LSC Delivery Report

OCTOBER 2007

LSC Management Group Report to Council

Agenda item 10
Paper LSC 48/2007

Of interest to everyone involved in improving skills and learning opportunities across England
Introduction

This report provides National Council with an update on performance against Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets; strategic priorities and the development and implementation of policy and strategy from across the LSC. The report pulls together all of the information, setting out our latest achievements and challenges.

Section 1: Key highlights since last report

The Impact of Learning on Employability

The LSC is measuring the impact of the learning it funds, in terms of helping adults to move into employment. This is the largest ever survey of its kind, involving a sample of 10,000 learners who were unemployed at the start of their course. Interviews were completed in August 2007, and initial results indicate that:

- Nearly one third of individuals who were unemployed when they started their general FE course are now in paid employment.
- The number claiming Job Seekers’ Allowance fell from 31% at the start of the course, to 12% 1-2 years after the course was completed.
- The personal impacts of learning are very strong – 70% of former learners say they gained personal/social skills from their course, and 79% have more confidence than they did at the start of the course.
- FE learning is effective in progressing individuals along a path to employment. Nearly two thirds claimed they had gained job-related skills, and a similar number felt clearer about their career aims – and this was amongst people who had completed a general FE course, which was not necessarily designed to lead directly to a job or improved employability.

Train to Gain Evaluation

The first wave of the Train to Gain (TtG) evaluation (a suite of three projects looking at the learner, employer and operational aspects of the service) is now complete with reports for each expected mid October. Initial findings are:

- Majority of learners find out about TtG through their employer
- Nearly all feel they had a choice whether to train or not
- Two-thirds have a pre-training skills assessment. A fifth start straightaway
- Most TtG learners want a more challenging job and some feel over-skilled
- Learners have a (limited) knowledge of TtG as a brand
- Most learners see the training benefiting both them and their employer
- Once completed, most learners want more...
- . . . especially those who had discussed future learning options
- Learners are highly satisfied with their Train to Gain experience

Latest Research on the Returns to Qualifications in England

The DIUS published an update on the Evidence Base on the economic value of the current range of qualifications such as the Level 2 and Level 3 Vocational Qualifications. The report states:

- The average wage returns to key academic qualifications are similar for men and women at around 26-29% for first or foundation degrees, around 14% for 2 or more A-levels and around 9-11% for 5 or more GCSEs A*-C.
- The average wage returns to NVQs are negligible at levels 1-3 but are much more robust at levels 4-5, consistent with the findings of other studies.
A range of NVQs at level 2 yield sizeable wage returns for people who left school with no or low qualifications. Among this group of lower school achievers who go on to attain VQs as their highest qualification, wage returns are around 13% for a BTEC First or General Diploma, 5-7% for a City and Guilds Craft qualification and 17% for RSA Diploma for women only. The wage return for NVQ2, whilst still insignificant for men, is small and positive for women at 3%.

The wage returns to VQs are generally substantially stronger at level 3 than at level 2. Limiting the sample to those whose highest academic qualification is at level 2, the wage return to NVQ3 is around 10-13%, when held at someone’s highest qualifications. Other level 3 VQs do even better: for example, wage returns or around 26% for men with an ONC or OND and around 19% for women with an RSA Advanced Diploma.

Skills Campaign Update – 12 October 2007

The Skills Campaign has up until 12 October achieved some successes, the cumulative response between 9 July and 7 October inclusive was 123, 942 (of which there were 112,875 web visitors and 11,067 campaign line calls) an average response of 9,534 per week. The comparative cumulative response for the TtG was 62,625 (of which there were 59,190 web visitors and 3,435 campaign line calls) an average of 5,219 per week.

Between 16 July and 7 October inclusive 792 employers submitted Train to Gain web forms. Since its launch, this Skills Campaign has achieved 121 pieces of coverage including from ITV’s Loose Women, the Guardian, the Daily Mirror, and the Daily Star. Such a range of exposure confirms that the campaign is helping to move the topic of skills into mainstream national media conversation. The skills advert was also posted on You Tube and has already generated more than 5,000 hits. Such a high response shows that people are actively engaging with the campaign and finding its concept both entertaining and inspiring.

