The Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the organisation that exists to make England better skilled and more competitive, has pledged an additional £35 million by 2008 to support and develop new and improved provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). Plus, funding allocated for learners accessing specialist colleges will be increased by 15 per cent to £181 million by 2008-09. The organisation will also set up the first National Learners with Disabilities Panel next year, as part of efforts to listen better to learners’ requirements. In line with wider commitments, the LSC will also eradicate poor provision for learners with LDD by 2008. The DfES and other Government departments will also agree on, and publish a set of national protocols for shared funding responsibilities and partnership working.

_Learning for Living and Work_ states that provision for learners with LDD should challenge them provide a sense of achievement, increase personal autonomy and deliver progression to new opportunities and experiences. The LSC currently funds and plans provision for more than 641,000 learners with declared, spending more than 10 per cent of its annual budget, nearly £1.5 billion on this group (2004-05 figures). The LSC has today pledged that by 2015, England will be an international exemplar in providing high quality post-16 learning provision for this group.
The strategy has been directly informed by the results of *Through Inclusion to Excellence*, a large-scale review and consultation on provision for learners with LDD, which was carried out by an independent steering group, Chaired by Peter Little, OBE. The review produced 40 recommendations, which has informed *Learning for Living and Work* the LSC’s work up to 2010. The LSC’s vision is that provision will be more holistic, flexible and equitable in the future. It will also be less complex and better recognise learner’s achievements.

Mark Haysom, the LSC’s Chief Executive, said:

“These learners must not be marginalised and we must strive harder to deliver access to and experience of, post-16 learning for this group. The LSC has a serious commitment to this agenda, which is why we have set ourselves the ambitious target of making England an international exemplar by 2015. *Learning for Living and Work* provides clarity as to the purpose, for the next four years, of post-16 education and training for learners with LDD, and importantly stands alongside *agenda for change*, the Leitch Review and the FE White Paper as a major force for transformation of the FE system.”

Bill Rammell, the Minister for Higher, Further Education and Lifelong Learning said:

“This Government is determined to improve outcomes and services for learners with LDD. Today's strategy will lead to a major change in people's life chances. We must ensure equal treatment with other learners and greater participation in the job market through improved provision tailored to individual's needs. Work with the Departments of Health and Work and Pensions will complement and strengthen the LSC’s plans by bringing funding and provision closer together. We expect to publish a new joint strategy for people with LDD next year.”

Peter Lavender, OBE, Chair of the LSC’s Equality and Diversity Sub-Committee on learners with LDD said:

“This is the first ever strategy we have had for learners with disabilities in the further education system, and shows that this group of learners are a priority for the Government
and the LSC. By condoning poor quality provision for learners we somehow accept that disabled learners have less worth. So, I am pleased to see that the LSC will cease commissioning provision where it is inadequate, by 2008”.

“If we are going to make a real difference, we need to find ways to enable most learners with disabilities to gain new skills for living and work, to re-engage in the workplace where appropriate, and to have the confidence and support to move from incapacity benefits to earnings. And the education sector has a major role to play in this”.

ENDS

Learning and Skills Council (LSC)
The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for planning and funding high-quality vocational education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England’s young people and adults to world class standards. Our vision is that by 2010, young people and adults in England have the knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. Established in 2001, we work nationally, regionally and locally from a network of offices across the country.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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Notes to Editors

- *Learning for Living and Work* is the national strategy for LSC funded provision for learners with LDD across the FE system: 2006/07 to 2009/10. It is of interest to everyone involved in improving skills and learning opportunities across England. Learning for Living and Work can be viewed at: [http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Documents/Keyinitiatives/learning-for-living-and-work.htm](http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Documents/Keyinitiatives/learning-for-living-and-work.htm)

- Launch of the LSC’s LLDD Strategy follows the report commissioned by the LSC and published in November 2005 called *Through Inclusion to Excellence* and known as the *Little Report* after the name of the Chair of the group Dr Peter Little OBE. The Report contained over 40 recommendations, the majority being for the LSC, but also 12 for the DfES: [http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/Lsc/2005/research/commissioned/through-inclusion-to-excellence.pdf](http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/Lsc/2005/research/commissioned/through-inclusion-to-excellence.pdf)

- The LSC’s third *Annual Statement of Priorities Raising our Game* sets out the LSC’s ambitious funding and planning priorities for 2007-08. These aim to increase achievement and promote economic competitiveness and social inclusion in England. This document outlines the budget and expenditure plans for Learners with LDD. £181 million will be spent in 2007-08: [http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Documents/Keyinitiatives/OurAnnualStatementOfPriorities/raising-our-game.htm](http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Documents/Keyinitiatives/OurAnnualStatementOfPriorities/raising-our-game.htm)

- The LSC is shortly publishing its *Disability Equality Scheme* after carrying out a consultation with learners called ‘Talk to Des’ campaign. This consultation has informed the development of the scheme which will be launched in December 2006. Chris Banks, Chairman of the LSC is the organisations Disability Equality Duty Champion. Link to press release: [http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Media/PressReleases/pr374_talk-to-des.htm](http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Media/PressReleases/pr374_talk-to-des.htm)

- In early 2007, the LSC will launch a *National Learners with Disabilities Panel* which will work with the main National Learner’s Panel and the LSC governance structure.