Independent Panel on Technical Education (the widely quoted Sainsbury Report).
- 2.3 T levels are a classroom based technical study programme, available alongside apprenticeships, to form the technical education offer (A levels and Applied General Qualifications form the academic offer). They are designed to support entry to skilled employment in technical occupations at level 3 and above. T levels and apprenticeships will be based on the same set of employer designed standards. Students who complete T levels will be able to move into apprenticeships at level 4 and above, progress to further technical qualifications at higher levels, enter higher education, or join the labour market.

2.4 Each T level will follow the same broad framework and each programme will consist of 5 components:

- An approved technical qualification.
- A work placement.
- Maths, English and digital requirements.
- Any other occupation-specific requirements/qualifications, as set out by the relevant T level panel as part of the institute for apprenticeships.
- Any further employability, enrichment and pastoral (EEP) provision (as required in all study programmes).

2.5 T levels will be offered in 11 of the 15 technical routes (identified in the Post-16 Skills Plan – see **Appendix 1** for technical routes). The routes will be broken down into a number of occupations, and closely related occupations are grouped together into pathways. The expectation is that there will be one or a small number of T levels per pathway.

2.6 The consultation stated that all T levels should be made widely available to students around the country, and the funding flows should be designed to support this aim.

2.7 The key points in the Combined Authority's response were:

- The need to ensure that local T level provision takes account of local labour market needs. There is a balance to be struck in terms of ensuring young people have a wide choice but for technical/vocational provision to be successful it needs to match the labour market demands. Skills Advisory Panels could have an important role here along with delivery agreements. To illustrate this the Combined Authority suggested that funding incentives could be used to promote delivery in priority skills areas, ensuring that the course benefits the local economy.
- The importance of joined up careers information and guidance – this is particularly important with the new Careers Strategy being launched. Clear information and guidance will need to be provided. The message has to be understood by students, parents and employers if the technical routes, and T levels, are to be a success. The parity of esteem with academic qualifications needs to be reinforced. There is a need to start building awareness at the earliest opportunity. All pupils will need access to the information, which has been a challenge in some schools – exposure to apprenticeships in some schools has been limited to certain pupils
- The importance of appropriate funding levels to deliver the courses, both for equipment and staff. We need to ensure that provision is of sufficient quality to deliver the economically valuable skills that are required.
- The need to ensure that T levels contain transferable skills to support future occupational mobility in a changing labour market.
- That the work placement element is important and beneficial but needs employer buy-in. The length of work placement is a challenge for employers (between 45 – 60 days and a minimum of 315 hours), and ensuring that the right opportunities in terms of work placements are

available will be a challenge for providers. Also, there is the possibility that there are employers nearby who don't want to participate, some areas will have very thin economies so the range of opportunities would be very limited – it may mean there isn't a viable technical route in some localities. There needs to be a coordinated approach to employer engagement with providers, especially as T levels are not the only call on employers' time in terms of work placements.

### **3 Financial Implications**

- 3.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

### **4 Legal Implications**

- 4.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

### **5 Staffing Implications**

- 5.1 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

### **6 External Consultees**

- 6.1 No external consultations have been undertaken.

### **7 Recommendations**

- 7.1 That panel members note the enclosed consultation response.

### **8 Background Documents**

None.

### **9 Appendices**

**Appendix 1** – Technical routes and implementation timetable

**Appendix 2** – Combined Authority consultation response