Train to Gain – Skills Pledge

267 employers, covering 2.6m employees have now made the Skills Pledge, plus a further 689 employers have been referred to Skills Brokers.

KEY RISKS AND ISSUES

Skills for Life

Although we will hit the 2010 PSA target early, there are concerns regarding the challenging targets set out in World Class Skills by 2020, especially the capacity and demand for numeracy.

Government response to the report of the Education and Skills Committee on 14-19 Diplomas

On 15 October, the Government published its response to the report by the Education and Skills Committee on 14-19 Diplomas. The main concerns of the Committee were about the complexity and timescales associated with the introduction of the Diplomas from September 2008: in response, the Government stressed that all qualifications had been delivered on time, due to the dedication and expertise of all partners. The Committee also asked that the effectiveness of the LSC in supporting 14-19 partnerships should be monitored: the Government responded that the LSC’s organisational restructuring was designed to provide local teams to work closely with local authorities and 14-19 partnership teams.

Section 2: Update on delivery of PSA Targets

This section provides an update on our latest progress toward the delivery of our PSA targets. All information included in this section has been updated to reflect the latest delivery information.

Young People
Our PSA target for Young People is to:

*Increase the proportion of 19 year olds who achieve at least level 2 by 3 percentage points between 2004 and 2006, and a further 2 percentage points between 2006 and 2008 and improve attainment at level 3*

There have been no further updates to performance in this area since the last report to Council. 71.4% of people aged 19 in 2006 were qualified to at least level 2, a rise from 66.3% in 2004. 46.8% of young people have a Level 3 qualification (an increase of 4.7% on those aged 19 in 2004).

### Adult Skills

Our adult skills target is comprised of two elements:

*Improving the basic skill levels of 2.25 million adults between the launch of Skills for Life in 2001 and 2010, with a milestone of 1.5 million in 2007;*

#### Skills for Life

Latest estimates from October 2006 show that the 2007 milestone of 1.5 million adults with improved skills has already been exceeded one year early. The latest performance figures for 2005/06 confirm that by the end of July 2006, 1,759,000 achieved first qualifications that count towards the target.

The second element of the adult skills target is: *Reducing by at least 40 per cent the number of adults in the workforce who lack NVQ 2 or equivalent qualifications by 2010. Working towards this, one million adults in the workforce to achieve Level 2 between 2003 and 2006.*

The number of adults with Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications has grown, latest figures show that the number of economically active adults at or above Level 2 has increased – from 69.2% in 2001 to 73.9% in 2006. The number of adults with Level 3 qualifications has also increased – from 47.9% in autumn 2001 to 52.4% in 2006.

There are 12.4 million adults from an economically active population of 23.6 million with at least a Level 3 qualification. This represents an increase of 0.9 percentage points since quarter two of 2006, and no change since quarter one of 2007.

### Apprenticeships

The achievement rate for Apprenticeships frameworks has increased from 24% in 2001/02 to almost 62.5% (provisional) in 2006/07.

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**Section 3: Delivering our Priorities**

**Priority 1:** Raise the quality and improve the choice of learning opportunities for all young people to equip them with the skills for employment, further or higher learning, and for wider social and community engagement.
Apprenticeships
The Prime Ministers Strategy Unit working jointly with the DCSF and DIUS are currently undertaking a review of the Apprenticeship programme. It is a high level internal review into the operation of the Government funded apprenticeship programme in England. The review will look particularly at the implications of the entitlement for young people in 2013 and the Leitch ambition for expansion by 2020.

The review is in two phases: the first phase is a level analysis (from the Prime Ministers speech at the Conference of Business Industry conference in September) on Pre-Apprenticeships and the national roll out of a matching system. Due to report back at the end of November 2007 the second phase will produce a clear set of recommendations, which set out how the apprenticeship programme should respond to the requirements Entitlement and the Leitch Ambition.

Pre- Apprenticeships
Submissions to be involved in the modelling and trialling of Pre-Apprenticeship Pathways, as part of the preparation for the phased implementation of Progression Pathways from 2008/09, have now been received from all LSC regions, and confirmation of the first trial sites for the Pre Apprenticeships will be confirmed in early October.

Learner Support Schemes
Apologies are made for the error on page 6 of the June report. Please take the correction that Liberata were awarded the contract for the Learner Support Helpline, Assessment and Payment Body, and not Capita as was reported in the June report.

Learning Agreement Pilots
Of the 3,151 young people who have commenced in learning and have a learning agreement, 821 have started on an apprenticeship programme, 204 started on FE “Mainstream” programmes, and 2,126 on other courses delivered by either FE, or WBL providers. And, while 575 young people have completed their learning programmes 372 have left early.

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)
Figures for the end of 2006/07 show 527,120 (the latest) learners benefited from EMA payments in the 2006/07 academic year, exceeding LSC anticipated take-up of 520,000. By 28 September 448,056 (latest) Notices of Entitlement (NoEs) had been issued to learners who have applied, and are eligible for, EMA support in the academic year 2007/08. This shows an increase of 6.6% compared to the number of NoEs issued in 2006/07.

A submission is currently with Ministers about a number of amendments to improve the effectiveness of EMA provision. As part of this submission, Ministers have already agreed proposals to modify the bonus regime to ensure that it encourages young people to successfully complete their programme of study and achieve their qualifications. They have also agreed to a proposal to introduce the EMA Guarantee will would mean that the majority of new applicants will only have to be assessed once to see if they qualify for EMA instead a new assessment each year.

Dance and Drama Awards (DaDA)
The DaDA provision enables the most talented individuals to train to become actors, dancers, and stage managers, regardless of their family income. End of year stats show that a total of 1,585 Awards were taken up in 2006/07 and 883 learners (56%) received further support from the Income Assessed Student Support Fund (IASSF). By 28 September 1,465 Awards were reported to have been taken up for 2007/08 and 823 learners (56%) are also receiving further support from the IASSF.

Care to Learn
End of year stats show that a total of 6,739 (latest) young parents benefited from Care to Learn (C2L) in 2006/07. It should be noted that this figure was the cumulative total for the whole of 2006/07 and that this fell short of the 2006/07 target of 7,000. By 28 September, 3,050 young parents have benefited from C2L in the 2007/08 academic year, on target for annual target of 7,500.
Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS)
The LSC has now published its proposals to reform OLASS by aligning it much more closely to the mainstream offer with a key emphasis on employability and employment. The proposals are set out in the consultation document Developing the Offenders’ Learning and Skills Service: The Prospectus the key objectives of which can be summarised as follows:

- developing and reforming the way in which learning provision for offenders in custody is planned, organised, delivered and funded
- widening the scope, range and availability of learning provision for offenders in the community
- for all offenders, ensuring that the learning offer is explicitly linked and aligned to other services, in particular by developing strong joint commissioning arrangements with NOMS commissioners, and interventions, and
- supporting improvements in the quality of provision, ensuring that all offenders are able to benefit from existing provision and developments within the wider post-16 sector.

Consultation on the proposals ends on 26 October 2007 and all feedback considered as proposals will be developed further whilst working through their operation viability. The technical document/report is planned for early 2008.

Nine regional events were staged in September/early October to support the consultation process, and are an important element of the process. Over 700 key partners and stakeholders attended the events and their feedback (the majority of which was extremely positive) will be incorporated with that received via online consultation.

Time to Talk
The DCSF has initiated a debate, seeking suggestions from anyone with an interest in making things better for young people. The first stage of this review was an open-ended consultation, to which the LSC has responded by re-iterating the main points made in response to previous consultations, including Raising Expectations, Every Child Matters, Youth Matters, and Care Matters, together with our response to the consultation on quality standards for Information, Advice and Guidance.

Priority 2: Raise the skills of the nation, giving employers and individuals the skills they need to improve productivity, employability and social cohesion.

Delivering Train to Gain to employers
The number of full level 2 achievements has risen sharply and is now 95,970, including level 3 jumpers and ETP achievements. The ETP programme has contributed 38,890 achievements towards this figure. At the start of the year, 78,610 achievements were planned; therefore we have contributed more achievements towards the adult skills level 2 PSA target.

Most regions have now retargeted their skills brokerage service to engage larger hard to reach employers. This should boost learner numbers in due course. However, the announcement that the skills brokerage service will transfer to RDAs in 2009 has created a mood of uncertainty in regions and brokerage contractors.

An under spend of £30 million has been made available to support Level 3 in other parts of the country to the pilot regions and flexibilities agreed with DIUS in respect of the size of the employer and “firstness”. Additional sector action planning activity is also currently being commissioned through Sector Skills Councils.

These changes to the policy has shifted the objectives of the Level 3 pilots to focus on increasing employer investment in Level 3 as part of a broader package of skills; enabling providers to be more flexible in their strategies for attracting investment from employers.

1,880 learners are now taking part in the level 3 pilots with the majority of learners in the North West and West Midlands from the Health Care and Construction sectors.
Train to Gain - Skills Pledge
267 employers, covering 2.6m employees have now made the Skills Pledge (SP) plus a further 689 employers have been referred to Skills Brokers. Tesco announced their commitment to the Skills Pledge at the CBI Skills summit, bringing on board an additional 275,000 employees.

There has been a successful first meeting of the Skills Pledge Partners Group to bring together public relations and communications activity.

A draft Skills Pledge Employer Engagement Strategy has been prepared and will go to Ministers.

Business in the Community have prepared proposals for promoting the SP to their members – this represents 75% of the FTSE 250 and David Lammy has written to 31 ‘Heading for Success’ football clubs inviting them and their board members, as employers, to make a Skills Pledge commitment.

The Investor in People (iiP) UK are working closely with LSC on the SP, promoting SP through regional quality centres and developing certification arrangements. Preliminary discussions have also been held with 6-8 Sector Skills Councils to fast track demand for the Skills Pledge.

David Lammy will attend the NES October employer conference to recognise another group of employers, and Local Government Employers and Improvement and the Development Agency will develop a Joint Investment Framework with LSC covering local government, setting out plans (by October) for bringing remaining Local Authorities on board the SP.

Train to Gain - Delivery Plan
A TtG delivery plan is being drawn up. This will draw heavily on the outcomes of the thematic reviews and provide a clear statement on TtG, including funding and trajectories and specific actions to develop the service.

Skills in England
The Skills in England (SiE) is an annual report (produced by the LSC working with colleagues and the DIUS, the SSDA, DWP, DBERR and the RDAs) which draws together a range of research to identify the key issues affecting the demand for, and supply of skills.

SiE 2007 provides an authoritative and sector-wide perspective on what the key skills issues are. The report highlights the threats and opportunities facing the economy over the medium term, and the role of skills in meeting these challenges. It reinforces the fact that skills are critical to addressing the two main challenges facing the economy: maintaining global competitiveness and reducing social exclusion. There are three supporting volumes which look at regional and sectoral issues and the research findings in more detail.

Research into the attitudes of large employers towards training to be released late October/early November will provide greater insight into recruitment and training strategies within large organisations as well as provide an understanding into their attitudes towards publicly-funded training. Over 200 large employers were interviewed (just under a half were existing National Employer Service (NES) clients).

Early key findings are that
- large companies are not taking a long-term approach to training and development and are not analysing the actual impact of training on their productivity etc.

- A significant proportion of large employers need to look outside the UK to find the skills that they need - 43% actively recruit from overseas.

- The motivation and attitude of potential new recruits is of key importance to large employers. However, the majority of employers also feel that qualifications are important.
- Externally accredited training is popular amongst large employers, with around three quarters of the sample providing this type of training to their employees.

- In terms of publicly-funded training, only two-fifths of large organisations using external training providers said they received some form of public sector funding.

- Employers feel that publicly-funded training could be improved by making it less bureaucratic, more flexible in terms of funding, and offering more bespoke provision and more flexible on the timing of provision.

- Over half of respondents (52%) have heard of the Skills Pledge (SP) although awareness is significantly higher amongst NES clients (88%) than non-NES clients (37%).

**Skills Campaign**

As well as using the imagery and messages in adverts and communications, a number of our partners including DirectGov, Jobcentre Plus, AoC, ALP, UK Skills and Investors in People, and a number of colleges and training providers have also linked onto the LSC website and featured the campaign on their sites to promote their own marketing and communications campaigns.

By doing this in tandem with each other, LSC really believe everybody will all benefit from the ‘halo effect’ and word of mouth that the campaign is generating. Consequently, perhaps, this is why 1,784 individuals have registered with the campaign resources site since its launch on 1 June 2007 and the campaign resources site and stakeholder helpline being used frequently during this period.

To ensure that the Campaign is successful the there are a number of stakeholders (with the objective of ensuring cross-sector view of progress) meet on a regular basis at the ‘sub-group’ level seeking/providing creative input into the initial concept of the Skills Campaign whilst feeding back on its implementation thereby assessing regular updates on its development.

To that end, LSC is awaiting the results of tracking research for the Skills Campaign which is due in October. This will provide further information about how the campaign has influenced attitudes to learning and raised awareness of skills and will be used to inform the plans and the creative direction for the next phase of activity.

**Ufi**

We have been able to release £20 million from the 2007/08 Ufi budget due to underspends in the 2006/07 academic year. The underspend resulted from administration budgets (rather than delivery budgets) and development programmes being delayed due to priority changes identified by Leitch.

As highlighted in the last Council report, there was no impact on Ufi performance relating to this underspend, Ufi delivered all their Level 2 and Skills for Life targets for 2006/07.

**Skills for Life**

As the LSC will achieve the 2010 Skills for Life PSA target early, the Statement of Priorities (due to be published) will confirm that the focus of Skills for Life delivery is now the ambitious targets outlined in World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England.

Responsibility for the management of the Government’s Adult Basic Skills marketing campaign, previously featuring the ‘Gremlins’ television advertisements has now transferred to the LSC. A new campaign to promote numeracy learning is planned for a spring launch. This will dovetail with the wider Skills Campaign.

National Skills for Life conferences will be held throughout November, with the LSC providing input.

**ESOL**

The position as to how ESOL is reflected in the new Leitch threshold targets for adult basic skills will be debated at the next Ministers’ Cross-Government meeting on 1st November. The meeting will also consider cross government policy on ESOL and the progress made by other departments to
align policies.

Bill Rammell will launch the new ESOL for Work qualifications on 16th and 23rd October at two dedicated events. The qualifications have been available since 1st September 2007 at Entry Level 3 and Level 1. They are shorter, work focussed English language qualifications that provide greater learner choice, with a range of different assessment models offered by different awarding bodies.

**National Skills Academies**
We remain on track to meet the target of 12 National Skills Academies (NSAs) by 2008 with three Round 2 Business Plans appraised in September. Of these, one NSA (Nuclear) has been approved; the other two NSAs (Process Industries and Creative & Cultural) were deferred with further work required on their business plans. A fourth NSA (Hospitality) is due to be appraised in the autumn.

Four NSAs from Round 3 (Sport and Active Leisure; Glass manufacture, coatings, print and building products; Fashion, textiles and jewellery and Retail) and are now in the business planning stage with Business Plans due to be submitted early in 2008.

The Secretary of State announced Round 4 in July with the caveat that: *We hope to announce a Round 4 for NSAs as resources allow to keep building the network*. There is however, still some uncertainty of the potential scale and scope of a Round 4 given the need to complete Rounds 2 and 3 in the CSR period.

**New Standard for Employer Responsiveness and Vocational Excellence**
Since the national roll out of the New Standard in June, the first assessment and verification processes have been conducted for over 40 providers’ applications. There has been considerable development of the assessment structure, including further website developments and recruitment development of more assessors.

Over 300 CoVE status providers have been contacted to promote the New Standard, and to advise over transition process and financial support being made available.

**Sector Skills Councils: Reforming and Re-licensing**
The DIUS led project board met in August and September to consider the core remit of the Sector Skills Councils; the fit between the developing the Sector Skills Councils performance framework; the models for delivering a re-licensing process and a communications strategy.

A great deal of work was still required to agree the re-licensing model, both criteria and re-licensing process, although agreement was reached, that all Sector Skills Councils would go through the re-licensing process and a re-licensed network will be delivered by end 2009.

**Sector Skills Agreements**
All 25 Sector Skills Councils are currently at various stages of their Sector Skills Agreements, 14 of which have or are about to complete and publish their final and agreed plans. The last nine are due to complete by March 2008. Final agreements from all tranches have been delayed from original timelines, due to additional time taken to gain corporate agreement. All Sector Skills Councils are on target to complete their Sector Skills Agreements by March 2008.

**Higher Level Skills**
The LSC and HEFCE have agreed to work together more closely to enhance and increase the provision of higher level vocational learning and skills. The proposals for collaborative working were agreed at a meeting of the Joint Progression Strategy Strategic Forum involving senior colleagues from the LSC, HEFCE and DIUS. LSC and HEFCE will focus collaborative working on four key areas: complementary investment decisions for higher level skills; a programme of joint research into higher level skills and data sharing; credit transfer and progression across the FE system and the HE sector and curriculum change, qualification reform and better links between qualifications. A feature of the work will involve the piloting of joint working arrangements (including a sector focus) in one region.
Adult Learning Grant
The Adult Learning Grant (ALG) provides adult learners from low income households with financial support to help achieve their first full Level 2 or full Level 3 qualification.

Take-up of the pilot scheme exceeded expectations in 2006/07, with 11,715* adult learners receiving payments from the scheme. The first full year of national rollout is now underway. At 28 September 15,647 (latest figures) applications for support from the scheme have so far been received. While it is too early to tell how many of the applications received will turn into awards, it seems possible that LSC will exceed the anticipated expected take-up of 17,500 adults receiving ALG by the end of 2007/08.

Career Development Loans (CDLs)
The Career Development Loans (CDLs) are commercial bank loans which help individuals to pay for learning that will enhance their career prospects. As at 2 October there were 13,874 live CDLs.

Priority 3: Raise the performance of a world-class system that is responsive, provides choice and is valued and recognised for excellence.

New Adult Career Service
Work has begun on the specification development for the new adult careers service and the proposed skills health check system. Delivery plans have been agreed by the Leitch implementation group which include the following key activities:

- Define target groups: scope the service; agree delivery methods; agree the infrastructure to deliver the service; identify impact measures and confirm procurement options. This work is scheduled to complete in time to give advice to ministers early in the New Year. A working group that includes JCP and the LSC has been established to design the specifications and to ensure the adult careers service becomes a primary component of the integrated employment and skills system.

- Building on the Best: The Joint DCSF and LSC Final Report and Implementation Plan of 14-19 Work-related Learning was published in September. Work-related learning covers all the work that the LSC is currently engaged in covering education business links and practical learning opportunities 14-16 involving work-experience, professional teacher placements and employer engagement. The LSC has led and managed a number of successful programmes: Increased Flexibility, Young Apprenticeships and the KS4 School Engagement Programme which have employer engagement as a central part of their delivery.

Adult Learner Accounts trials
Regional trials of Adult Learner Accounts (ALAs) in 07/08 are underway with allocations of ALA resources having been issued to learning providers successful in the tender process.

An IAG hotline has been established and processes agreed, and stakeholder briefing has been provided.

On the wider Skills Accounts project, development work is underway on the design of the expanded trials to run in 2008/09. It will be important to ensure a fit with a more integrated employment and skills service.

UK Vocational Qualification Reform Programme (UKVRP)
The first modelling of aligning public funding priority qualifications (identified by Sector Skills Councils and accredited into the Qualifications and Credit Framework, QCF) is now proceeding. Ten SSCs are involved in the first tranche of this work (and five of these are in the pilot phase of reformed sector qualification delivery). An indicative list of the outline priority qualifications will be published alongside the Statement of Priorities. The identified priority qualifications will be part of the fast track process for bringing new provision into the QCF.
We have also commissioned an impact assessment to evaluate the process and implications of switching funding to priority qualifications, and moving funding away from non priority qualifications. In addition, and as part of the planning, funding and delivery strand of the UK VQ Reform Programme, the LSC is working with DIUS to begin working trials of unit funding and supporting incremental achievement in the context of the VQ reform programme. The outcomes of this work will be available in March 2008.

In the context of Progression Pathways, the LSC is confirming the criteria for establishing national parameters for the first four Progression Pathways (Pre Apprenticeship, Pathways for Adults to access a full Level 2, Pathway to Independent Living and Supported Employment and an Entry Level Pathways for 14-16). During November and December the criteria will be subject to refinement and consultation and this will support awarding bodies in the submission of entry level and level 1 units and qualifications to the QCF from which to build the Pathways in readiness for delivery from August 2008. During 2007/08, we are continuing to work with trial centres in the modelling of delivery of Pathways, and in the process of phasing in any QCF provision as it becomes available within the existing trial sites.

Technology for Learning
The LSC continues to support providers in the wider FE System firmly to embed the use and reach of learning technologies in the delivery of all its programmes. In addition to its existing programmes, which include a wholesale refresh of the ICT equipment within the offenders learning and skills service, upgrades to JANET network and capital investment in the voluntary and work based sectors, the LSC is now a major partner in the technology exemplar network (TEN) programme. This is a £3.9 million initiative to accelerate learner-focused use of technology in the Further Education system.

The Minister for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education, Bill Rammell MP, unveiled the programme at Becta's FE and Skills Conference on 11th October. The programme will lead to the development of a national support network by encouraging providers with a track record of successfully embedding technology into their learning and teaching to create a forum to share best practice with other providers. To help establish the network, support and funding will be made available. Participating providers will also be eligible to receive funding to develop their use of technology for learning and to revise and implement strategies resulting from engaging with the network.

Equality Impact Assessment
LSC are delivering mandatory training to all National Office staff at Bands 5, 4 and 3 to enable them to achieve the goal set out in the Single Equality Scheme to complete Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) for all policies highly relevant to equality by the end of 2008.

This is a particularly high priority area as the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) recently ‘named and shamed’ fifteen Government departments for their failures to comply with legislation, including carrying out race equality impact assessments. Like those departments, the LSC is legally obliged to assess all existing and new policies for their impacts on race, disability and gender. Additionally, the CRE has surveyed fifty further education colleges, which were all found to be non-compliant. The Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) has been asked to account for this, and convene a number of bodies including the LSC to monitor compliance.

Equality and Diversity Electronic Workbook
Staff have made considerable progress towards our goal of ensuring they have a solid understanding of how to make equality and diversity integral to everything we do. Despite a few technical hitches, 67% of staff across the LSC have now completed the electronic workbook, up from 25% in June. Staff in the North West (79%) and in the national Skills Group (95%) and Learning Group (80%) have done particularly well, and we are now renewing our efforts on encouraging remaining staff.

International Education and Training
We are supporting the development of the DIUS International Further Education Strategy by identifying actions within our existing remit that will contribute to its delivery. The DIUS strategy has
four goals: global citizenship, international engagement, trade and investment, and infrastructure. Our key contribution will be to deliver our targets and priorities to give adults and young people the skills they need for life in a global society and work in a global economy. One specific contribution we are making is through the Prime Ministers Initiative for International Education where we are funding partnership development work between English FE providers, HEIs and overseas providers and agencies. We will also contribute through our support for the National Languages Strategy, the 2012 Olympics, the 2011 WorldSkills competition, our use of European Funding, and our strategy for sustainable development.

Priority 4: Raise our contribution to economic development locally and regionally through partnership working.

Skills for Jobs
The commissioning round for discrete skills for jobs activity is underway and delivery is expected to start from November. Regions have developed their offer with Jobcentre Plus and getting a job with training will be a key outcome. Skills for jobs activity will be a key focus for relevant adult ESF – supported activities.

Economic Development
Strategic meetings with representatives from the core cities group have taken place, exploring approaches to closer working and common issues around multi-area agreements and the emerging picture of regional and sub-regional partnership working from the Treasury’s review of sub-national arrangements.

A 24 hour event for top managers involved in economic development across the LSC was held on 11/12 October which agreed key priorities and next steps for the coming year.

Agreement was reached, by Mark Haysom and Core City chief executives, on the principles of joint working with LSC and how to maximise contributions to economic performance of cities.

Other Developments

Commission for Employment & Skills
Some very positive progress has been made. Recruitment of the Chief Executive and Board of the Commission is in progress and appointments are imminent.

The location of the Commission has been agreed subject to Cabinet Office approval of the business case for a London presence. Agreement is due shortly on the functions that should transfer from National Employment Panel/Sector Skills Development Agency.

There are issues around the UK remit of the Commission and budgets.